

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

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EEOC SETTLES EQUAL PAY LAWSUIT AGAINST EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

DETROIT -- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Eastern Michigan University (EMU) today announced the settlement of a lawsuit in which the EEOC alleged that EMU engaged in unlawful sex discrimination when it paid its only female professor in its Industrial Technology Department less than her male colleagues for doing essentially the same work.

From 1991, when she was first hired by the university, to 1997, Dr. Pamela Speelman was the second lowest paid professor in the department, despite the fact that she had a higher rank and more seniority than four of her male colleagues. The EEOC's investigation found no justification for the significantly lower wages the university paid Dr. Speelman as compared to her male counterparts.

"Enforcing laws that require equal pay for men and women performing the same jobs is a priority for the EEOC," said agency Chairwoman Ida L. Castro. "Clearly, the effective enforcement of these laws ensures that the contributions of women in the workplace are not undervalued. A case like this highlights the fact that there is still much work to be done in the area of equal pay, 37 years after the Equal Pay Act was enacted."

Detroit Regional Attorney Adele Rapport, who heads the legal unit that prosecuted the case for the EEOC, explained that Dr. Speelman was hired by EMU as a tenure track Assistant Professor in the Industrial Technology Department, a field traditionally dominated by men. Between 1992 and 1998, Dr. Speelman was the only female professor out of 18 or 19 in her department. In addition to teaching departmental basic studies, computer literacy, and other undergraduate courses, she taught graduate level courses, something which at least one of her higher-paid male colleagues had not done.

In the Consent Decree signed yesterday by Judge Nancy G. Edmunds of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, the university agreed to raise Dr. Speelman's salary to \$52,551 per year, the same level as the highest of her male colleagues. The university also agreed to provide Dr. Speelman \$100,000 in monetary compensation, consisting of \$45,400 to make up for the difference in her pay for the past seven years; \$4,600 to her retirement fund for lost retirement contributions for the same period of time; and an additional \$50,000 to resolve a related sex discrimination claim under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Finally, EMU agreed to train senior university managers on federal protections against gender discrimination and requirements for equal pay for substantially equal work.

EEOC General Counsel C. Gregory Stewart said that the protections of the Equal Pay Act are particularly important for women like Dr. Speelman "who work in academic settings and in fields that might be viewed as nontraditional for women. Although Dr. Speelman was teaching in a male-dominated department, she was teaching similar courses under the same general circumstances as her male colleagues, and she was entitled to the same pay for this work."

The assistance and support of Dr. Speelman's union, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), was acknowledged by EEOC's Detroit District Director, James R. Neely, Jr. "The EEOC's Detroit office has had great success in working with unions to vindicate the rights of their members," he said.

In addition to enforcing the Equal Pay Act, which prohibits discrimination in wages on the basis of sex, the EEOC enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended, which prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of age; and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. Additional information about the Commission is available on the agency's web site at www.eeoc.gov.

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