WEAKENED ROLE of science advisers creates "crisis" from White House to Capitol Hill, report says

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT presses Wisconsin to open scholarship program to white students

DEPUTY SECRETARY joins exodus from U.S. Education Department

COLLEGES would be required to teach the Constitution, under provision tucked into spending bill

NOTRE DAME PROFESSOR wins Grawemeyer Award for religion

LEWIS U. loses volleyball title and 26 scholarships, faces additional NCAA penalties

PENN PROFESSOR to be sentenced for sexual assault

A WOMAN IN A MAN'S DISCIPLINE
As a graduate student and now as the only tenured female professor of economics at Stanford, Susan C. Athey (above) has fought gender bias in her own way. Read the transcript of a live discussion of the issues raised in this article. You can also comment on the issues raised in this article, in Colloquy.

FOR LOVE OF TEACHING
On two-year-college faculties, the proportion of women is far higher than at the research institutions where many of them received their doctorates.

The NEXT 4 YEARS
Four experts discuss the issues in higher-education policy that they expect to dominate President
COMIC LITERACY
A recent book from Yale University Press displays the cartoonist Chris Ware's intellect and relentless curiosity.

Also of Interest
MEN AND WOMEN IN ACADEME
A chart in the 2004-5 issue of The Chronicle's Almanac of Higher Education offers statistics on the sex, race or ethnicity, and citizenship status of faculty members at American colleges and universities.

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In graduate school, Susan C. Athey's male classmates began playing basketball and working out together in the gym. Unwilling to be left out, she took up weight lifting.

"I was definitely a lot smaller than they were," says the professor, with a laugh. She didn't want to let her status as one of the few women in the
economics Ph.D. program at Stanford University in the early 1990s exclude her from opportunities to make contacts.

Ms. Athey has since put away the barbells but has become the only female tenured professor in the economics department at Stanford. She had received her Ph.D. there, and then started her first job at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at age 24. After six years, in 2001, she got tenure at MIT and, shortly afterward, was hired by Stanford.

She is in a male-dominated discipline -- in 2003 only about 12 percent of the tenured professors in Ph.D.-granting economics departments were women, according to the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession. Ms. Athey says the secret of her success is that she works hard to change the stereotype of the economist.

For her, that has not meant taking on the causes of all women. Instead Ms. Athey has focused on gaining the trust and respect of her mostly male colleagues, and carefully choosing when to push for gender equity.

In many ways, Ms. Athey was not typical. From the beginning of her career, she was an exceptionally promising scholar. And just as she doesn't represent all female scholars, her approach to success may not work for everyone.

Gavin Wright, an economics professor at Stanford who helped recruit Ms. Athey from MIT, says her gender has never been a big issue. "She seems like one of the guys," he says. Still, he adds, she is "something of an activist."

For example, Mr. Wright remembers, not long after her arrival at Stanford, Ms. Athey organized a brunch for the women in the department, including graduate students and junior professors. She was not shy about asking the department to chip in money for the event. But she often joins the men in nearby offices for lunch. She also speaks up freely in senior-faculty meetings and on committees where she is the only woman in the room.

"She's just as blunt and outspoken and rigorous in her department as men," says Mr. Wright, "and yet she feels there really ought to be special attention to women."

**Getting Women Noticed**

Ms. Athey brings that sensibility to her work both inside and outside of the department. As a member of the economics hiring committee, she tries to make sure that deserving people, including women, are not passed over. "You can inadvertently exclude women" by taking a very narrow view of what methodological approach you accept, she says.

In economics, she explains, fewer women are in the more theoretical subfields, which involve analyzing mathematical models. Microeconomic theory, one of her own specialties, is one of them. She also focuses on industrial organization, a more applied area that uses theories to answer policy questions and attracts more women.
"I have found that arguing for broad talent searches opens up the field to the best candidates, which often include women," she says.

The advantage gained by male graduate students who shared the basketball court with faculty members was clear while Ms. Athey was in graduate school. Many of those same male faculty members hired the graduate students they played with as their research assistants.

Rather than focusing on being left out, Ms. Athey decided to do something about it. She did some research on mentors that became her first published academic paper. It explored the consequences of mentors on workers and their workplaces. That advisory role is more likely to occur between people who have something in common, whether it be basketball, professional interests, or simply the same gender.

"The concerns about gender really got my career started," she says.

Later, when she entered the job market, she continued to experience some challenges that she suspected had to do with her gender. For example, because of her outgoing and fun-loving personality, which stood out in the buttoned-up discipline, she says some people also questioned how serious she was. "Was I too bubbly to be a theorist?" she says. "You don't think of many theorists as frivolous and carefree."

While such reactions made her feel self-conscious, they also made her more determined to prove herself. "It was helpful to realize that difference might be perceived negatively," says Ms. Athey. By establishing strong professional credentials, she thought, "basically, whatever I do will be accepted."

While Ms. Athey's style is usually to work behind the scenes for change, she recently made a very public statement about gender without saying a word. She was responsible for appointing members to an influential committee of the Econometrics Society, one of the two major professional associations in economics. She chose 16 women and no men.

"It's a terrific committee," was all she would say about the composition of the group, which is responsible for choosing papers for the society's annual meeting in 2006. "It's got leading scholars in every area."