

Outstanding Assistant Professor Jennifer Griffith influential to better understanding equitable workplaces

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[Jennifer Griffith](#) was barely twenty when her first work experiences inspired questions about equity that desperately needed answering. Why was there such a disconnect between employees and management in the American workplace? What actually motivates people to work well and stay in their jobs? How do we fix things like the gender wage gap?

Griffith didn't realize at the time that she would make her own career pursuing answers to those questions and contributing extensive, influential research to better understanding how to make workplaces more equitable for all. Or that she would pass on her insights to undergraduate and graduate students at universities across the country, and serve in numerous positions guiding, conducting, and implementing research-driven interventions both at the University of New Hampshire and for government and private sector companies, most recently in the fields of sexual harassment prevention and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

For these prodigious accomplishments in the areas of teaching, research, and service, Griffith was recently awarded the 2021 University of New Hampshire's [Outstanding Assistant Professor award](#).

"It's bananas," Griffith said. "When Dean Merrill-Sands called to tell me I had won I was very confused. We have so many amazing assistant professors at this university, so this is an incredible honor. I am very humbled by it, but also happy to win some recognition for people who work in DEI. I feel so privileged to have a job I love and work that I'm passionate about."

Griffith didn't always want to be a teacher. In fact, in her early graduate school days she was "adamant" that she wanted to work at a research consulting firm. But after working alongside undergraduates for research projects and enjoying their input, she decided to try her hand at it. Griffith's first teaching gig, a class on statistics, showed her she had the patience for the job, and further classes concerning leadership helped her fall in love with the profession.

"Working on projects with my students was really exciting for me. Watching them go through the process of reflecting on themselves as leaders - outside of outdated notions of what "leadership" looks like, and unlocking their potential in ways that were meaningful to them. I think it's the most important part of being an educator," she said.

Griffith is a dedicated and innovative teacher who receives consistently high student evaluations describing her as inspiring, innovative, and compassionate. She is an active contributor to [Paul College's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion working group](#), and recently engaged an exhaustive overview of the college's course syllabi for DEI topics. Griffith also helped lead the design of a workshop for the college's [First-Year Innovation and Research Experience \(FIRE\)](#) program on DEI, implementing panel discussions with students from underrepresented groups to start important conversations earlier in their education.

"This is one of my favorite things to work on, for service. It ties into my teaching and research passions, and it's a practical way to influence the place I actually work," she said. "I think it's important to get involved in ways that make a meaningful difference not just to you but to people who don't usually have a voice in the conversation either because it puts them at risk now or they've been silenced in the past."

At the graduate education level, Griffith worked with colleagues to redesign the MBA core course in organizational behavior. She also has been a leader in strengthening attention to Human Resources and the use of data to make people-oriented decisions in the workplace within the management option.

Griffith has published 27 peer-reviewed studies, half in the top journals in her field and the remainder in a variety of specialized "niche" journals. Her scholarly contributions have more than 1,600 citations, and her work also is frequently cited in media outlets such as Forbes, Fast Company, and Psychology Today, among others. She is currently a contributor to [ForbesWomen](#), the arm of Forbes that focuses on women, gender equity, and leadership. Her work focuses on the ways that gender impacts decision making, leadership, advancement, and collaboration in the workplace.

"Jennifer is one of the strongest and most dedicated faculty members at Paul College. She has consistently performed at levels that exceed our expectations for assistant professors," Paul College Dean Deborah Merrill-Sands said. "We are very fortunate to have her as a member of our community."

Outstanding faculty awards are prestigious university achievements granted to professors whose accomplishments in the areas of teaching, research, and service are prodigious and of the highest quality. As noted on the awards description, "He or she is an inspiring, challenging, and effective teacher, whose concern and respect for students

is evident both in and out of the classroom. Such a faculty member makes important and extensive contributions to his or her chosen field and shares those contributions with peers through publication or other appropriate means. Finally, the ideal faculty member willingly and effectively devotes time and energy in useful service to the university, the profession, and the state.”

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