Cornell, like many other elite institutions, has set ambitious goals for the gender, racial, and ethnic diversity of the faculty. These goals often reference the pool or “pipeline” of women or minority candidates in a given field, thereby acknowledging that a department in a field in which 60% of the PhD pipeline are women (for example) should be expected to have a higher proportion of women on its faculty than a department in a field in which only 10% of the PhD pipeline are women.

Defining “the pipeline,” however, is not as straightforward as it first seems. Is the relevant pipeline limited to PhDs produced in the subfields in which a unit specializes, or does it include all PhDs produced in the discipline (implying that departments may need to rethink their mix of subfields in order to meet diversity goals)? What is “the pipeline” for Cornell’s many interdisciplinary units? In units where post-docs are the norm, does the prior year’s pool of PhDs overstate the actual pipeline for junior hires? And, perhaps most critically, is the pipeline defined more narrowly, recognizing that Cornell departments are more likely to hire junior faculty who received their PhDs from other elite departments than they are to hire junior faculty who received PhDs from less elite PhD departments?

The files on this page are intended to give departments detailed information about their PhD pipelines. They refine the more general pipeline figures submitted to each College by OHR as part of Cornell’s effort to comply with federal EEOC standards. We are posting the files publicly in the hope that they will be useful to faculty at other institutions, but would appreciate a citation or link if they are disseminated more broadly.

For each discipline, we first identified the top 5, top 10, and top 25 departments. These lists were usually obtained from USNWR rankings, but occasionally come from either the 1993NRC rankings or, in rare cases, personal communication with the chair of the department. Although the long-awaited NRC rankings would of course been preferable, we are confident that the departments in the top 5, top 10, and top 25 across different ranking systems do not differ appreciably, and certainly not enough to affect estimates of the percentage of women and persons of color graduating from these prestige groups. Lists of the departments in each status group are provided in the files.

We then use IPEDS data from the National Center of Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/) to calculate the number and percentage of women in the pool of PhDs granted by the top 5, top 10, and top 25 departments. We provide these estimates for the 4-6 most recent years for which IPEDS data are available, depending on the field; estimates for fields in which post-docs are common extend further back in time. We also calculate the percentage of under-represented minority PhDs produced by these three sets of departments, where under-represented minorities include African Americans, Native Americans/American Indians, and Latino/a Americans. Finally, we follow our summary of the demography of the pipeline of PhDs in the field
with the pipeline in specific subfields (e.g., Applied Economics, Development Economics), where the field codes in the IPEDS database allow.

Finally, two caveats. First, Cornell PhDs are not included in our estimates, even where the relevant department is highly ranked. This reflects our assumption that Cornell departments rarely hire their own PhDs into new junior faculty positions. However, we don’t anticipate that the exclusion of Cornell PhDs affects the estimates appreciably, because the demography of our PhD programs is presumably quite similar to the demography of our peers’ programs. Second, we did not create pipeline files for all Cornell departments, and the humanities in particularly are underrepresented. Departments in fields that are unranked by USNWR or NRC1993, that are uniquely configured at Cornell (e.g., many of the language/literature departments), or that cover a field not uniquely identified in IPEDS may find these files less useful. We hope to be able to provide better coverage of the remaining STEM/SBS departments and the humanities in the future.

Additional questions about these files should be directed to Dr. Kim Weeden (Sociology; CU-ADVANCE Evaluation Director) at kw74@cornell.edu. We are extremely grateful to Sarah Thébaud (Sociology; PhD 2010) for her expert research assistance on this project.