

Women ‘slipping down career ladder’ in Canadian universities

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Women are much less likely to be reappointed as faculty deans than men, says a new study of hiring at Canadian universities.

While recruitment of new deans at Canadian universities largely reflects the overall gender balance of its academic sector, a [University of Toronto](#) researcher has found that women were far less likely to be reappointed once their five-year office had concluded.

Analysing almost 300 appointment and reappointment announcements from the Canadian publication *University Affairs* between 2011 and 2016, Eric Lavigne, a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, found that 58 per cent of appointments for dean positions went to men and 42 per cent were awarded to women.

However, 71 per cent of reappointments were men and just 29 per cent were women, says Mr Lavigne, a former associate dean at Toronto.

That higher attrition rate for women than men suggested many female academics were choosing not to continue in these demanding middle-management roles, despite having the opportunity to do another term of office, Mr Lavigne told *Times Higher Education*.

“Women are obtaining these positions in the first instance, but these roles do not seem to hold enough of an attraction for women deans to stay on,” he said.

This may suggest that women “do not see the point” of continuing in middle management roles that traditionally require long hours, possibly because it may clash with other commitments such as childcare or other caring duties, Mr Lavigne said.

“It seems these roles require a certain type of person and it’s perhaps difficult to imagine yourself doing them long term if you have children,” he said.

“However, there is something inherently unfair about designing a job in this way,” he added, arguing that greater efforts to make these positions more family-friendly were needed.

In his study of the “maple career ladder” in an as-yet-unpublished paper, Mr Lavigne also found that ethnic-minority academics were less likely to be reappointed dean than their white peers.

While one in five (20 per cent) faculty deanships went to ethnic-minority academics, they accounted for only 3 per cent of reappointments, suggesting that deanship appointments were “still gendered, but acutely raced”.

The appointment of deans in Canada remains a largely domestic affair, with 95 per cent of academic hires and 96 per cent of administrative appointments going to those with experience of Canadian universities, Mr Lavigne added.

Some 55 per cent of academic-related deanships went to those within the same university, while this figure rose to 91 per cent for administration-related deanships.

“Even if we claim to be looking internationally for deans, Canadian universities hire Canadian,” said Mr Lavigne.

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