

Mind The Gap: Women's Leadership In Hampton Roads



MIND THE GAP: WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN HAMPTON ROADS

A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half our homes.
– Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer, Facebook, and Founder of LeanIn.org

During June and July of 2018, the Pew Research Center surveyed Americans about their attitudes toward women and whether women would make effective leaders. The survey responses, while not entirely surprising, provided a stark contrast with the reality of women in leadership positions in the United States. Not only did a majority of respondents state that they would like to see more women in leadership positions, 59% indicated that there are too few women in high political office and in top executive business positions. More than two-thirds of respondents indicated that more women in leadership positions would improve the quality of life “some” or “a lot” for all Americans.

There was, of course, a lack of unanimity with this perspective across the political spectrum. While almost 80% of Democratic or Democratic-leaning respondents believed that there were too few women in high political office or top executive business positions, only about one-third of Republican or Republican-leaning respondents voiced similar opinions. Among the more conservative respondents, however, there were strikingly dissimilar responses by gender. While about one-quarter of Republican or Republican-leaning men thought there were too few women in high political office, this view was held by almost half of Republican or Republican-leaning women. The same split emerged with respect to top business positions. At the same time, nearly half of the men and two-thirds of the women who identified as Republican or Republican-leaning thought it was easier for men to get elected to high political office or be appointed to an executive business position.

Most participants in the Pew survey saw no difference between the skills of women and men in areas that are relevant to corporate and political leadership – from being persuasive and working well under pressure, to providing fair pay and mentoring employees (Table 1). A notable exception was when it came to being compassionate and empathetic; 61% felt women were better in this area. **The minority of respondents who did see a difference in the abilities of female and male leaders consistently ranked women's abilities higher.**



The relative advantage of women was most pronounced in “creating a safe and respectful workplace” and “serving as a role model for children.” Men were given an edge only in “being willing to take risks” and “negotiating profitable deals.” If women and men are viewed as having similar leadership qualities and many Americans believe that there are too few women in senior leadership positions, this raises the question: Why does this gap continue to persist?

TABLE 1

**WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP SURVEY, 2018:
VIEWS ON WOMEN’S AND MEN’S LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

	Women are better	Men are better	No difference
Creating a safe and respectful workplace	43%	5%	52%
Valuing people from different backgrounds	35%	3%	62%
Considering the societal impact of business decisions	33%	8%	58%
Mentoring young employees	33%	9%	56%
Providing fair pay and good benefits	28%	5%	66%
Negotiating profitable deals	9%	28%	61%

Source: 2018 Women and Leadership Survey, Pew Research Center, September: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/09/20/women-and-leadership-2018/>

According to the latest estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau for 2017, women comprised approximately 52% of the U.S. population ages 25 and over. On average, women were slightly more likely than men to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher (31.2% vs. 30.6%), but there were marked differences across age cohorts. For those ages 25 to 34, 38.5% of women and 30.4% of men held a bachelor’s degree or higher. For 31- to 35-year-olds, the percentages were 37.8% and 31.8% for women and men, respectively. Only when we examine the 65 and older population do we observe more men (31.5%) than women (21.5%) having completed a college or university degree.

In Hampton Roads, 31.8% of women ages 25 and over held a college or university degree in 2017, compared to 29.7% of men in the same age range – an achievement gap that is a bit broader than in the United States as whole. Yet these averages obscure significant variations in educational attainment by race and gender. As illustrated in Graph 1, black or African American, Hispanic and white women were more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or

higher than their male counterparts in 2017. If income is strongly influenced by education, one might reasonably conclude that women, on average, should earn more in Hampton Roads than men, but this is not the case.

At every level of educational attainment, women typically earned less than men in 2017. In Hampton Roads, median income for women with bachelor’s degrees was \$41,486 – 67.5% of the median income for men with the same level of education (\$61,416). The earnings gap was even wider for women with a graduate education. Their median income was \$53,551, which was just 61.6% of that for men with a graduate or professional degree (\$86,984) – an annual disparity of \$33,433.

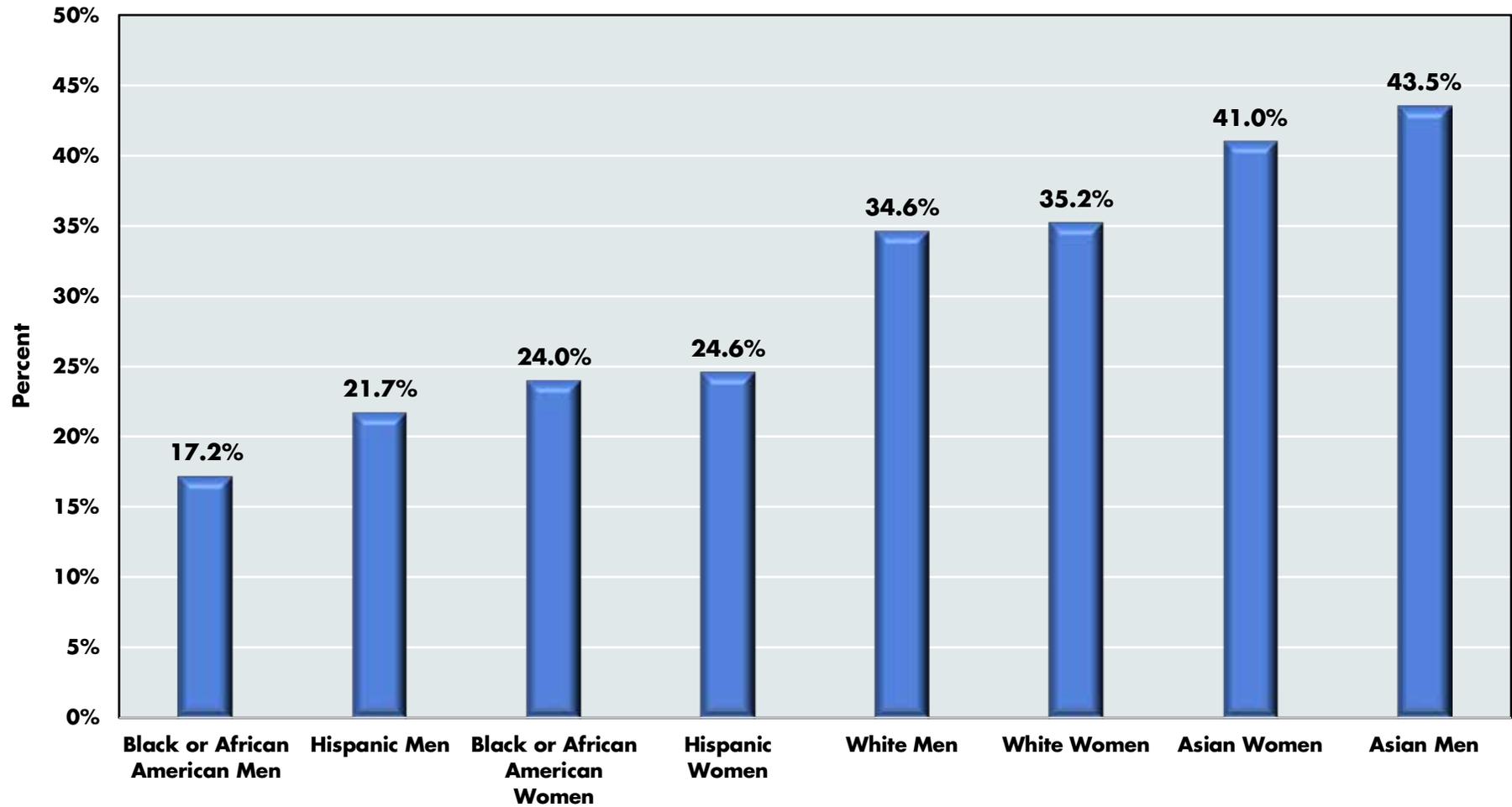
There are many different reasons for this gap in earnings – including a higher proportion of women who work part time and the fact that women may, on average, work more often in jobs (caregiving and education, for example) that have lower levels of compensation. Men’s earnings may also be higher due to the tendency of males, on average, to work longer hours and in jobs that may be more physically demanding, dangerous or in harsher environmental conditions.¹ Women interrupt their careers for children more than men and there are well-documented penalties in terms of wages and income as a result. Recent evidence suggests that while the gender wage gap declined significantly from 1980 to 2010, these declines have been much slower at the top of the wage distribution.² This yields the somewhat ironic conclusion that the more successful women are, on average, the more they fall behind men’s wages.

The disparity in earnings also reflects the women’s leadership gap. In nearly all lines of work, the proportion of women at the highest levels of leadership is significantly lower than the proportion of women in mid- and lower-level positions. The relative absence of women has ripple effects on the talent pipeline, as women mentors are in relatively short supply.

1 <http://www.aei.org/publication/details-in-bls-report-suggest-that-earnings-differentials-by-gender-can-be-explained-by-age-marital-status-children-hours-worked/>.
2 Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Khan, 2017, “The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 55 (3), 789-865.

GRAPH 1

HAMPTON ROADS, BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER: RACE AND GENDER, 2017



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2013-2017, 5-Year Estimates

In Hampton Roads, the women’s leadership gap is readily apparent. Although it has narrowed considerably over the past several decades, there are still far fewer women than men in positions of power. Women comprise less than one-quarter of the membership of the regional boards of directors for both the Peninsula and Hampton Roads Chambers of Commerce. The 2019 Inside Business Power List recognizes 70 men, and just 30 women, as “important to the future of Hampton Roads.” The Inside Business emeritus list – reserved for those individuals whose “tenure in our community is not only implicit, it’s a valuable ongoing contribution” – is even more lopsided; only 14 of its 83 names belong to women.³

TABLE 2			
SELECTED HAMPTON ROADS BUSINESS LEADERS BY GENDER, 2019			
	Men	Women	Percentage of Women
Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors	56	18	24.3%
Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors	27	8	22.9%
2019 Inside Business Power List	70	30	30.0%

Sources: Hampton Roads Chamber, board of directors (May 2019); Virginia Peninsula Chamber, board of directors (May 2019); and Inside Business, “The Power Issue” (May 2019)

This chapter seeks to investigate the extent of the women’s leadership gap in Hampton Roads, its underlying causes and what can be done to narrow it. We focus on four key fields: politics, business, law and higher education, drawing upon publicly available data as well as our own conversations with some of Hampton Roads’ women leaders.



³ “The 2019 Inside Business Power List” (May 17, 2019), <https://pilotonline.com/inside-business/special-reports/power-issue/>.

Politics: Gains In Representation, Though Challenges Remain

2018 was a milestone year for women in politics throughout the United States. A record number of women ran for elected office, at all levels of government, in the November elections. As illustrated in Table 3, more women than ever before are now serving in the U.S. Congress (127, or 23.7% of all members), including three newly elected representatives from Virginia – Abigail Spanberger (Virginia 7th), Jennifer Wexton (Virginia 10th) and Elaine Luria (Virginia 2nd, which covers parts of Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore).

This accomplishment is all the more notable in that only four women have ever represented Virginia in the U.S. Congress, in all years previously – Barbara Comstock (2015–2019), Thelma Drake (2005–2009, also from the 2nd District), Jo Ann Davis (2001–2007, from the 1st District, including northern Hampton Roads) and Leslie Byrne (1993–1995). Women’s gains in the Virginia General Assembly were also impressive. The proportion of seats held by women rose from 19.3% to 26.4% (37 of 140 seats).

TABLE 3

WOMEN IN ELECTED OFFICE: UNITED STATES AND VIRGINIA, 2019

	UNITED STATES			VIRGINIA		
	Total seats	Total held by women	Percent	Total seats	Total held by women	Percent
U.S. Congress	535	127	23.7%	13	3	23.1%
U.S. Senate	100	25	25.0%	2	0	0.0%
U.S. House	435	102	23.4%	11	3	27.3%
Statewide Executive	312	86	27.6%	3	0	0.0%
State Legislature	7,383	2,117	28.7%	140	37	26.4%
State Senate	1,972	504	25.6%	40	10	25.0%
State House	5,411	1,613	29.8%	100	27	27.0%
Mayors	1,365	297	21.8%	18	6	33.3%

Sources: Center for American Women and Politics and the Virginia Public Access Project, 2019. Mayors are for cities with populations of 30,000 or greater only.

Table 4 shows the proportion of Hampton Roads districts now represented by women is slightly higher, at 27.6% (8 of 29 seats). Our region’s state senators are Mamie Locke (Hampton) and Louise Lucas (Portsmouth). Our delegates are Emily Brewer (Smithfield), Kelly Fowler (Virginia Beach), Cia Price (Newport News), Cheryl Turpin (Virginia Beach), Brenda Pogge (Norge) and Jeion Ward (Hampton). Notably, after a recount in the race for the 94th District, Shelly Simonds (Newport News) received exactly the same number of votes as David Yancey, losing the seat only after a random drawing broke the tie.

TABLE 4			
WOMEN IN ELECTED OFFICE FROM HAMPTON ROADS, 2019			
	HAMPTON ROADS		
	Total seats	Total held by women	Percent
U.S. Congress	6	1	16.7%
U.S. Senate	2	0	0.0%
U.S. House	4	1	25.0%
Statewide Executive	3	0	0.0%
State Legislature	29	8	27.6%
State Senate	9	2	22.2%
State House	20	6	30.0%
Mayors (Cities > 30,000)	7	1	14.3%

Sources: Center for American Women and Politics and the Virginia Public Access Project, 2019. Mayors are for cities with populations of 30,000 or greater only.

Virginia women have made great strides in representation at the state and national levels, although the proportion of female officeholders, in all categories, still lies well below the percentage of women in the Commonwealth. Hampton Roads’ city council chambers are somewhat more equitably populated. Half, or four of the eight Norfolk City Council seats are held by women (Courtney Doyle, Angelia Williams Graves, Mamie Johnson and Andria McClellan), while women do in fact represent a majority on the Newport News City Council, holding four of seven seats (Vice Mayor Tina

Vick, Sandra Nelson Cherry, Sharon Scott and Patricia Woodbury). Linda Johnson is the only woman now serving on the Suffolk City Council – but she is also the mayor, a position she has held since 2006. She follows in the footsteps of Virginia Beach’s longest-serving mayor, Meyera Oberndorf (1988–2009); as well as Ann Kilgore (1963–1971 and 1974–1978), Mamie Locke (2000–2004) and Molly Ward (2008–2013) in Hampton; and Jessie Ratley (1986–1990) in Newport News.

Research shows that women win U.S. elections at about the same rate as men. Women, however, have traditionally been less likely to run for office, for a number of different reasons – including fundraising hurdles, insufficient support from power brokers and party insiders, and perhaps a self-confidence gap.⁴ Organizations such as Emerge America, VoteRunLead, Higher Heights for America and She Should Run have coalesced to support and train women candidates within the past several years, contributing in no small way to these candidates’ successes in the 2018 elections.

Suffolk Mayor Linda Johnson told us that city leaders first encouraged her husband, Jesse, and other men to run for an open City Council seat in 2000. After none of the men expressed interest in running, she decided to step up herself – although she had not previously considered a political career, and only two women to that point had ever served on the Suffolk City Council. Johnson has since won five elections, including three as Suffolk’s first directly elected mayor, and she has presided over a remarkable phase of population growth and economic development in her city.

Daun Hester – who has run successful campaigns as a city councilwoman, General Assembly delegate and now city treasurer in Norfolk – reiterated the challenges that women politicians face breaking into the formal and informal circles of power that remain largely dominated by white men. She emphasized the importance of relationships in the political process, and thus the importance of women in positions of influence supporting each other. She cited the cooperation and collegiality she experienced among female members of both parties in the General Assembly as a positive example.

4 See “Research and Scholarship,” Center for American Women and Politics, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/research>; and Saskia Brechenmacher, “Tackling Women’s Underrepresentation in U.S. Politics,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (February 2018), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_323_Brechenmacher_Gender_web.pdf.

The governments of Hampton Roads' seven cities can point to numerous women in leadership posts, including as city managers, deputy city managers and department heads. We found that women in Hampton Roads generally hold one-third to one-half of these key positions. Three of the seven cities' city managers are currently women – Mary Bunting in Hampton, Cynthia Rohlf in Newport News and Lydia Pettis Patton in Portsmouth. Bunting, who has served in Hampton's top administrative post since 2010, told us that the women's leadership gap in city government may be somewhat narrower than in other fields because of the profession's inherent emphasis on reflecting and serving the entire community. She remarked that becoming a city manager never seemed out of the ordinary to her, as she is literally following in the footsteps of her mother, Darlene Burcham, who served as director of social services in Hampton, deputy city manager in Norfolk and city manager in Roanoke. Even so, national survey data suggest that the gender gap among city managers remains quite wide, with women holding just 20 percent of chief executive positions in local government throughout the United States.⁵



⁵ "Will 2019 Be a Breakthrough Year for Women in Local Government Leadership?" ICMA (Jan. 23, 2019), <https://icma.org/blog-posts/will-2019-be-breakthrough-year-women-local-government-leadership>.

Business: Some Good News, Some Opportunities For Improvement

It's been more than 40 years since Rosabeth Moss Kanter published "Men and Women of the Corporation," a landmark study that identified the structural barriers that kept many working women in low-level managerial or secretarial posts. In The New York Times Magazine earlier this year, journalist Emily Bazelon noted the dramatic progress that women executives have made since then, "achieving higher positions, closing the gender wage gap and moving into male-dominated fields" – but also how this progress has largely stalled since the 1990s, especially at the highest ranks of leadership.⁶

National statistics and survey data throw Bazelon's observations into sharp relief. Since 2015, LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company have published a comprehensive annual study on the state of women in corporate America. (LeanIn.Org is a nonprofit organization dedicated "to offering women the ongoing inspiration and support to help them achieve their goals"; McKinsey & Company is a worldwide management consulting firm.) Each year, their depiction of the corporate pipeline has shown how women remain dramatically outnumbered in senior leadership. Women hold nearly half (48%) of all entry-level positions, but they represent just 38% of managers, 29% of vice presidents and 22% of top (or "C-Suite") executives. The leadership gap is wider still in Fortune 1000 companies, where women comprised just 18% of all C-Suite executives in 2016. Table 5 shows that most of these top female executives were either chief human resources officers or chief marketing officers – not chief executive officers, chief operating officers or chief financial officers. In 2015, there were four men named John, Robert, William or James for every woman chief executive (of any name) in an S&P 1500 firm.⁷

⁶ Emily Bazelon, "A Seat at the Head of the Table," The New York Times Magazine (Feb. 21, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/02/21/magazine/women-corporate-america.html>.

⁷ Justin Wolfers, "Fewer Women Run Big Companies Than Men Named John," The New York Times (March 2, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/03/upshot/fewer-women-run-big-companies-than-men-named-john.html>.

TABLE 5	
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES: FORTUNE 1000 COMPANIES, 2016	
TITLE	U.S. (2016)
Chairman of the Board	6.7%
Chief Executive Officer	6.9%
Chief Operating Officer	7.2%
Chief Financial Officer	8.8%
Chief Revenue Officer	12.5%
Chief Technology Officer	12.9%
Chief Strategy Officer	20.0%
Chief Information Officer	20.7%
Chief Legal Officer	31.9%
Chief Compliance Officer	36.4%
Chief Marketing Officer	48.0%
Chief Human Resources Officer	62.2%
All C-level executives	18.0%

Source: Fortune, "There Are Hardly Any Women Leading Fortune 1000 Companies," <http://fortune.com/2016/09/06/fortune-1000-still-led-by-men/>

We acknowledge that we are not able to provide a full portrait of the corporate pipelines of Hampton Roads’ three Fortune 500 companies (Dollar Tree, Norfolk Southern and Huntington Ingalls) due to data limitations and confidentiality concerns. Publicly available data, however, allow us to examine the composition of these corporations’ boards of directors. As illustrated in Table 6, one perspective is that women appear to be an unambiguous minority among the appointed members of these boards. Another perspective is that the proportional representation of women in two of the three companies in Table 6 is higher than the national average. Lastly, one could surmise that, in all cases, the representation of women on these boards, locally and nationally, is well below the percentage of women in the overall population. All three perspectives can simultaneously be true and a challenge to do better.

TABLE 6			
MEN AND WOMEN APPOINTED TO BOARDS OF DIRECTORS: FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES IN HAMPTON ROADS, 2019			
	Men	Women	Percent of Women
Dollar Tree	13	2	15.4%
Norfolk Southern	11	3	27.3%
Huntington Ingalls	11	3	27.3%
U.S. Average	--	--	22.5%

Sources: Wall Street Journal Co. Profiles (2019), Bloomberg Co. Profiles (2019) and Alliance for Board Diversity, "Missing Pieces Report." Data as of May 29, 2019.

We spoke with Jennifer Boykin, president of Newport News Shipbuilding and executive vice president of Huntington Ingalls in Newport News, at her company’s headquarters, where her portrait stands out as the newest, and the only female, face at the end of a long hallway showcasing the visages of men who led Newport News Shipbuilding for more than 130 years. The past 10 to 15 years in the company, Boykin said, have been distinguished by a renewed emphasis on diversity and inclusion. She told us that efforts to increase the hiring and promotion of women (and members of other diverse groups) have borne the most fruit since the company shifted from using primarily outcome-based measures to, more recently, making sure that initial pools of interviewees and hiring panels were also diverse.

The payoff, Boykin said, is a leadership team that incorporates multiple perspectives and is flexible and open to new ways of thinking. She observes that male leaders, too, may be more comfortable asking questions or proposing new ideas in a more diverse group; this has been particularly helpful as the company has tackled new challenges associated with its ongoing digital transformation. Boykin’s observations correspond with research from McKinsey & Company, which has found that meaningful strategies of diversity and inclusion can be a source of competitive advantage. Specifically, McKinsey found that “companies in the top-quartile for gender diversity on their

executive teams were 21% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile.”⁸

Alongside Huntington Ingalls, the health care providers Sentara, Riverside, Bon Secours, Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters and Chesapeake Regional Healthcare are among our region’s top employers. We found the health care systems’ executive teams often included a higher proportion of women than those of other comparably sized companies. Sentara Healthcare has seven female vice presidents (and eight male vice presidents), and five of the 13 Sentara hospitals are headed by women. Amy Carrier has served as president of the Bon Secours Hampton Roads Health System since October 2018, and at CHKD, eight of 14 vice presidents are women. These numbers correspond with, or exceed, national statistics; women represented 34.5% of all U.S. hospital executives in 2018.⁹

Sentara Healthcare senior corporate vice president Mary Blunt notes that the health care field has traditionally employed a high proportion of women, in many different capacities. She herself began her career as a physical therapist. Moreover, nonprofit entities of all kinds have a high rate of female leadership, representing a significant exception to the women’s leadership gap.¹⁰ Blunt told us that the nature of large health care providers, which necessarily serve the entire public, has made them particularly cognizant of issues related to diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias. When we spoke last spring, Sentara was in the process of adding the new position of chief diversity officer to its executive team. And Blunt’s own assessment that women leaders tend to be more intuitive and compassionate, while just as sharp analytically as their male counterparts, may help to explain the success of many women in this field.

8 McKinsey & Company, “Delivering through Diversity” (January 2018), 8, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>.

9 Halle Tecco and Michelle Huang, “What 600+ women told us about working in healthcare in 2018,” <https://rockhealth.com/reports/women-in-healthcare-2018/>.

10 A recent survey of foundation boards shows that 73 percent are led by female executives. See “Foundation Board Leadership: A Closer Look at Foundation Board Responses to Leading with Intent 2017,” p. 17, <https://leadingwithintent.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LWI2017-Foundations-Report.pdf>.

Law: Concerns About Equity, Efforts To Improve

Last December, the prominent law firm Paul, Weiss, whose headquarters are in New York City, did not receive the warm response it had undoubtedly hoped for to a LinkedIn post congratulating its new partner class. The post displayed the portraits of 12 young, white attorneys, all but one of whom were male. Social media backlash was swift, and the firm eventually expressed regret for the “gender and racial imbalance” of its 2019 class. Paul, Weiss chairman Brad Karp did note that the class was something of an outlier, and that the firm’s overall partner-level membership was more diverse than that of many of its peers. It’s no secret, however, that white men continue to dominate the profession of law, and elite law firms in particular.¹¹

About half of all law school graduates today are women, and a recent McKinsey & Company survey shows that women represent just under half of all law firm associates. But female associates are far less likely to reach the first level of partnership than their male counterparts. For every 100 women, 141 men are promoted to partner. Thus, only 19% of all equity partners are women, a dramatic narrowing of the professional pipeline.¹²

The pipeline may be even narrower in our region. At the end of May 2019, we examined the websites of Hampton Roads’ six largest law firms (as identified by Virginia’s Largest Law Firms 2018), and we found that women generally comprise more than half of all junior attorneys and associates. Yet the proportion of women partners, members or shareholders did not exceed 19% at any of the six firms. The Hampton Roads offices of Williams Mullen came closest (17.6%, or 6 female/28 male partners), followed by the Hampton Roads offices of Vandeventer Black (16.7%, or 5 female/25 male partners) and Kaufman & Canoles (15.1%, or 8 female/45 male members). The Virginia Beach office of Troutman Sanders has 11 male partners only. All six

11 Noam Scheiber and John Eligon, “Elite Law Firm’s All-White Partner Class Stirs Debate on Diversity,” *The New York Times* (Jan. 27, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/27/us/paul-weiss-partner-diversity-law-firm.html>; Tracy Jan, “The Legal Profession is Diversifying. But not at the top,” *The Washington Post* (Nov. 27, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/11/27/the-legal-profession-is-diversifying-but-not-at-the-top/>.

12 McKinsey & Company, “Women in Law Firms,” see <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/gender%20equality/women%20in%20law%20firms/women-in-law-firms-final-103017.ashx>.

firms employ approximately the same proportion of women attorneys across all levels (between 22% and 31%). We recognize that there may be internal variation in employment data from the public-facing websites; however, the publicly available data suggest that women are underrepresented at senior levels in the legal profession.

For the past 19 years, Virginia Business, in collaboration with the Virginia Bar Association, has published a list of the Commonwealth’s “legal elite.” The 2018 list was based on a poll of more than 14,000 attorneys, who were asked to select “the best lawyers” in 18 different practice categories. Among the Hampton Roads attorneys who made the list, men dominated 14 categories – by especially high margins in lucrative fields such as business law, civil litigation and real estate/land use (see Table 7). Notably, the “young lawyers” category was evenly split between men and women.

We reached out to attorneys at all of the law firms and acknowledge the gracious reception of those who responded to our inquiries. At Willcox Savage, partners Lisa Murphy and Cher Wynkoop (who are both recognized as Virginia Business legal elites) underscored the great investment of time and energy that it takes to become a law firm partner, which can be difficult to manage while raising children or attending to other responsibilities outside of work. They agreed that a key challenge for law firms today is not so much recruiting, but rather retaining female talent, and that some associates can be unprepared for the degree of competition and social assertiveness that the profession demands. Murphy emphasized the importance of mentoring junior colleagues and Wynkoop noted that the presence of women partners in a firm tends to beget more women partners, in the sense of offering multiple role models and potential paths for success.

At Vandeventer Black, Michael Sterling, managing partner, and Deborah Casey, partner and executive board member, emphasized their firm’s commitment to diversity and the proactive steps it takes to recruit and retain talent that reflects this ideal. Casey, who chairs the firm’s diversity committee (and is also recognized as a Virginia Business legal elite), remarked that law firm life can be challenging to combine with family life – but also that Vandeventer Black offers flexible options (such as the option to “step back” from partner-level involvement for a limited period) to make this possible.

Sterling noted that this kind of flexibility is increasingly sought by women and men alike – an indicator of generational change within the profession.

TABLE 7
HAMPTON ROADS’ “LEGAL ELITE” BY GENDER, 2018

	Men	Women
Alternative dispute resolution	8	3
Appellate law	4	0
Bankruptcy/ Creditors’ rights	17	4
Business law	25	3
Civil litigation	31	1
Construction law	12	3
Corporate counsel	11	5
Criminal law	14	0
Environmental law	10	2
Family law/ Domestic relations	8	10
Health law	6	8
Intellectual property	8	1
Labor/Employment law	18	8
Legal services/Pro bono	1	3
Legislative/Regulatory/ Administrative	9	2
Real estate/Land use	27	4
Taxes/Estates/ Trusts/Elder law	17	9
Young lawyers (under 40)	8	8

Source: Virginia Business, Nov. 30, 2018, <http://www.virginiabusiness.com/reports/article/changing-rules#>

We also spoke with several women who work, or who have worked, in multiple law firms in our region, and who asked that their names not be used for this report. They commented on the numerous obstacles that women face in achieving seniority at large firms, beginning with the long workdays and high expectations for collections and billable hours. We heard that our region's networks of power and influence remain challenging for women to penetrate, and that firm leaders too often give plum assignments to other attorneys "who look like them." We also heard, however, that the experiences of women at these firms has improved significantly, if slowly, over time. One female attorney recalled that, early in her career, it was not unusual for male colleagues to question her very presence at the firm. Another pointed out that technology – in particular, the ability to send email and to work extended hours from home – has introduced a certain flexibility to the work of high-powered attorneys (if also heightened expectations for availability) that wasn't possible in the past.

The women who spoke to us off the record generally agreed that our region's law firms would like to "do the right thing" and become more inclusive, although not all have arrived at a successful formula for doing so. At a bare minimum, firm websites tout policies that affirm their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Some firms advertise targeted fellowship programs, diversity or women's committees, or cooperation with relevant organizations, such as the Virginia Women Attorneys Association.

In the end, pressure from clients may be the most meaningful impetus for reform. A growing number of large clients have become reluctant to work with firms that are not diverse; it is increasingly common for RFPs (requests for proposals) to include specific expectations in this regard. One outcome of last year's Paul, Weiss controversy was an open letter to law firms from the general counsels and chief legal officers of more than 170 companies, including Lyft, Heineken USA and Booz Allen Hamilton. The letter reiterated that these companies would "direct our substantial outside counsel to those law firms that manifest results with respect to diversity and inclusion, in addition to providing the highest degree of quality representation."¹³

¹³ Christine Simmons, "170 GCs Pen Open Letter to Law Firms; Improve on Diversity or Lose Our Business," *The American Lawyer* (Jan. 27, 2019), <https://www.law.com/americanlawyer/2019/01/27/170-gcs-pen-open-letter-to-law-firms-improve-on-diversity-or-lose-our-business/>.

Higher Education: Uneven Gains

Hampton Roads is home to no fewer than 10 well-regarded institutions of higher education – two community college systems, seven public and private universities, and a graduate medical school. They are among our region's largest employers, educating thousands of students each year. A women's leadership gap is evident here, too, reflecting broader trends in the arena of higher education.

The higher education pipeline bears some resemblance to the pipeline of law firms discussed previously. Women now earn a majority of all U.S. graduate degrees granted each year, and they represent a majority of all university instructors and lecturers (non-tenure track, often part-time positions), and also assistant professors. Yet Table 8 shows the proportion of women among associate professors, who have earned tenure, slips to 44.8%, and the share of women among full professors falls further still, to just 31.7%. Some portion of this statistical gap – as with the gap between law firm associates and partners – may reflect change over time. Full professors may have served at their institutions for decades, while assistant professors have generally been hired within the past six years.

A declining proportion of women faculty at senior levels is apparent at nearly every institution of higher education in Hampton Roads, according to Data USA statistics. The outstanding exception is Thomas Nelson Community College, which also has one of the smallest faculties in the region; 11 of its 14 full professors are women. Regent University, Eastern Virginia Medical School and Old Dominion University have the lowest proportion of female full professors (between 19.6% and 21.4%), while the remaining institutions range between 29.2% and 38.9%.

TABLE 8

**NUMBER OF ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS
BY RANK AND GENDER, 2016**

UNITED STATES

	Male	Female	Percentage Female
Professors	124,364	57,840	31.7%
Associate professors	87,317	70,842	44.8%
Assistant professors	84,762	88,269	51.0%
Instructors	42,936	56,350	56.8%
Lecturers	18,372	22,586	55.1%
Other faculty	81,038	72,716	47.3%

Sources: American Council on Education, "Pipelines, Pathways, and Institutional Leadership: An Update on the Status of Women in Higher Education," p. 19 (<https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/HES-Pipelines-Pathways-and-Institutional-Leadership-2017.pdf>), and Data USA, at <https://datausa.io>

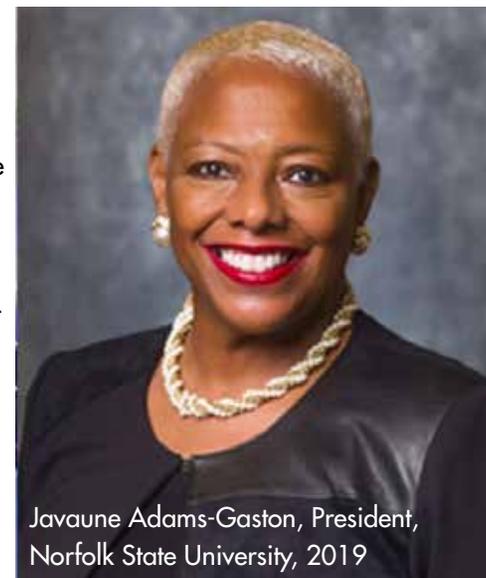
It is also notable that a pay gap exists between the average salaries of male and female faculty members at nearly every level, according to 2016-17 salary figures from The Chronicle of Higher Education. The average female assistant professor is typically paid less than the average male assistant professor (and so forth) at all institutions, in Hampton Roads and elsewhere. A substantial part of this disparity may be explained by the preponderance of women faculty in lower-paying fields, such as the humanities or education, or by other measurable factors that may apply in some circumstances, such as lower academic productivity. Even controlling for these and other variables, studies frequently turn up some "unexplained variance" in the salaries of female and male faculty members.¹⁴ This may (or may not) be evidence of discrimination because unobserved differences between genders (such as the number of hours devoted to work) could explain salary divergences. In any

¹⁴ Joshua Hatch, "Gender Pay Gap Persists across Faculty Ranks," *The Chronicle for Higher Education* (March 22, 2017), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Gender-Pay-Gap-Persists-Across/239553>; John W. Curtis, "Faculty Salary Equity: Still a Gender Gap?" *On Campus with Women* (spring 2010), http://archive.aacu.org/ocww/volume39_1/feature.cfm?section=2.

case, unexplained variance declines to insignificance at the assistant professor level.

Unsurprisingly, there is also a gap at the very top ranks of university leadership. In the United States, just three out of 10 college presidents were women in 2016. However, this proportion has grown steadily over the past three decades (in 1986, it was less than one in 10). According to the American College President Study, only 8% of all women presidents lead doctorate-granting institutions; the majority preside over institutions that do not offer graduate programs.¹⁵

In Hampton Roads in 2019, two of 10 university presidents are women. Katherine Rowe became the first woman president in the 325-year history of William & Mary in 2018, and Javaune



Adams-Gaston assumed the presidency of Norfolk State University early in 2019. They follow in the footsteps of Carolyn Winstead Meyers and Marie McDemmond (also at NSU), Roseann Runte (Old Dominion University), Shirley Robinson Pippins (Thomas Nelson Community College), and Deborah DiCroce and Edna Baehre-Kolovani (Tidewater Community College). Half of our region's women college presidents over time have been African American women – Pippins at TNCC and the three NSU presidents. If we expand our view to the ranks of vice presidents and provosts, we can see that women generally hold one-third to one-half of our regional institutions' top administrative posts. Noteworthy exceptions are Hampton University (all five of its vice presidents are women) and Virginia Wesleyan University (no women vice presidents).

¹⁵ American Council on Education, American College President Study 2017, Summary Profile, <http://www.aceacps.org/summary-profile/>; and Rick Seltzer, "The Slowly Diversifying Presidency," *Inside Higher Ed* (June 20, 2017), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/20/college-presidents-diversifying-slowly-and-growing-older-study-finds>.

Hampton Roads' colleges and universities do support a variety of means to promote diversity in leadership and in their student bodies – not only with respect to gender, but also race and other categories. This year, EVMS and ODU were nationally recognized for their efforts in this arena. EVMS received an institutional excellence award from the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, and Forbes magazine named ODU as one of America's 100 best employers for diversity.¹⁶ These awards suggest that important progress is being made, although the women's leadership gap clearly persists.

W&M President Katherine Rowe emphasized to us that diversity is essential to institutions of higher education today; it accelerates innovation and creates an environment where talent can thrive. We discussed the university's diversity plans, a comprehensive personnel study that has helped to identify potential inequities, and efforts to encourage female students in computer science (women at W&M earn computer science degrees at rates well above the national average). Rowe also underscored the importance of celebrating women leaders from the university's past. Last year, two new plaques were added to the walls of the historic Christopher Wren Building – honoring the first 24 women who enrolled as students in 1918, and the first three African American students in residence (also women) who enrolled in 1967.



¹⁶ "EVMS receives national award for excellence in diversity," EVMS Pulse (March 13, 2019), <https://www.evms.edu/pulse/archive/evmsreceivesnationalawardforexcellenceindiversity.php>; and "ODU Named One of America's Top 100 Employers for Diversity," News @ ODU (Feb. 1, 2019), https://www.odu.edu/news/2019/2/odu_cited_by_forbes_.

Final Thoughts

Hampton Roads Community Foundation President and CEO Deborah DiCroce shared a telling story with us from the early 1990s, when she served as (the first woman) president of Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville. After she selected a new chief academic officer, the headline in the local newspaper read "DiCroce Hires Woman" – the implication being that not just one, but two women in top leadership positions at the institution was a newsworthy event. We have made considerable progress since then. Virtually all Hampton Roads colleges and universities, city administrations and other large workplaces can point to multiple women in positions of power. Yet, the distribution of women and men at the highest levels of influence is not proportional to the population.

In her 2015 book "Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family," Anne-Marie Slaughter suggests that the most urgent problem for working women today is no longer the glass ceiling, but what she calls the "Great Stall" – the slow, and in some fields, "barely perceptible increase" of women in top leadership positions over the past generation. The stall is especially frustrating if one considers the impressive educational gains that young women have made in the meantime; they now outpace young men by many academic measures and earn more advanced degrees. **Slaughter identifies our society's devaluing of caregiving as a primary culprit, observing that "if a young female lawyer or banker on a promising career track decides to leave early every day to be home with her kids for dinner, work part-time, or take time out for a while to be a full-time caregiver, she is quickly knocked out of the game."¹⁷ The same observation is true (and perhaps even more so) for a young male lawyer or banker – but women, who perform the majority of all unpaid caregiving, are disproportionately affected.**

Participants in the Pew Research Center survey pointed to a number of different reasons why comparatively few women hold high political offices or top executive positions. The top responses – echoed by several of the women

¹⁷ Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Unfinished Business" (New York: Random House, 2015), 81–84.

leaders we spoke with for this chapter – included “women have to do more to prove themselves than men,” “women get less support from party leaders,” “women in politics/business face gender discrimination,” “many Americans aren’t ready to elect a woman to higher office/many businesses are not ready to hire women for top positions,” “family responsibilities make it harder for women to move up” and “women aren’t encouraged to be leaders from an early age.” Perhaps not surprisingly, a higher proportion of female than male respondents identified each one of these reasons as “major.”¹⁸

Several women leaders – including panelists at the Hampton Roads Chamber’s “Power of Women” event in April – emphasized to us that women must not hesitate to “lean in,” take the initiative and create opportunities for themselves. Retired Rear Adm. Janet Donovan, U.S. Navy JAG Corps, urged women not to wait for someone else to open professional doors, but to proactively ask, “What would it take?” in order to advance or introduce workplace change. Lorraine Wagner, vice president of operations at Stihl Inc. in Virginia Beach, emphasized the importance of risk-taking, self-confidence and not placing limits on oneself – qualities that were key to her own upbringing and professional development.

An interesting question that emerged in some of our conversations is what closing the women’s leadership gap might look like. How much diversity is enough? A common answer we heard is that institutional leadership should reflect the population it serves – whether voters, students or corporate clients. Another way to think about the closing of the leadership gap is in terms of pipelines for advancement. If 40% to 50% of entry-level positions within a particular workplace or sector are occupied by women, it does not seem misplaced to expect a similar proportion of women at the senior level as well.

We consistently heard that achieving greater gender equity does not happen on its own. Institutions that have made the most progress in closing the leadership gap have generally done so intentionally, through a variety of means. We heard about informal and formal mentoring initiatives for entry- and mid-level female workers, greater acceptance of flexible working hours, more transparency and inclusion in decision-making processes, the importance of proactively encouraging women applicants and the introduction of diversity

¹⁸ Pew Research Center, “Women and Leadership 2018,” 22 and 30, at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/09/20/women-and-leadership-2018/>.

officers to guide and monitor institutional progress. DiCroce noted that the Hampton Roads Community Foundation enhanced the diversity of its board by introducing term limits and increasing its size from nine to 17 members.

Closing the women’s leadership gap is important not only because it is the “nice” or politically correct thing to do. Greater gender equity may actually improve how our institutions function. In a recent study at Harvard University, researchers found that “beliefs about gender diversity create a self-fulfilling cycle. Countries and industries that view gender diversity as important capture benefits from it. Those that don’t, don’t.”¹⁹ Women leaders in Hampton Roads have already accomplished great things. To close the gap, we must first recognize that it exists. Only then can we take action – action that will improve the perception that Hampton Roads is a place where everyone can “do business.”



¹⁹ “An Institutional Approach to Gender Diversity and Firm Performance,” Letian Zhang, Harvard Business School, 2019, http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/An%20Institutional%20Approach%20to%20Gender%20Diversity%20and%20Firm%20Performance_4c0479f3-9d13-4af8-82da-7f1713af940d.pdf.

