

Sandra Maas' Suit Against KUSI is the Tip of the Wage-Gap Iceberg

The San Diego Union-Tribune

When former KUSI news anchor Sandra Maas filed a [\\$10 million lawsuit](#) last week accusing the San Diego TV station of failing to deal with a large pay gap between Maas and her male co-anchor, she was broadcasting a big-ticket reminder that when it comes to being valued in the workplace, women are still being treated like chump change.

Maas' suit claims that her suspicions that she was earning less than her male co-host were backed up when her former manager told her she was making at least \$90,000 less each year. A contract was eventually offered that would have paid her \$70,000 a year less than what she understood her co-host to be making. When Maas met with station management to talk about it, she was told that KUSI would not be renewing her contract in order to bring in a "new generation of people." Maas' lawsuit also alleges gender and age discrimination and retaliation.

The yearly salary gap between Maas and her co-host is more than many, many people's actual yearly salaries, but her suit reflects an issue that cannot be filed under "rich people's problems." The gender wage gap is real, and judging by the darker side of an otherwise great news development about women in the workplace, pay inequality is going to get worse before it gets better.

The boost came courtesy of a [new study from Pew Research](#), which analyzed data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and found that 2019 is likely to be the first year in which there will be more college-educated women in the work force than college-educated men. Women have been earning the majority of bachelor's degrees in the U.S. since the early 1980s, but they have been 36 percent less likely to enter the workforce after graduating.

Until now.

Fabulous news for the ladies, right? Well, like everything else having to do with the long and winding road toward equality, it's complicated. Because while there are more college-educated women in the workplace than ever, they are still earning far less money than men. Even when the only difference between the best woman in the job and the best man in the job is what each one is being paid to do it.

How much less? According to a 2018 report from the [Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce](#) that compared men and women with equal education, the same college majors and the same occupation, women still earned 92 cents for every dollar earned by men.

"We have been looking at the progress women have made since the 1950s and how much women have improved their outcomes and opportunities by doing exactly what we were told," said economist Nicole Smith, co-author of a 2018 analysis of women in the workplace. "Every single milestone women were told they had to achieve, women have achieved and surpassed it. But there are still disparities in terms of

income and opportunities. There is still residual discrimination in the workforce that exists because we have employers that still favor men over equally educated, qualified and experienced women.”

And how entrenched is the wage gap? Just check out the title of the Georgetown report: “Women Can’t Win: Despite Making Educational Gains and Pursuing High-Wage Majors, Women Still Earn Less than Men.” It’s a mouthful that speaks volumes.

Here is what not-winning looks like, according to the Georgetown report. It looks like the \$26,000 more per year that men with bachelor’s degrees make than women with bachelor’s degrees. It looks like the 81 cents a woman makes for every dollar earned by men.

It also looks like the domino effect that happens when the educational choices women tend to make result in jobs that tend to put them at a salary disadvantage. Many women gravitate toward jobs in the “helping” fields — teaching, mental-health, nursing — and those jobs, despite their societal value, do not pay as well as jobs in such male-dominated fields as law, engineering and the M.D. sector of medicine.

You could say, then, that it’s on women to go where the money is, if that’s a priority. But even when they do, they don’t make what men make. According to the Georgetown report, male pre-law and legal studies majors hold a 40.4 percent earnings advantage over women with the same majors, men who major in environmental engineering have a 50 percent earnings advantage over their female counterparts, and male mathematics and computer science majors have a 37.7 percent earnings advantage over women with the same major.

So what is a woman in search of wage equality supposed to do?

According to the Georgetown report, the inequality to-do list looks like this: (1) Study up. Women need one additional degree in order to have the same earnings as a man; (2) Your college major choice largely determines earnings, so pick one that pays; (3) If you major in liberal arts, get a graduate degree; (4) Your first salary largely determines the salaries that follow, so know what you’re worth and be ready to negotiate for it.

And whatever you do, don’t hold your breath. According to the [Institute for Women’s Policy Research](#), if change to the gender wage gap continues at the same pace as it has over the last 50 years, women will reach pay parity.

In 2059.

https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.sandiegouniontribune.com/columnists/story/2019-07-05/column-sandra-maas-suit-against-kusi-is-the-tip-of-the-wage-gap-iceberg%3f_amp=true