

HARVARD NEWS

Male Engineering Professor Incredibly Excited About Helping Women in Science



CAMBRIDGE, MA
Twice-divorced engineering Professor Ronald Tucker stunned colleagues this week when he called for Harvard's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) to step up its recruiting efforts in attracting women in the natural sciences, departmental sources confirmed Tuesday. "I was floored by how passionately Ron feels about the issue," said SEAS Professor

Barbara Jones. "It's as though someone lit a fire under him" she added.

According to witnesses, Tucker unilaterally took control of his departmental faculty meeting Tuesday, demanding that "young women between the ages of 21 and 29 be enabled to compete alongside their male peers, who have out-numbered them for far too long." In no fewer than five minutes, witnesses said, he laid out a comprehensive plan to increase the percentage of female students by more than 900%. "This is a great day for gender equality," said SEAS Professor Cynthia Crowder.

Sources close to Tucker, who agreed to comment only on the condition of anonymity, have expressed amazement at the fervor with which he has taken up the mantle of women's rights. "I've been in SEAS for a long time, and I've never seen anyone interview sixty potential graduate students - all of them female - in a single year. I can't go far enough in praising his commitment to diversity," said one faculty member. Yet other colleagues expressed concern that perhaps his enthusiasm for attracting female candidates was distracting him from his research. "Now, whenever I have found a good faculty candidate, he interrupts to disapprove of the candidate's gender - and then suggests some Swedish female professor instead. Give me a break." Professor Tucker, meanwhile, insists that he has not gone far enough. "When I go for something, I aim to go all the way," he told HSP in a brief phone interview.

Interviews with female graduate students in SEAS reflect a complex, often intimate relationship with Tucker, who has been variously described as "amazing," "incredible," and "totally unbelievable" by different female students. One young scientist remarked that now "whenever I do differential equations, I feel like he's right there inside of my head again." One undergraduate student said that she had "never been so deeply satisfied" as when she worked

with Professor Tucker. Tucker, when asked about his female students, could scarcely contain his excitement. "To me, there is nothing on earth like having so many meaningful relationships with such talented young women."

Since receiving tenure last year, Tucker has founded no fewer than six organizations seeking to promote a sense of community in the female graduate student environment. The latest is HBWISE, which seeks to recruit, promote, and retain Harvard's Beautiful Women In Science and Engineering. "This is one area where we felt a special need to focus in order to avoid losing these attractive candidates to more attractive jobs in finance, consulting, modeling, presidential politics, and domestic engineering," remarked Tucker.

For a professor who has accomplished so much in his career, Tucker shows no sign of slowing down. "Working with such amazing women, it's not surprising how much pleasure I derive from my work," he added.



Some Women In Science Recently Recruited by Professor Tucker

When asked to speculate about the future of engineering, for Tucker it comes down to one word: women. "Women are our future. Women will build our planes and trains, design our bridges, and ensure the integrity of our infrastructure. The question now is, what can we do for our women, and what can our women do for us?" The answer, Tucker says, "will blow your mind."

