



W I S E R I

Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Sex and Science: Tips for Faculty

Introduction

Responsibility of faculty.

Faculty are the fulcrum of change in the research university. Their values and behavior permeate everything a university does and stands for, and therefore it is essential that all faculty consider their own impact on women in science. From the subtle to the blatant, faculty behaviors often shape women's careers. Most faculty want to be a positive influence on women in science, so it is important to understand the types of behavior that can make a difference.

If you are a new professor, you may soon confront new issues associated with gender – either your own or that of your students, staff, or colleagues. You will also experience a dichotomy of authority: you will wield more power over students and staff than you did as a graduate student or postdoc, but your status as an untenured faculty member will also leave you vulnerable to the power of more senior faculty, who will be making both objective and subjective judgments about your performance. If you are a woman, you may find that colleagues take advantage of your professional vulnerability. If you are a man, you may find that you need to adjust your behavior with women colleagues or women who work in your lab. They are not just your lab mates anymore. Similar, but differently nuanced issues may arise for those who are lesbian or gay or who supervise students and staff who are lesbian or gay; however, our express emphasis here will be on women, because – as a class, and with little other plausible cause besides gender – women are grossly underrepresented in academic science. Gender issues are complex and influential, so it is worth spending some time thinking about them and periodically examining your own behavior and that of people around you.

If you are a senior faculty member, you have a position of immunity and influence from which to stimulate change in your institution and members of your scientific community. You can provide support for younger men and women who would like to see change, but are timid about inciting it because of their vulnerable status. You may have a respected voice and you can use it to induce the changes in behavior, and the climate it generates, in those around you.

Women are not as well represented in the leadership of science as might be expected from their representation among PhDs in many fields of science. Even in fields such as biology, in which women have been receiving almost half of the PhDs granted for years, women represent only 30% of assistant professors and 15% of full professors. This imbalance cripples the vitality of the scientific community by artificially constraining its diversity, limiting the scale of ideas in

proportion to those given the opportunity to express them. Moreover, women are legally and morally entitled to the same opportunities in science enjoyed by men; the search for knowledge unimpeded by false borders provides a parallel mandate.

Underrepresentation of women in science.

The underrepresentation of women in science faculties stems from a number of issues that are firmly rooted in our society's traditions and culture. Thus, to accelerate the rate at which women take their places as leaders in science, it is essential that each of us - men and women alike - reflect on our own values, beliefs, and behavior to ensure that we are not furthering stereotypes, prejudices, policies, practices, or climates that discourage or exclude women from academic science.

There are four factors thought to be responsible for the relatively low representation of women in academic science leadership. They are:

- **Discrimination and harassment.** Women continue to suffer as targets of illegal behaviors, including sexual harassment and discrimination (which includes withholding a professional position, benefit, or advantage based on a personal characteristic such as gender, race, sexual preference, marital status, or age). Some studies indicate that one experience with sexual harassment can affect a woman's professional success and psychological health even a decade after the event. Likewise, witnessing or being the target of discrimination can discourage and demoralize all members of a community, but can be especially debilitating to women.
- **Lack of role models and encouragement.** Success depends heavily on the belief that a goal can be obtained. A number of factors converge to make this belief more difficult for women, in general, than for most men. Women are less likely to receive explicit encouragement to advance in science or to pursue an academic career, making it less likely that they will do so. Women in most fields of science have fewer role models. This makes it more difficult for them to believe that they can succeed as leaders in academic science. There are prominent men in all fields of science, so even if men don't consciously recognize the power of role models, they have always been privileged with successful examples to follow. The need for role models presents another challenge for women – those who serve as role models often become overloaded with responsibilities because their time is in demand by junior women who need guidance and advice about their professional choices.
- **Subtle bias.** In addition to all of the obvious negative behaviors directed toward women in science, there are also subtle, unconscious attitudes that creep into our evaluation of and responses to women and their work. Copious research shows, for example, that the same work is considered of less value if it is done by a woman than by a man. Moreover, people are less comfortable with women in leadership positions in traditionally male-dominated fields. These attitudes are held by both men and women, indicating that simply having women present in the community will not necessarily reduce bias against other women.

- **Work-life balance.** Women in science typically carry a larger share of family responsibilities than do men. This places women in a particularly challenging position during their early careers, when their careers are likely to be stressful and demanding and they are most likely to be caring for young children. The prospect of combining a demanding career with family life often discourages women from pursuing academic positions in science; those who do take up the challenge experience more stress and have more time constraints than many of their male colleagues. Men are faced less often with stark choices between parenthood and a high level career because they are – on average – more likely to have a spouse who shoulders most of the child care responsibilities. If women are to have families and exercise their right to succeed in science, then universities and the people in them need to develop more flexible attitudes, policies, and programs to accommodate both roles.

The guidelines presented here are intended to prepare you for some of the challenges you may face and make you aware of issues of power, discrimination, opportunity, and facilitation. The assertions made are based on decades of research about women in the workplace. See the bibliography for examples of these studies.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Protect yourself and your colleagues and students.

It is imperative that every member of an academic community be educated about the laws and policies that pertain to discrimination and harassment. Be sure you know the definition of sexual harassment and your university's policy on consensual relationships between supervisors and the people they supervise. This knowledge will help you deal with a situation if you become romantically involved with a colleague or someone you supervise, or if you are harassed, accused of harassment, or approached by someone who thinks they have been harassed. Understanding the nature of discrimination will help you avoid making unlawful mistakes and help you spot mistakes made by others. Be sure you know what offices in your university deal with harassment and discrimination complaints and offer training about university policies and procedures.

Keep your lab members physically safe. Develop and discuss recommended practices about working in the lab alone, leaving doors unlocked, and sharing keys to the building or lab. Make sure that women know of campus services that can help them get to their cars or homes safely after a late night in the lab.

Enable others to speak out.

When you see discrimination, harassment, or unsafe working conditions, speak out against them and support others who speak out. Federal law prohibits retaliation against those who make accusations of sexual harassment, but retaliation is common and many victims of sexual harassment do not report it out of fear of retribution.

Discuss sexual harassment with your research group. Make sure your students and employees understand the sorts of behavior that are proscribed by discrimination laws and provide safe

avenues for them to report behavior. Let them know that you want to know if they are made uncomfortable by others' behavior, and provide them with an alternative route for reporting (a department administrator, a colleague, a member of your lab) in case they do not feel comfortable talking to you about an incident.

ROLE MODELS, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND WORKLOAD

Provide encouragement.

Give your graduate students positive feedback as well as constructive criticism to ensure that they know their strengths and develop confidence in their abilities. Don't assume that students or employees know what you appreciate about them or their work. Provide support, encouragement, and constructive criticism in group settings – lab meeting, journal club, practice seminars – so that everyone in the group can learn from your comments, but save your harshest comments for private settings. Do not humiliate or embarrass students. Respectful practices are important for all students and employees, but are likely to be more important for women, who may have received less encouragement and therefore may be more easily discouraged by negative feedback.

Reinforce your women colleagues. Women often report that they find little support for their ideas in faculty meetings or committee meetings. If you experience this, talk to your department chair or a colleague and ask them to be aware of this tendency and find ways to show their support. When you agree with something said by a woman, be explicit about it. When you disagree, do so respectfully in a way that acknowledges the validity of alternative viewpoints.

Make connections.

Women often feel isolated from informal communication networks in their work environments. Help women students, postdocs, staff, and faculty members to feel included in your lab, department, and university by making sure that women have access to all of the same networks and opportunities to which male students have access. Be especially inviting to women of color, as they are even more isolated than white women in most institutions. Share important policies, requirements, or opportunities broadly. If you feel excluded from a network, seek out ways to be included by talking to your chair, serving on key committees, or finding out how your colleagues obtain their information.

Recognize the unique contributions of women.

Women often do quite different work from men. Many women bring unique perspectives to old problems, new interdisciplinary work to a field, and different styles of leadership to a department, and many women attract new students from diverse backgrounds just by their presence. They act as role models to junior women who are eager for guidance and advice and often serve on more committees than men as committees begin to place greater emphasis on a diverse membership. Even women graduate students may be called on to provide advice and mentoring for junior students. If you are a woman, you will want to be very careful about protecting your time. For many women, it is a challenge to balance the desire to be a visible role model and voice in governance with the need to get your own work done. Whether you are a

man or a woman, reinforce women's contributions by nominating them for awards and by recognizing their extra work in mentoring and committee assignments at tenure, promotion, and salary adjustment evaluations.

Share the load.

If you are a male faculty member, you can provide support for your female colleagues by making your commitment to gender issues visible and by sharing the workload. Participate on diversity committees, lobby in faculty meetings for the hiring and promotion of women candidates, look for instances in which women have become invisible and become a voice for inclusion, put a diversity sticker on your office door—these are all ways to create a welcoming climate and let women and minorities know that you are an advocate. If you are a woman, feel free to say “no” when asked to serve on committees or participate in non-research activities. Have an answer ready, so that when you are called to serve in some way that you feel taxes your time too much, you can politely explain your overcommitment and need to do your own work. Most people will be supportive of your decision if you explain it. Many women have to keep reminding themselves that it's okay to say “no,” so they put a note on their phone or computer that says, “JUST SAY NO!!!” or they make a policy of always asking for a day to think about a request for their time before accepting the task.

Use inclusive teaching methods.

Make your classroom inclusive of different types of students and learning styles. The traditional ways of teaching (e.g. lecturing, passive learning, cookbook labs) have been shown to be less effective for all students, but women and students of color especially benefit from a switch to active learning and cooperative approaches.

Provide access to role models.

If you are a man, make sure that your women students have female role models. If you have few women faculty in your department, invite prominent women in your field to visit your department and your lab. Their visits will enrich your career and your research group and can provide women students with examples of the different women who populate academic science.

SUBTLE BIAS AND PREJUDICE

Educate yourself and your colleagues.

Educate yourself about how unconscious biases and assumptions might affect the evaluation, mentoring, advising, coaching, and encouragement of your female students and colleagues. This advice is for women as well as men, because we all internalize the same gender assumptions. Discuss the results of research on unconscious bias and prejudice with your lab group and faculty colleagues and consider how these prejudices might affect decisions and evaluations.

Reflect, question, and challenge.

As you evaluate people for positions in your lab or department and for award nominations or promotions, reflect on your evaluations. Ask yourself and your colleagues whether you are

holding all candidates to the same standards. Explicitly ask whether there has been any gender bias in the process. As you read papers and grants, ask yourself whether you would have come to the same conclusion if the paper or proposal had had a name of the other gender on it. Review letters of recommendation that you write for men and women to ensure that you are not falling into linguistic patterns that disadvantage women. Challenge your own decisions to ensure that you are being fair and equitable and that you are evaluating people on their merit as scientists, and not basing your assessments upon some cultural bias that has nothing to do with quality science.

Examine resource access.

Make sure that men and women have equal access to resources. Ensure that space, salary, and responsibilities are allocated fairly within your lab. If you find that your male students are asking for, and receiving, more of your time than your female students, help your women students to demand more time or simply offer to meet with them more often. If you are a woman, make sure you have the resources to do your job. If you are a woman and find that you are not provided the same support that is provided to men of similar positions, ask your department chair or a trusted mentor how to achieve equity.

Understand and be aware of climate.

Try to understand how the local climate affects your women students, staff, and colleagues. Read the attached set of experiences that describe climate issues and examine your environment for behaviors or policies that might make women feel less safe, valued, or respected than they should. If you are a woman and experience an inhospitable climate, seek out women or men who are sensitive to climate issues and discuss how to approach the problem. This is a tough topic to raise, but you may find that your colleagues are unaware of the behaviors that make you uncomfortable and they may be eager to change them. If you are a man, try to help women address climate issues. You have the advantage that you are not asking for a change that benefits you, which diffuses the request for behavior change. For example, it may be easier for a man to pull aside a male colleague and say, “I know you don’t realize you are doing it, but it probably makes Sue feel uncomfortable when you stare at her breasts when she’s talking to you” than it would be for a woman to ask a colleague to stop staring at her breasts (this, incidentally, is a common complaint among professional women).

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Family responsibilities fall more often to women.

Family commitments have a differential impact on women’s and men’s careers because women more often have primary responsibility for care of young children or aging parents. If you are a woman, take advantage of the policies designed to alleviate the pressures differentially shouldered by women (e.g., tenure clock extensions, part-time appointments, parental leave, flexible work hours). If you are a man, recognize that these policies are not “special treatment,” but in fact make for a better workplace for men as well as women. Remind colleagues that having children, extending the tenure clock, and/or taking a parental leave do not indicate a lesser commitment to science, but reflect the desire of scientists to be human beings in the full

sense of the word. An academic scientist's career lasts 30+ years, and the time taken early in a career for family responsibilities is a speck in the face of a lifelong commitment to science.

Consider family issues, whether you have a family or not.

Avoid scheduling important or mandatory meetings before or after the hours when child care is typically available. Provide support for colleagues with children so they can stay home with a sick child, attend a parent-teacher conference, or take a child to a medical appointment. Offer to fill in for them at meetings or in class in case they ever have family emergencies and need some help covering their responsibilities. You can be sure that the favor will be returned and you will earn a grateful and loyal colleague. Offer maximum flexibility to members of your lab who have children. If they are good students or employees, you will earn their trust, loyalty, and gratitude by making it easy for them to take parental leave, work odd hours, work part-time, or occasionally work from home. They will probably do better work if they feel at peace about their family commitments. They are certainly likely to remain in your lab longer if you provide them flexibility than if you don't. Remember that losing good personnel is far more costly to a lab's productivity than a lab member reducing their time commitment for a few months or years.

Advocate for family-friendly policies.

Be vocal about the need for on-campus child care facilities, lactation rooms, or sick child care, whether or not you will personally take advantage of these facilities. If you are a man or a woman without children, raise family issues when appropriate so that women with children do not have to advocate for themselves.

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What is bad climate all about anyway?

*Compiled by the Committee on Women in the University
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Our working and learning environment is composed of innumerable day-to-day communications and interactions. Subtle aspects of these experiences can isolate and cause suffering but can also nurture and liberate. A better understanding of how these subtleties can and do affect us will help us to make conscious and deliberate choices about the kind of community we create. To help members of university communities understand the environment that is experienced by many women, we have collected stories from men and women that illustrate different workplace climates. These are all true stories. We hope these vignettes will help to provide insight into the small, daily events that contribute to making climate alienating or welcoming. We have included examples of situations that cause pain and isolation and also anecdotes that illustrate how every member of the community can contribute to a positive climate by asking questions or intervening when potentially hurtful behaviors occur.

I am a female staff member in a male-dominated field. My job requires that I work intensively with my supervisor, often on nights and weekends. People I work with have spread a rumor that I am having an affair with my supervisor and that I am receiving preferential treatment in promotions, raises, and job responsibilities because of the relationship, and not based on the quality of my work. I am not having an affair with my supervisor and I am very good at my job. My professional advancement seems appropriate to my performance, which I am told by many people is stellar. I am extremely uncomfortable in my work environment knowing that people are discrediting both my integrity and the quality of my work behind my back, and I am angered that many of the people spreading the rumor are other women who should know how hard it is for a woman to get proper credit for good work in a field where women in positions of influence are still rare. The attitudes of these people seem like something out of the 1950's when successful women were often accused of "sleeping their way to the top."

As a young faculty member thinking about how I am going to fit my plans for a family into my career, I am often discouraged by comments that my male colleagues make. Recently, one of my senior colleagues said of a colleague, "She has been successful even though she had kids." I find this disheartening in several ways – it seems that the expectation is that if a woman has children she will not be successful and that counter examples are looked on as special cases and not the norm. These comments are never made about men with children.

I am the second female tenure-track faculty member in my department. The first woman in the department left after her third year review, years before I arrived. I have been told several times, "Don't make the same mistakes Jane made." After I received my first external grant, a male colleague congratulated me and said, "This gives you some credibility." Jane had never gotten external funding. When a male colleague was hired, I was curious about whether he would have the same experience of always being cautioned away from Jane's mistakes. When I asked him, he did not know who Jane was.

I find that women students naturally gravitate to my office and ask me for advice and guidance on a number of topics – perhaps because I am a woman professor. I end up doing significantly more formal and informal advising than my male colleagues but am always willing to give my time. What is a bit troubling is that now my male colleagues are redirecting women students to me even though the students initially approached them. One of my male colleagues consistently redirects women students who cry to my office. These students tell me that as soon as they started crying my male colleague asked them to

leave and see me instead. In one instance a student had wanted to talk about a grade in the class she was taking from him. As I have nothing to do with that class, it was unclear why he sent her to talk to me.

One day a female colleague pulled me aside and told me that I would get further if I didn't wear so much "ethnic jewelry" and flowing skirts and if I didn't sound "so much like a woman." First I was humiliated at her criticism of my personal style. Then I got really angry because I wondered how much "further" could I get considering I have an endowed professorship in the top department of my field, two NIH grants, a paper in Science last year, prestigious research awards, and frequent job offers from other top universities. Then I got really sad. Sad that a woman would want to crush another woman's individuality instead of celebrating it. Sad that we still live in a society where women's personal styles are thought to determine their success. And sad that anyone besides my mother would have the audacity to tell me how to dress and talk. Can you imagine her saying those things to a male colleague?

A male colleague commented to me he thought it unfair to the men that there was a couch in one of the women's restrooms. I pointed out that although having a couch in one restroom in the building may be an added perk for the women, the fact is that there are over three times as many men's restrooms as women's. Women's restrooms can only be found on every 4th floor.

Before awarding our department's teaching excellence award to me, our chair read some comments from my student evaluations. One student had commented on some advice I had given throughout the semester. After sharing this comment, the chair laughed, lamenting that he also gives his students this piece of advice, but never receives such high evaluations. One of my "mentors" responded to the chair by saying, "That's because you are not wearing a dress!" On the surface, the response was meant to be funny; in fact, it generated much laughter. Below the surface, though, the response obviously suggests that a woman's success is based in part on her appearance.

As the only woman participating in a weekly lunch meeting of faculty with similar teaching and research interests, I learned very early on that to contribute to the discussions I would have to be just as aggressive as my male colleagues, speaking my mind and occasionally interrupting another person. One day, after a meeting, a group member asked me if I thought he had talked too much during the meeting. I told him that I thought he had been rather quiet. He said, "Well, you cut me off three times!" I'm convinced that he was disturbed because a woman had interrupted him; it's most likely he has never called any of his male colleagues on this.

A female faculty member brought her 4-month old baby to a department gathering. I was holding the baby, and one of my "mentors" said, "Oh, you don't have time for one of those!" This mentor has two children of his own. What a double standard!

In my department, newer faculty often accompany a few of the senior distinguished faculty on a canoe trip in the Boundary Waters. This is obviously a chance to get to know these famous guys pretty well in a very informal setting. Many times I have mentioned my prior experience with and enjoyment of winter camping, canoeing, etc., but I have never been invited to go along.

A male colleague in my department mentioned to my husband that he was afraid to ask me to go to lunch or for coffee, because it might get back to his wife.

A senior male professor insists on referring to the faculty spouses as "the faculty wives" or just "the wives."

As a member of a faculty search committee, I suggested that we identify promising women and candidates of color. The answer came back quickly, "We look for the best candidates, no matter what."

End of discussion. Twenty-five percent of the PhDs in my discipline are women, and we have had a very large turnover in faculty, but we haven't hired another woman in the past 11 years.

A dean contacted me to schedule a meeting. When I told him I was on maternity leave, he and his assistant offered to come to my home instead of having me come to campus. I still recall with great appreciation his willingness to accommodate my situation.

I work in a department where sexual harassment is rampant, and many women have shared painful personal accounts with me. Though they would not officially come forward for fear of retribution, I decided something must be done. I approached an administrator and asked to speak in confidence. He listened to the stories I recounted, believed in their validity in spite of the fact that I could not name names, and vowed to do something about it. I was impressed with his willingness to listen and with the depth of his distress. And, most importantly, he kept his word and made efforts to change the situation.

A colleague of mine, who is also a friend, returned from a vacation. In greeting me, she gave me a peck on the cheek. A couple of colleagues saw our greeting and, unbeknownst to us, circulated an erroneous rumor that we were lesbians and were having an affair. It was several months before either of us found out what was common knowledge to everyone else in the building. I was absolutely astounded that people felt so free to make assumptions about my sexuality and my personal life, especially based on such paltry evidence. It was even more amazing to me that this was considered interesting enough to warrant so much speculation.

The professor I work for, unlike many past employers, is always careful to acknowledge the contributions that I make and to thank me for the work that I do. It is amazing how these small comments make a difference in my day.

As a man, I've noticed that when a woman approaches a group, some or all of the men do a once-up/once-down – almost as if it's a requirement for conversation. I don't know if the men are aware they do it; it seems like it's an unconscious response. I'm sure the women are aware of it, though.

A committee was formed to fill a major administrative position. At the first meeting the chair announced that there was no need for to look for minority or women candidates because no qualified ones were available. No one said anything. Later, when I, the sole black member of the committee, tried to get faculty colleagues concerned about this statement, I was told that it was not important. The chair of the committee later became dean of the college.

While playing a pick-up basketball game on campus, I was punched by one of the players. He yelled at me, saying that women should not be allowed to play basketball. Eight other men (faculty and staff) witnessed this but said and did nothing.

A male student came to my office and started yelling at me about a grade he had received from a male professor. I had no connection to the class. He blocked my exit and stood over me in a threatening manner. After he left I locked the door and called the department chair who told me it was nothing. Later, the student returned and again was verbally abusive and threatening. This time the department chair responded and intervened.

My colleague, who has since left the university, was told by members of her department that she should not participate in campus activities for women (e.g., women's luncheons, Women Faculty Mentoring Program). As a result, she felt intimidated and unsupported in her department. I think her sense of isolation was a factor in her decision to leave.

Imagine my surprise when I attempted to join a Faculty and Staff Bowling League and discovered that “faculty and staff” meant men only. Bowling may seem trivial, but I think the men got a kind of mentoring from league participation that enhanced their working relationships. I eventually convinced them to gender-integrate the league, but not everyone was happy about it. Once someone brought in a birthday cake decorated with the nude torso of a woman. A male full professor in my department made a point of cutting a specific piece of the cake and eating it in front of me, laughing and gloating about how he “got a breast.” His comment was pretty clearly aimed at me. I felt that I couldn’t protest because then I’d be proving that it was a mistake to let women into the league.

Once I (male) told a female colleague I thought she looked nice that day. I meant it as a compliment, but it was obvious I had made her uncomfortable. I was frustrated that she misinterpreted my remark, but I talked about it with another female colleague, who is also a friend, and she said my comment may have made her feel like her appearance was somehow a factor in my level of respect for her, like I valued her more because she looked a certain way. That wasn’t my intention, but I can see how she might have felt that way. I’m a lot more aware of my comments now.

I am a woman and a full professor. A male colleague, also a full professor, submitted a grant proposal using my name. He did not ask my permission (and I would not have granted it had I been asked). When I found out, I approached an associate dean who asked me not to complain because it would make the college look bad. Later, when I protested a similar misuse of my name, the same associate dean announced that I have a neurotic need to control the use of my name and that this need wastes college resources. He said he would tell our colleagues not to work with me because I don’t know how to work with people.

A male professor was interviewing for a senior position here. Individual interviews with the candidate were scheduled for all of the male faculty in my division. There are only two women in my division (I am one) and we were scheduled to meet with him together. At the time, I was the only faculty member in the division with tenure. My junior colleague was one of only two people in the division with a tenure-track appointment. The situation was denigrating: somehow it took two of us to earn a slot on the schedule that one man could fill! It also proved confusing to the candidate, who thought that we were working together when we were not.

When I was negotiating to do some consulting work, the organization’s president called to ask me whether I had seen a letter sent to him by my department’s associate chair. I was embarrassed to say that I had not. He faxed a copy of the letter and I was horrified to read that the department had informed him I was too busy to be consulting. No one had even bothered to talk to me about it. I believe this kind of patronizing behavior and blatant lack of professional courtesy, let alone good manners, would never have occurred to a senior professor of my stature who was a man. As a result, I went ahead and gave my time as a consultant away. The department missed out on the generous remuneration the company was willing to give for my time.

On a number of occasions a senior male has responded to comments made by women in my department by saying, “You are thinking just like a woman.”

When my former boss had to leave his position for ethical reasons, I was told by a senior male faculty member that I “was like an adolescent who had lost her daddy.” Never mind that I was about 45 at the time, chair of an NIH study section, and had about 50 publications to my credit.

In one secretarial position I held, my boss, a female full professor, often covered her own missteps on the phone by making comments such as, “My secretary must have forgotten to give me the message.” I was

furious that she would abuse my credibility so casually. When I finally mustered the courage to bring it to her attention, she couldn't see why it was a "big deal" because I would never meet the people she was talking to anyway.

My husband and I were hired as part of a "two-body problem" – we both joined the same department. One day I was waiting in the associate dean's outer office while his secretary took in a form to be signed for me, and I heard him say to her, "Oh yes, this was the case where we hired X, and to get him we had to hire his girlfriend, too." I told several people in my department, including the chair, about the dean's comment. Ultimately, I was reassured that his statement was untrue; however, it was still disturbing. That's not the kind of thing a dean should say.

In meetings where I am the only woman, or one of very few women, I have noticed that sometimes after I speak there is a small pause and the conversation just picks up again as if I had not said anything. I don't notice this happening to the men in the meetings.

I have been at meetings where a topic is being discussed at length, and without interruption, by men. Then a woman faculty says something, and the committee chair says, "Well, I think we've talked about this long enough; let's move on." I think this sends a clear message to the woman that her opinion is not considered important.

In a recent meeting I expressed an opinion that I thought was in keeping with the discussion. One of the male committee members turned to me and said, "Did you forget to take your Prozac today?" I was so offended that I stopped going to those meetings after that.

As a support staff person I participated in a group project with graduate students and faculty. At one point I made what I considered to be a significant suggestion. The group talked about it, then dismissed my idea. Later, a draft of the project was given to a senior male professor for his comments. He made the same suggestion that I had made weeks earlier. The project was revised according to his comments, and his viewpoint was termed "brilliant." When the final version of the project was completed, all the graduate students and faculty involved were mentioned in the acknowledgements section. My name was omitted, although I had contributed more extensively than many of the others.

One day a colleague asked me to go out to lunch. After some perfunctory talk about science, he asked me if I wanted to go to his place for a "nooner." After I figured out what he was talking about (never having heard the word before) and recovered my composure, I said no that I was married and not interested. He seemed embarrassed and didn't talk to me for months afterward. I fretted a lot about the incident partly because it was so unpleasant to have that kind of interaction enter my work world, but also because he was to vote on my tenure a few months later.

I recently attended a reception and ran into the university's president, who is an avid carpenter and builder in his spare time. We were talking about the use of a stud detector to find studs in a wall when another man joined the conversation, pointed at me and said to my president, "She sure needs a stud detector," followed by a lascivious laugh. While I was left speechless and blushing, my kind-hearted president quickly retorted, "She wouldn't be where she is if she didn't have a pretty good stud avoider." I was grateful for my president's supportive quip, since it gave me a moment to regain my dignity and composure.

One day a male full professor asked me if my husband and I were planning on having any more children. I said, "Probably." He then told me that I should wait until I got tenure. What I didn't tell him was that I had learned that very morning that I was, unexpectedly, pregnant with my second child. I felt his comment was a threat, but it was too late to do anything about having another baby!

A male full professor came into my office minutes before an important review was scheduled to begin. After asking if I was nervous he asked, "By the way, are you pregnant?" I tried to let him know his question was out of line, but he was oblivious and claimed someone had told him I was pregnant. When I asked who, he said, "Oh, some girl at a party." A year earlier he had told me that the woman who used to have my job, but left for another university, never would have gotten tenure because nobody knew who she was: "She was on leave. She had babies." Later, I learned that he had asked a tenured female colleague the same question about a month after her third year review. He again claimed that "someone" had told him they had seen her in loose clothes and wondered if she was pregnant.

Recently, someone brought in a birthday cake for a faculty member. When I took a slice, someone jokingly said, "Now make sure and leave some for everyone else." I am a large person, but that's my business. Everyone was having a slice of cake. I was furious to be singled out in this way but couldn't think of anything to say.

In a discussion with a more senior male graduate student and two male professors, I was following and learning, but not contributing a lot. One of the professors finally said to me, "Your eyes are so blue today!" I think he meant to be kind, but it felt like he was saying, "I know you can't understand this hard stuff that we guys are talking about, but I don't want you to feel left out, so I'll make you feel good by saying something nice about your appearance."

Recently, a male graduate student standing next to me on the elevator said, "You're wearing a dress!" I said, "Uh, yes." He continued, "You never wore dresses last semester." I replied, "Yes, I did." He actually argued with me. Mercifully, we arrived at our floor and I was able to terminate the conversation. I felt so angry: I knew he would never comment on a male professor's clothing. Who did he think he was to tell me he knew better than I did what I had worn the previous semester? I was a professor speaking to a graduate student, yet he still felt free to do this.