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EECE 490A

9/11/17

Equality of Opportunity in Engineering

It has been a known issue that women in science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM) fields have faced a gender bias in the workforce. The United States and the entire world for that matter have come a long way with promoting gender and racial equality. Women have for a long time been stereotyped as “caretakers” and are rarely seen as the breadwinner in most families. Though these statistics and views have started to take a tremendous change in society, we still see gender bias in the workplace, especially in STEM fields. Some companies like Google, Facebook, and Intel are spending significant amounts of money to increase diversity in their workplace. However, other companies such as Qualcomm and Oracle are suffering the embarrassing financial consequences due to exposing discrimination in their workplace.

There was recently a class action lawsuit that was settled against Qualcomm, which is a smartphone chip designer company based out of San Diego California. A few female employees filed a lawsuit against the company, claiming that women were not being paid equally nor were they evaluated for promotions the same as equivalent men in their company. The Stanford Heisler law firm represented these women, and after months of negotiations ended up reaching a settlement with the company. The OFCCP conducted a compliance evaluation during the negotiations that included interviews of employees regarding their pay and pay equity, and

analyzing the companies compensations system. The agency found that there was a statistically significant pay difference between male and female employees in engineering job function that were equally or more qualified as the men. With this concrete evidence the company decided to settle the case under the following terms, Under the settlement agreement, Qualcomm will make a non-reversionary payment of \$19.5 million to settle all class claims in the case. Qualcomm will also institute significant changes in its policies and practices to help eliminate gender disparities and foster equal employment opportunity going forward. The settlement covered 3,300 women nationwide who work in STEM jobs at Qualcomm. The fact that these women are going to get some financial compensation for this settlement is not what makes this case important. This case is important because it is a very recent instance in the technology field where women were not being treated equally and justice was served for these wrong doings. I think this case serves as a warning for other companies to reevaluate their compensation and promotion hierarchy to ensure all people have an equivalent chance at being the best no matter their race or gender.

Another recent workplace discrimination instance involving a STEM company is the United States Department of Labor filing a lawsuit against Oracle, the database and cloud services company. Alleging the leading technology company has a systemic practice of paying Caucasian male workers more than their counterparts in the same job title, which led to pay discrimination against female, African American and Asian employees. The suit also challenges Oracle's systemic practice of favoring Asian workers in its recruiting and hiring practices for product

development and other technical roles, which resulted in hiring discrimination against non-Asian applicants. Almost every workplace discrimination case filed claims that white men are being paid more than others, so I am not surprised to see those claims. However, I do find it interesting that statistics show that Oracle favors Asian people in their hiring process.

At my summer internship at S&C Electric Company in 2016, I worked as a Software Engineer Intern. There were nine other interns, eight of which were Asian and one other than me was white. All of the other nine interns were studying computer science at a UC and I was the only intern from a state school. The company treated me great and I have no complaints, but I could definitely see how they favored Asian students from private universities. I don't think my experience counts as workplace discrimination despite the ungodly amounts of Asian food I had to suffer through with them at lunch. Though it does demonstrate a valid point of employers showing a trend of employing people that are stereotyped as hardworking and smart. Thus every person that doesn't classify with that "ideal" stereotype is at a disadvantage due to race or ethnicity, which is not the American way and needs to be addressed.

Racism, sexism, hate, and bigotry are all things that I believe America stands against. It may be a slow process and I know we are not completely there yet, but I believe that before I leave this earth all the aforementioned evils will no longer exist in America, and I can guarantee they will no longer exist in the American workplace. Companies like Oracle and Qualcomm are getting an example made out of them, and all the other tech companies are watching closely to ensure that they are not the

next ones on the chopping block. Hopefully as conditions get better for women in STEM fields, we will start to see an increase in the number of women who decide to pursue careers and education in STEM related fields.