

The Senior Executive Service (SES) at GAO

**Personnel Appeals Board
EEO Oversight Report**



Personnel
Appeals
Board

July 23, 2010

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Acting Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Room 7000
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Pursuant to the authority granted to it under the Government Accountability Office Personnel Act of 1980, the Personnel Appeals Board has statutory responsibility to oversee equal employment opportunity at GAO. The Board performs this function through a process of review and assessment that includes the conduct of studies and the preparation of evaluative reports containing its findings, conclusions and recommendations. In exercise of that authority, the Board is issuing the attached report on the Senior Executive Service at GAO.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Leary

attachment

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GAO's Senior Executive Service (SES)

Chapter I

Background

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 created a Senior Executive Service (SES) for the Executive branch to ensure that the executive management of the Federal Government would be “responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality.”¹ Two years later, Congress passed the Government Accountability Office Personnel Act of 1980 (GAOPA) which established a personnel system for GAO designed to operate independent of the Executive branch. That same Act created the Personnel Appeals Board (PAB or the Board) and gave the Comptroller General (CG) the authority to establish a Senior Executive Service that met the statutory requirements of the Executive branch’s SES corps.² The SES at GAO came into being in October 1980.³

This study is not the first time that the Board has taken an in-depth look at the SES. In 1998, the Board published an EEO Oversight report entitled *Selection into the Senior Executive Service at GAO (1992-1997)* based on a study of the selection process for the SES at GAO over a

¹ 5 U.S.C. §3131.

² 31 U.S.C. §733. “The Comptroller General is free to establish a Senior Executive Service and a system of merit pay, if the Comptroller wants to do so. If GAO does establish a Senior Executive Service or a system of merit pay, it must follow certain basic guidelines, parallel to those existing in executive branch agencies.” 125 Cong. Rec. H9182 (daily ed. Oct. 10, 1979) (statement of Rep. Schroeder).

³ GAO Order 0768.1, *GAO’s Senior Executive Service* (June 1980). Although the Order was promulgated in June, its effective date was October 5, 1980.

five year period.⁴ In that report, the Board found that, with respect to race, national origin and gender, the SES corps resembled the composition of the pool of employees eligible for selection. The Board did note an inconsistency between the available pool of those eligible to apply for SES positions and selectees by age in that employees below age 50 were disproportionately successful in being selected and those 50 and over were disproportionately unsuccessful. In addition, the report concluded that the pool of black and Hispanic employees eligible to apply for SES vacancies was well below their overall representation in the Agency.⁵

In 2004, the Board took another look at the SES as part of its overall study of the state of Equal Employment Opportunity at GAO and found that no Hispanic employees had been appointed to the SES between the years 1999 and 2004. In addition, black females and Hispanics constituted a smaller percentage of the SES ranks in comparison to their representation in the pool of those eligible to apply for SES vacancies. Women continued to make gains in the executive ranks and older employees and persons with disabilities were appointed to the SES in much higher numbers than was the case in the Board's 1998 study.⁶

Methodology

In its most recent study, which focused on retention at GAO, among the issues the Board looked at was diversity in the supervisory and management ranks. In its report, the Board compared the SES at GAO in 1997 to the SES at GAO in 2009 and observed the following:

⁴ EEO Oversight studies are conducted pursuant to the Board's mandate to review and evaluate the regulations, procedures and practices of GAO as they relate to equal employment opportunity and to assess the Agency's efforts in a particular area. 31 U.S.C. §732(f)(2)(A); 4 C.F.R. §§28.91, 28.92(b).

⁵ *Selection Into the Senior Executive Service at GAO (1992-1997)* at 31 (1998) [hereinafter *Selection into the SES*]. The Board's EEO Oversight reports are available at www.pab.gao.gov.

⁶ *The State of Equal Employment Opportunity at GAO in the 21st Century* at 37-38 (Oct. 2005).

With the exception of white females, over the span of 12 years, little progress has actually been made in the overall diversity in the SES corps at GAO, with black males and Asian females remaining static and with Asian males and black and Hispanic females making gains, the latter increasing in number from two to four.⁷

Those observations led the Board to conclude that further study of the SES at GAO was both warranted and timely. Much like in its earlier report, the Board is focusing on the “feeder pool” for the SES in this study that covers the years 2001 through 2009.⁸ The analysis of the data relevant to that pool allows a comparison of the representation of employees, by race, gender, national origin, age and disability, in the Agency, as a whole, in the pool of those eligible to apply for SES positions, and in the pool of those internal candidates who applied for SES vacancies.⁹

In addition, the report will compare the SES employees at GAO to those working in a number of similarly sized Executive branch agencies.

The SES at a Glance

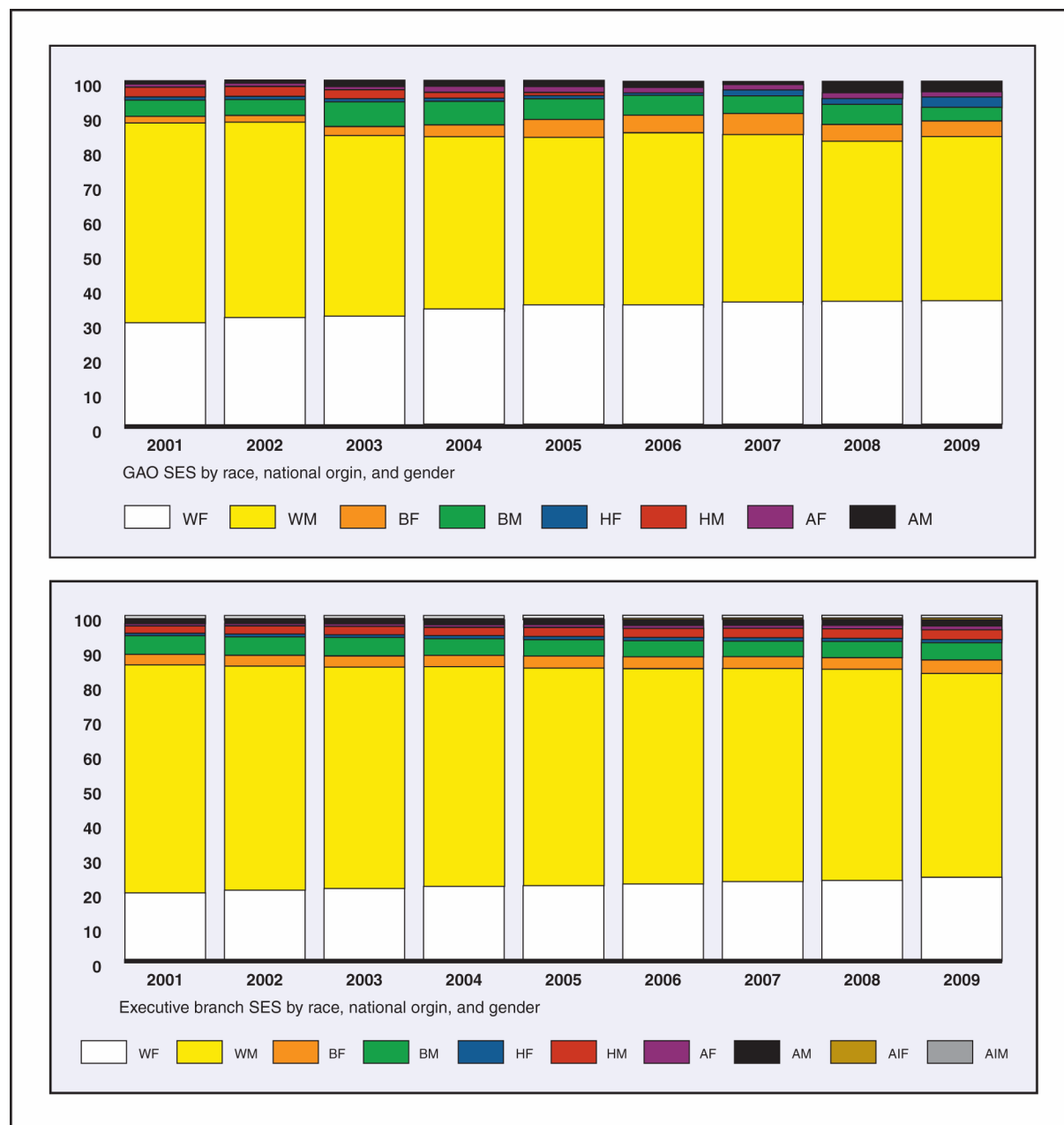
The following charts show the composition of the SES at GAO and within the Executive branch by race, national origin, and gender during the time period of this study.

⁷ *The Retention of New Hires at GAO* (forthcoming 2010).

⁸ The feeder pool is a term meant to describe those employees at GAO who are eligible to apply for SES vacancies (also known as developmental or successor pools). At GAO, that means Band III analysts, specialists, and attorneys, and PT-IV and MS-II for some vacancies. The analyst and analyst-related population remains the predominant feeder pool for the Executive Candidate Assessment and Development Program (ECADP).

⁹ As of December 2009, GAO’s workforce was 69.4% white and 30.6% minority. African Americans made up 18% of GAO employees; Asian Americans, 7.4%; and Hispanics, 4.7%; the feeder pool was 80.2% white and 19.8% minority. African Americans were 11.7% of the pool; Asian Americans, 4.2%; Hispanics, 3.8%; and American Indian, .1%.

Charts 1 & 2: SES Corps at GAO and the Executive Branch by Race, National Origin and Gender (2001-2009)¹⁰



Source: Analysis of GAO and OPM data

¹⁰ The letters in the legend stand for: white female, white male, black female, black male, Hispanic female, Hispanic male, Asian American female, Asian American male. Some of the charts in this report also include AIF (American Indian or Alaskan Native female) and AIM (American Indian or Alaskan Native male) when someone has self-identified as such.

From 2001 to 2009, the comparison of demographic changes within the SES at GAO showed that white females had the largest increase from 32 to 46 employees, resulting in an increase from 30% to 35.7% of the total SES complement.¹¹ While the number of white males remained constant at 62, the decrease in the percentage of white males was the largest, declining from 57.9% to 48.1% due to an increase in the total number of SES employees at GAO. The number of black females tripled from 2 to 6, resulting in an increase from 1.9% to 4.6%. The number of Hispanic females and Asian males both increased from 1 to 4 employees, resulting in an increase from .9% to 3.1%. GAO lost 3 Hispanic males in the SES during the years on which this study is focused. Overall, the SES in 2009 at GAO is 16.3% minority compared to 12.1% at the inception of this study and 44.9% female, compared to 33.6% in 2001.

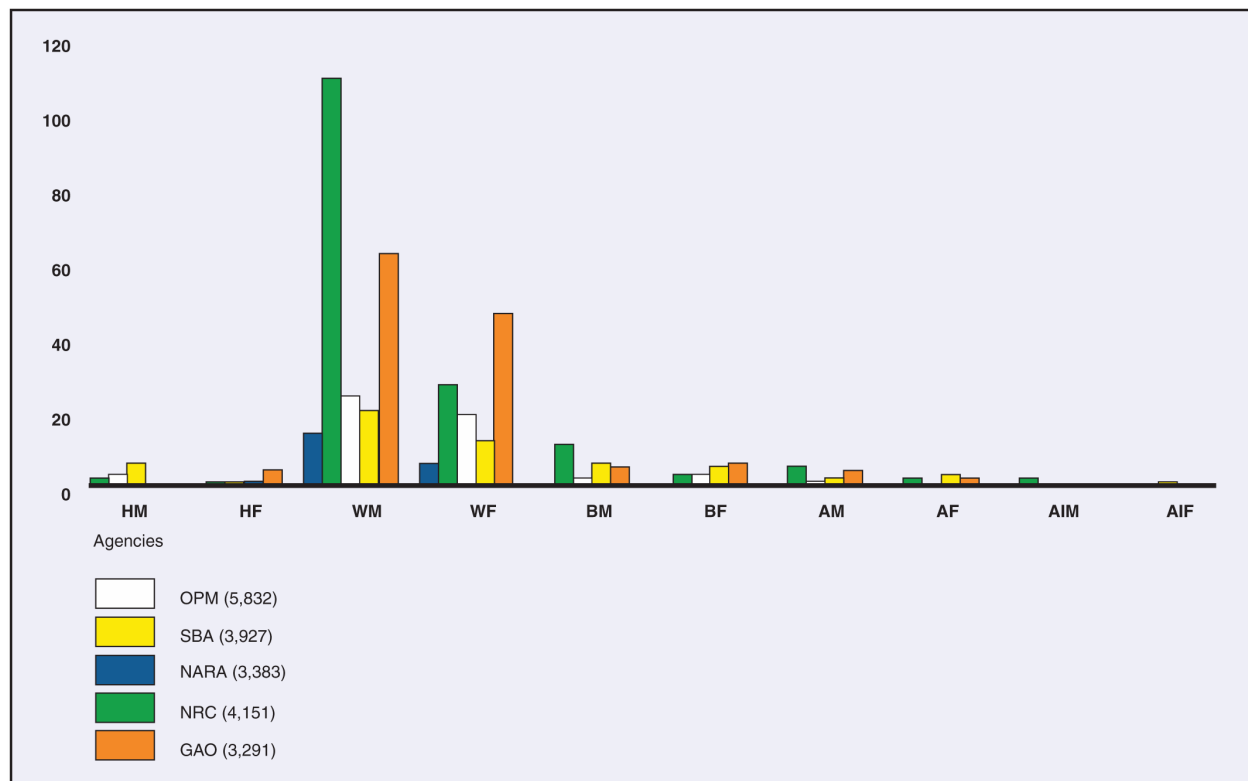
Similarly, the Executive branch experienced the largest percentage decrease of white males from 2001 to 2009 and also experienced a loss of Hispanic males during this period. The Executive branch SES, which has 7,712 members, is 16.9% minority, compared to 14% in 2001. The Executive branch SES currently is 30.7% female, up from 24.4% in 2001.

To compare GAO to individual Executive branch agencies, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the Small Business Administration (SBA) were chosen because of their similarity in size to GAO.¹² The following chart shows the breakdown of each agency's SES by race, national origin and gender in 2009.

¹¹ See Tables 14 and 15 in the Appendix at 31.

¹² NARA has 20 SES members; NRC has 162; OPM has 54 members of the SES on its rolls; SBA has 55 members; and, GAO has 129.

Chart 3: SES Corps at 5 agencies by race, national origin and gender in 2009



Source: OPM data.

As the chart shows, the SES at NARA has no minority members; OPM has no Asian American females; and GAO has no Hispanic males. White males are over 50% of the SES at NARA and NRC. Although the agencies are similar in size to GAO, only NRC has comparability to GAO with respect to the size of its SES corps. In 2009, NARA had 20 SES members; NRC, 162; OPM had 54 members of the SES on its rolls; SBA had 55 members; and, GAO had 129.

Congressional Interest and Initiatives

The House of Representatives Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia issued a report late in 2007 entitled *Senior Executive Service: Women and Minorities Are Underrepresented in Most Legislative Branch Agencies*.¹³ The report focused on GAO, the Library of Congress and Congressional Research Service (LOC/CRS), the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Government Printing Office (GPO), the Capitol Police, and the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), noting that in FY 2007, the six legislative branch agencies employed a total of 13,332 people, 346 of whom were in the SES (2.6% of the overall workforces).¹⁴

The report, the first ever to analyze diversity in the senior ranks of the legislative branch agencies, contains five specific findings.¹⁵ Chief among those findings are that “[t]he SES at each agency was less diverse in terms of minorities than its workforce as a whole in FY 2007. . .” and that “[t]he representation of minorities in the legislative branch SES has stagnated and the representation of women improved only slightly between FY2002 and FY 2007.”¹⁶

¹³ Majority Staff of Subcomm. on Fed. Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia of the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov’t. Reform, 110th Cong. (Comm. Print 2007).

¹⁴ GAO and LOC/CRS accounted for 70.5% of the senior executives in the six agencies. *Id.* at 2.

¹⁵ Diversity in the SES in the Executive branch, however, has been of interest to Congress since the 1990s when GAO was first asked to undertake a study of that issue, resulting in a report entitled, *Senior Executive Service: Diversity Increased in the Past Decade*, GAO (Mar. 2001). Two years later, GAO was asked to “explore the implications for diversity, as defined by race, ethnicity, and gender, of the expected loss of SES members over the next several years.” *Senior Executive Service: Enhanced Agency Efforts Needed to Improve Diversity as the Senior Corps Turns Over* at 1 (Jan. 2003). GAO updated its 2003 report five years later. *Diversity in the Federal SES and Processes for Selecting New Executives* (Nov. 2008). The latter two reports focused particularly on the representation of women and minorities in the developmental or feeder pools for the SES.

¹⁶ *Senior Executive Service: Women and Minorities Are Underrepresented in Most Legislative Branch Agencies* at i.

That report was issued in conjunction with a November 2007 hearing before the same subcommittee at which Ronald Stroman, then Managing Director of GAO's Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness, testified. According to Mr. Stroman, minority representation overall in the SES corps at GAO improved from 14% to 18% between 2000 and 2007; more significantly, minority representation in the SES feeder pool (Band III) increased from 12% to 19% during the same time period.¹⁷ He acknowledged, however, that GAO's percentages of Hispanics at the SES level and Asian Americans at the Band III level were lower than government wide percentages.¹⁸

In the two years after the Managing Director's testimony, minority representation in the feeder pool at GAO increased to 20%; minority representation in the SES, however, dropped from 18% to 16.3%.

Legislation

In 2007 and, again, in 2009, legislation was introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate that addressed the issue of diversity in the Executive branch SES. The Act, known as the *Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act*, would establish a Senior Executive Resource Office (SERO) in OPM charged with oversight of the structure, management and diversity of the SES.¹⁹ In addition to its oversight responsibilities, SERO

¹⁷ During the same time period, minority representation in the executive branch SES increased from 13.9% to 15.8%; minority representation in the feeder pool increased from 17% to 22.5%.

¹⁸ *Senior Executive Service: Women and Minorities Are Underrepresented in Most Legislative Branch Agencies*, Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Fed. Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia of the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't. Reform, 110th Cong. (2007) (statement of Ronald A. Stroman, Managing Director, Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness). [Hereinafter Stroman statement].

¹⁹ H.R. 2721, S.1180, 111th Cong. (2009). In 2007, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3774 (June 3, 2008); S. 2148 failed to pass the Senate prior to its adjournment.

would also establish mentoring programs for potential SES candidates, conduct a continuing program for the recruitment of women, members of minority groups, and people with disabilities. The Act also would create evaluation panels to review the qualifications of the candidates. The panel, which must endeavor to include minorities and women among its three members, will forward the names of the most qualified candidates to the Executive Resources Board after its review. Both bills are currently pending in subcommittees in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Chapter II

Types of SES Appointments at GAO

There are three types of appointments to the SES at GAO: Career Appointments, CG Career Appointments, and Limited Term Appointments. Career appointments are not time-limited and are made competitively through a recruitment and selection process or by way of the Executive Candidate Assessment and Development Program (ECADP);²⁰ noncompetitively through a transfer from an Executive branch SES position; or reinstatement after leaving the SES for reasons other than misconduct, neglect of duty, malfeasance, or less than fully successful performance, or resignation after receiving notice proposing removal under any of the aforementioned conditions.²¹

CG Career Appointments²² are also not time-limited and are based on merit competition but the appointee's executive qualifications for the position are approved by the CG rather than by GAO's Executive Resources Board (ERB).²³

The third type of appointment, Limited Term, allows the CG to make noncompetitive appointments to the SES for up to three years; some of those appointments are renewable. Appointees under this authority serve at the pleasure of the CG and do not serve a probationary

²⁰ Since the Board's study in the 1990s, the name of the program changed from the Executive Candidate Development Program to the Executive Candidate Assessment and Development Program.

²¹ GAO Order 2317.1, *GAO's Senior Executive Service and GAO Senior Level Positions*, ch. 2, ¶5(a) (Dec. 2009).

²² *Id.* ¶5(b). An SESer in a CG career appointment position is not eligible to transfer noncompetitively to a career civil service SES appointment in the executive branch. *Id.*, ¶10(a).

²³ The Executive Resources Board is comprised of SES members appointed by the CG. *See infra* p. 13. The Board conducts the merit staffing process for the SES and Senior Level positions and oversees the ECADP. *Id.* ch. 1, ¶6(d).

period.²⁴ The number of these appointments that the CG can make is restricted by statute to not more than 15 experts and consultants.²⁵

The primary source for SES appointments at GAO is the ECADP, which was established in 1980 to provide GAO with a pool of candidates who, after an intensive training period, are expected to have developed the requisite management, technical, and program skills to perform successfully as executives at the Agency.²⁶ Every year, the ERB considers the number of projected vacancies in the SES for the upcoming year, and, depending on needs, may authorize recruitment of candidates to the ECADP from inside GAO and the federal service and, on occasion, outside the federal civil service. The application process for both internal and external applicants is the same.²⁷ The ERB rates and ranks the applicants on their professional and technical qualifications and determines who among them are the best-qualified.²⁸ In addition, O&I reviews the list of applicants, considering both the diversity of the list as a whole and also determining whether there are any issues regarding the diversity management practices of any

²⁴ *Id.* ch. 2, ¶5(c).

²⁵ 31 U.S.C. §731(e)(1).

²⁶ GAO Order 0768.1, Ch. 3 (June 1980). *See also*, *Csicseri v. Bowsher*, 862 F.Supp. 547, 554 (D.D.C. 1994), *aff'd mem.*, 67 F.3d 972 (D.C. Cir. 1995).

²⁷ Previously, GAO applicants who wished to be considered for ECADP vacancies were required to submit a memorandum to their unit heads who, in consultation with supervisors, would select the nominees for consideration for the vacancies.

²⁸ The Executive Core Qualifications on which each applicant is evaluated are: Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, and Building Coalitions/Communications. There are, in addition, five Professional and Technical Qualifications to which applicants must match their experience, education, and accomplishments.

candidate, and provides its comments to the CG.²⁹ The ERB's list of the best-qualified candidates is forwarded to the CG, who makes the final selections.³⁰

Following selection, each candidate undergoes a skills and ability assessment and then receives specific training designed to develop executive competencies. In consultation with a mentor, the candidate prepares an individual development plan. Once a candidate completes his or her development program, which is usually about 18 months to two years, he or she is eligible for an immediate, non-competitive appointment to the SES at GAO.³¹ The candidates retain their eligibility for the two year period following successful completion of their development programs.

The Role of the Executive Resources Board

The ERB is responsible for staffing the Agency's SES and Senior Level (SL) positions which includes reviewing the qualifications of career appointees to those positions.³² Upon request, the ERB conducts reviews of SES or SL performance appraisals and also oversees the ECADP.

The ERB, which meets monthly or biweekly, as needed, is composed of members of the SES, with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), and the General Counsel (GC) serving as permanent members. There are also 2-3 term members

²⁹ Stroman statement at 8.

³⁰ GAO Order 2317.1, Appendix 1.

³¹ *Id.* ch. 10, ¶2.

³² GAO's Senior Level position system was established as part of the GAO Personnel Flexibility Act of 2000 and was designed to meet "critical scientific, technical or professional needs" of the Agency. 31 U.S.C. §732a.

and an occasional *ad hoc* member. Between December 2000 and June 2009, the composition of the ERB changed 10 times.

Table 1: Composition of the ERB (2001-2009)

ERB	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM
12/00-3/01	2	1		1		1		
3/01-6/03	2	1		1		1		
6/03-3/06	2		1	1		1		
3/06-6/06	2	1	1	1		1	1	
7/06-4/07	2	2	1	1			1	
4/07-10/07	2	2	1	1			1	
10/07-2/08	2	2	1				1	
2/08-4/08	2	2					1	
4/08-5/09	2	2		1			1	
5/09-6/09	2	2		1			1	

Source: GAO data

The permanent members of the first four ERBs constituted during the time period of this study were a white female, a black male, and a Hispanic male; between April 2007 and December 2009, the permanent members were white: two females and one male. Efforts to maintain diversity of the ERB have been made through the selection of the Term Members (*i.e.*, non-permanent) who have included a black female, a black male, and an Asian female.³³

The ERB may appoint a screening panel composed of members of GAO's Senior Executive Service to rate the applicants or to interview them. Each rater fills out a worksheet on

³³ None of the permanent or temporary members was under 40; three of the permanent members were 60 or older. One of the permanent members who served on each of the 10 panels has a non-severe disability.

each applicant, grading them on the Professional and Technical Qualifications (PTQs) and Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) contained in the relevant vacancy announcement. After completing the ratings, the raters' worksheets are sent to the Human Capital Office which compiles the scores and prepares a ranked list of the applicants. The panel also establishes a cut-off score and only those applicants whose combined score exceeds the cut-off are considered by the ERB for transmittal to the CG.

Executive Candidate Assessment and Development Program

Once the ERB determines the number of projected vacancies throughout the Agency, a vacancy announcement for the ECADP program is posted on the Office of Personnel Management's USAJOBS web site. Recruitment of candidates includes, at a minimum, all qualified persons within all three branches of the federal service, except the uniformed services. Some of the vacancy announcements welcome candidates from outside the federal service who have the requisite managerial experience and skills. The reality, however, is that very few external applicants are accepted into the program. In testimony before a Congressional subcommittee, GAO's Inspector General related that Agency officials interviewed by her office pointed to past experiences that demonstrated that external candidates may face too daunting a task, trying to assimilate into GAO's SES audit methodology and culture while leading staff that is knowledgeable of and experienced in the Agency's unique practices and procedures.³⁴

The ERB rates and ranks the applicants for the EACPD on their professional, technical, and executive core qualifications to determine who among them is best qualified and then forwards the list to the CG who makes the final selections.

³⁴ *Legislative Branch Diversity Management Review*, Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Fed. Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia of the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't. Reform, 110th Cong. (2008) (statement of Frances Garcia, Inspector General, GAO). [Hereinafter Garcia statement].

The ECADP selection process has been streamlined since the Board's last study of the SES at GAO in the 1990s. Under the earlier process, GAO employees who wished to be considered for an SES appointment through the ECADP had to request nomination to the program, in writing, from their unit heads who would then consult with each requestor's SES supervisor to determine each employee's potential to perform successfully at the SES level. The unit heads would then select their nominees to the program.³⁵ Now, all internal and external applicants apply directly to the ERB.³⁶

³⁵ When the unit screening system was employed, the Board noted that during the five years of its study, one Asian employee of seven and no Hispanic employee who requested consideration for the ECADP survived the unit level screening. In addition, the Board found that employees between 50 and 59 constituted 24.3% of the requestors at the unit level but were only 9.8% of the units' nominees to the ERB. *See infra* p. 18.

³⁶ *Selection into the SES* at 30. Currently, there is no comparable screening process similar to the unit screening prior to application to the EACPD. The comparisons made in this study to the previous study are to those applicants who survived the unit screening process and made it to the ERB to be considered for selection (nominees).

Chapter III

The Agency recruited and selected seven ECADP classes between 2001 and 2009, taking a total of 70 candidates into the program from the 217 who applied. Internal candidates from GAO constituted 151 of the 217 applicants.³⁷ The ERB determined that 79 of the applicants were best qualified and sent their names to the CG for selection.

The Selection Process by Age

In 1994, a six day trial was held in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia concerning allegations that employees over 50 years of age had been passed over for selection to the Executive Candidate Development Program at GAO.³⁸ At the time the lawsuit was filed, 10 ECDP classes had formed since GAO first established an SES at GAO in 1980 and 116 employees had been accepted into the program. The court disposed of the seven individual plaintiff's allegations of age discrimination by finding that age was not a factor in the non-selection of each plaintiff for the ECPD. The plaintiffs, however, also alleged an "invidious pattern of age discrimination at GAO," pointing to the fact that no one over the age of 50 had been selected for the ECDP since its inception.³⁹ Although the court was troubled by that "inexorable zero," it noted that it was possible to have chosen no one over the age of 50 and remain within the realm of statistical chance because there were so few candidates that age.⁴⁰ Ultimately, the court concluded that the plaintiffs failed to identify specific GAO practices that

³⁷ There is no EEO data available for the 66 external applicants. The applicant questionnaire that accompanies the application and asks for demographic information states: "Completing this questionnaire is voluntary," which is standard practice throughout the Government.

³⁸ *Csicseri v. Bowsher*, 862 F.Supp. 547, 554 (D.D.C. 1994), *aff'd mem.*, 67 F.3d 972 (D.C. Cir. 1995).

³⁹ *Id.* at 560.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 567.

caused discriminatory impact or manifested themselves as discriminatory.⁴¹ Although the plaintiffs were unsuccessful in proving their age discrimination claims with respect to the ECPD selection process, the decision, which issued during the Board’s earlier study, foreshadowed a concern identified by the Board.

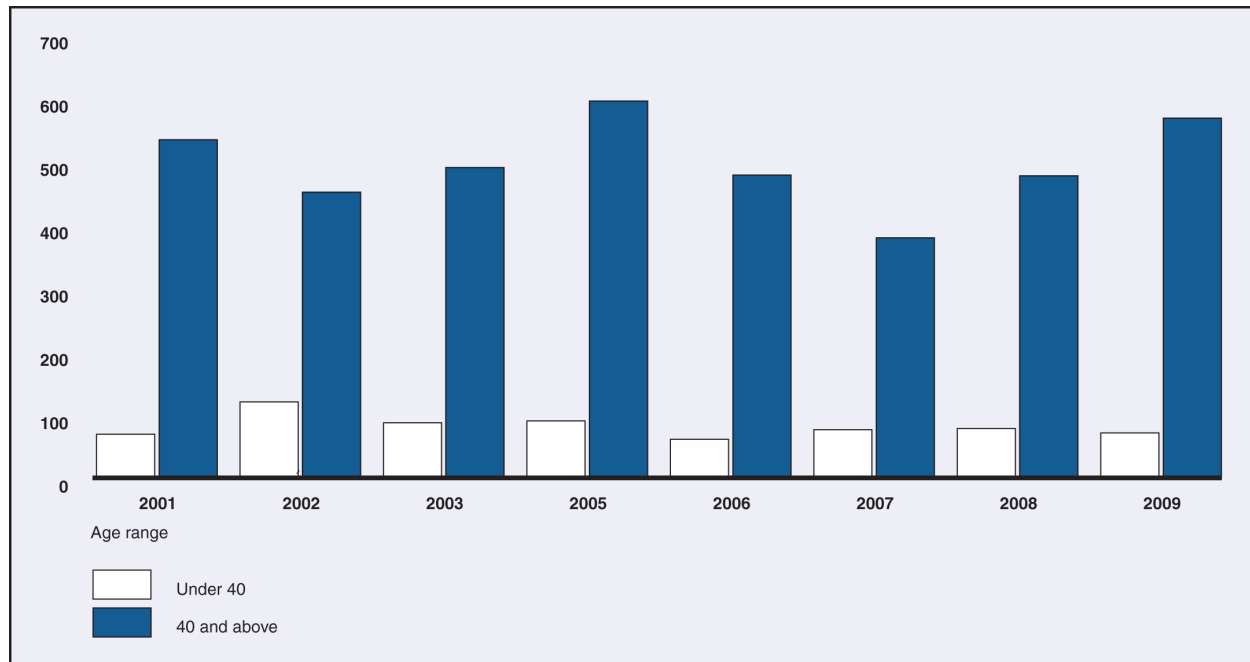
In its 1998 report on GAO’s selection process for the SES, the Board noted, in particular, a “lack of congruence” among the available pool, the applicants, and the eventual selectees to the ECADP based on age. The Board observed that employees under 50 were “disproportionately successful” in being selected relative to their representation in the pool. Conversely, those 50 and over were “disproportionately unsuccessful.”⁴² The following Tables show that midway through the study (1995), employees under 49 constituted 61.5% of the feeder pool; 90% of the ERB nominees; and 93% of the selectees. Employees 50 and over made up 38.5% of the feeder pool; 10% of the nominees; and, 7% of the selectees.

However, as the following charts and tables also illustrate, there have been dramatic increases, numerically and percentage-wise, in both the applications and selections of persons 50 and older to the ECADP. For example, 73 GAO employees over the age of 50 applied for ECADP vacancies between 2001 and 2009, nearly the same number as the 70 who were between 40 and 49. Comparable figures from the Board’s earlier study show that 10 GAO employees 50 and over applied during that time period as opposed to 76 who were between 40 and 49. Moreover, the number of candidates selected for the ECADP who were between 40 and 49 was the same as the number of those 50 or more, a 39% increase in that age category since the Board’s last study.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 574.

⁴² *Selection into the SES* at 30.

Chart 4: SES Feeder Pool by Age (2001 – 2009)



Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 2: Change in Percentages in Internal applicants for the ECADP by age (1992-97 & 2001-09)

	< 40	40 - 49	50 +	Total
1992-1997	16 15.7%	76 74.5%	10 9.8%	102 100%
2001-2009	8 5.3%	70 46.4%	73 48.3%	151 100%
Change in percentage	-10.4%	- 28.1%	+ 38.5%	

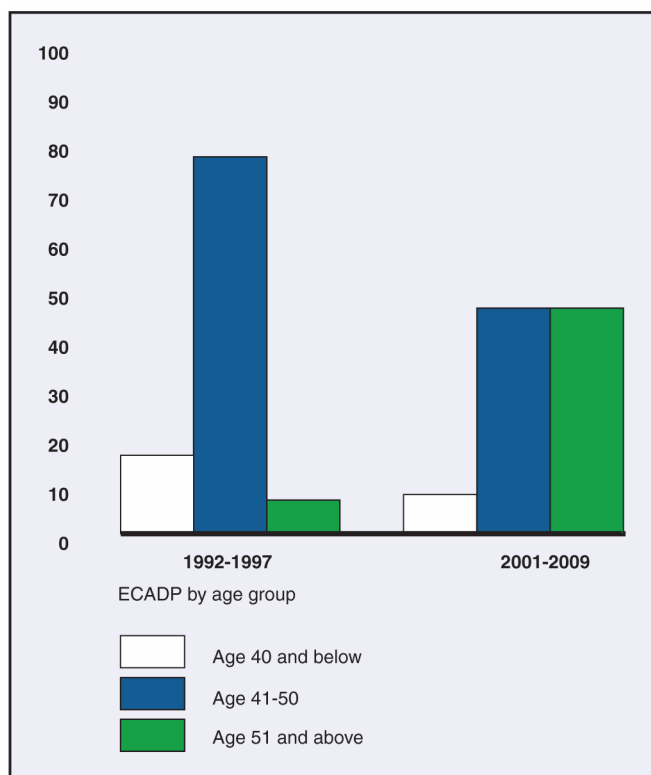
Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 3: Internal ECAPD Applicants by Age (Classes 14-20)

Class	< 40	40 +	50 +	60 +
14 (2001)	1	10	16	
15 (2002)	2	12	8	
16 (2003)	1	10	9	
17 (2005)	2	14	10	
18 (2006)	0	9	10	1
19 (2007)	0	5	9	
20 (2008)	2	10	8	2
Totals	8 5.3%	70 46.4%	70 46.4%	3 1.9%

Source: GAO data

Chart 5: Selectees to the EACDP by age (1992-97 & 2001-09)



Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 4: ECAPD Selectees by Age (Classes 14-20)

Class	< 40	40 +	50 +	60 +
14 (2001)	1	4	4	
15 (2002)	2	5	3	
16 (2003)	1	4	4	
17 (2005)	1	7	3	
18 (2006)	0	5	5	1
19 (2007)	0	4	7	
20 (2008)	1	3	5	
Totals	6	32	31	1

Source: GAO data

The Selection Process by Race and National Origin

GAO's 2009 Workforce Diversity Plan observed recent gains in minority representation at the SES and SL levels, noting that minority representation increased for African Americans and Asian Americans among both applicants and selectees. African Americans represented 21 percent and Asian Americans represented 2 percent of those applying for SES/SL positions in 2009 whereas in 2008 African Americans represented about 8 percent of the applicants and no Asian Americans applied. The 2009 Workforce Diversity Plan further reported that approximately 18 percent of those selected for SES/SL positions in the last year were minorities: Hispanics and African Americans represented 7 percent each and Asian Americans represented about 4 percent. In 2008, minorities represented about 10 percent of those selected.⁴³

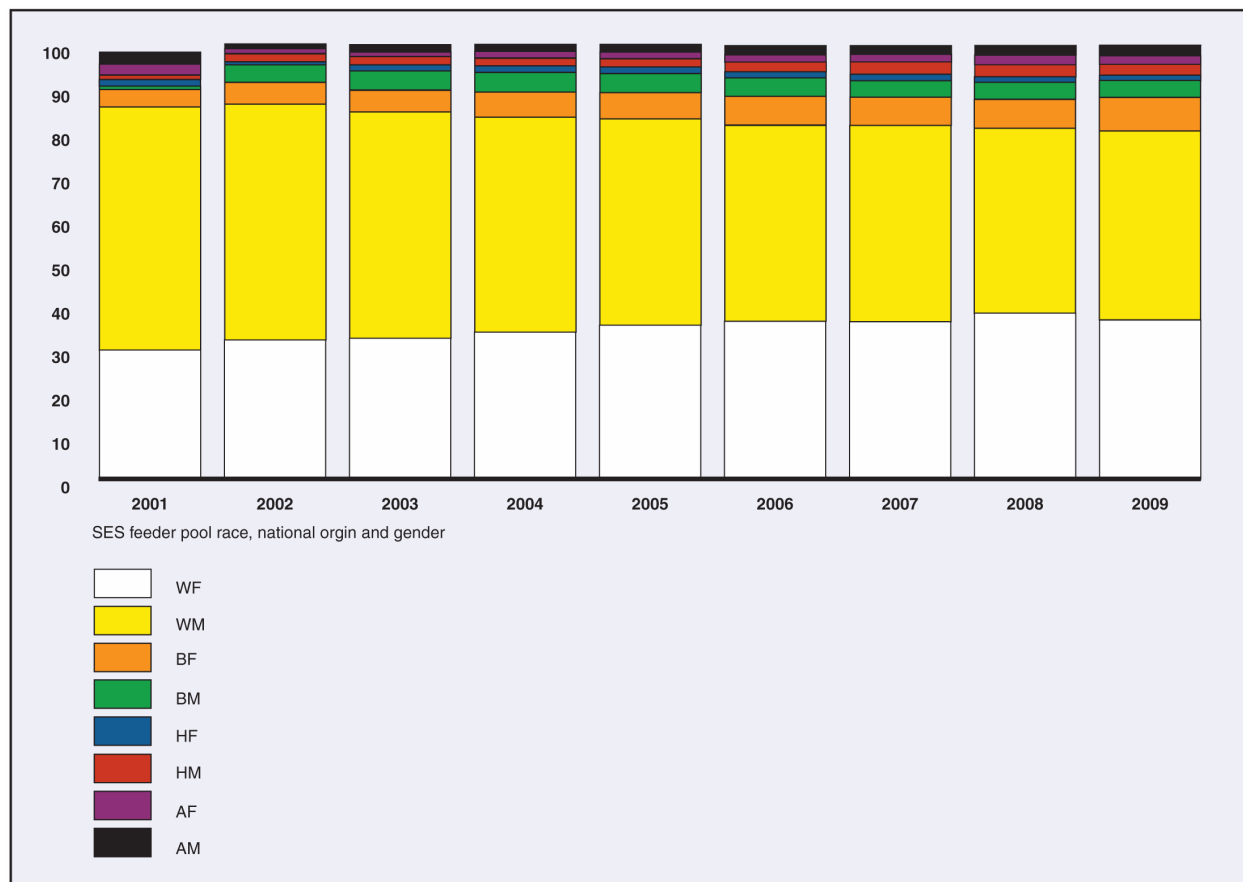
⁴³ *Workforce Diversity Plan*, U.S. Government Accountability Office at 13 (2009) [hereinafter *2009 Diversity Plan*].

However, the 2009 Diversity Plan also pointed out that the percentage of Hispanics among the applicants and those selected declined. Hispanics represented about 6% of the applicants and about 7% of those selected in 2009 compared to about 8% of the applicants and those selected in 2008. Nonetheless, Hispanic representation within the SES/SL increased from 1.7% in 2008 to 3.1% in 2009.⁴⁴

In 2001, there were 86 minorities, combined, in the GAO feeder pool; in 2009 that number was 117. The recent gains for black and Hispanic employees in the feeder pool may be an indicator of an expansion of diversity at the SES level in the future. African Americans are 12% of the Band IIIs at GAO and 8.5% of the SES; Hispanics constitute 3.8% of the Band IIIs and 3.1% of the SES.

⁴⁴ There was a corresponding bump in the feeder pool, as well: Hispanics represented 5.3% of those promoted to Band III in 2009, compared to 3% in 2008. *2009 Diversity Plan* at 15.

Chart 6: SES Feeder Pool by race, national origin and gender (2001-2009)



Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 5: Change in Percentage in the SES Feeder Pool by race, national origin & gender from 1995 to 2009

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	Total
1995	147 22.6%	428 65.8%	16 2.5%	29 4.5%	6 .9%	8 1.2%	5 .8%	11 1.7%	650 100%
2009	234 37%	278 44%	50 8%	25 4%	8 1.2%	16 2.6%	13 2.4%	5 .8%	638⁴⁵ 100%
Change in percentage	+14.4%	-21.8%	+5.5%	-.5%	+.3%	+1.4%	+1.6%	-.9%	

Source: Analysis of GAO data

⁴⁵ One employee identified herself as American Indian in 2009.

Between 2001 and 2009, there were 26 eligible minority employees at GAO who applied to the ECADP (22%).⁴⁶ During the course of this study, there were seven ECADP classes formed. There was one Hispanic female applicant for five of the classes; no Asian Americans for four classes; and, no black males for four of the class vacancies. No Hispanic male applied for any of the seven classes. There were, however, 14 black females who applied to six of the classes, although no black females or Asians applied in 2007 and no black males or Asians applied in 2008.⁴⁷

Table 6: Change in Percentage: Internal applicants for the ECADP by race, national origin and gender (1992-97 & 2001-09)

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	AIF	AIM	Total
1992-1997	29 28.4%	64 62.7%	2 2%	6 5.9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1%	0 0%	0 0%	102 100%
2001-2009	49 32.5%	76 50.3%	14 9.3%	3 2%	5 3.3%	0 0%	2 1.3%	2 1.3%	0 0%	0 0%	151 100%
Change in percentage	+4.1%	-12.4%	+7.3%	-3%	+3.3%		+1.3%	+.3%			

Source: Analysis of GAO data

Asian Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians all posted gains in selection to the ECADP when compared to the figures from the Board's earlier study.

⁴⁶ That percentage is in line with the overall rate of applications from the feeder pool which is 23.6%. About 24% of white employees who are eligible to apply do so.

⁴⁷ See also Garcia Statement at 7.

Table 7: Change in Percentage: Selectees for the ECADP (1992-97 and 2001-09) by race, national origin, gender

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	AIF	AIM	Total
1992-1997	17 39.6%	22 51.2%	2 4.6%	2 4.6%	0 0%	0	0	0	0	0	43 100%
2001-2009	23 33%	35 50%	3 4.4%	2 2.8%	2 2.8%	0	2 2.8%	1 1.4%	2 2.8%	0	70 100%
Change in percentage	-6.6%	-1.2%	-.2%	-1.8%	+2.8%		+2.8%	+1.4	+2.8%		

Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 8 breaks down the seven ECAPD classes that formed during the course of the Board's study. In classes 15, 18, and 19, all of the selectees were white except one. No African American candidates were selected for three of the classes; one Asian candidate was selected each year that there was at least one Asian American applicant. However, in the most recently selected class, 3 of the 9 selected were minority candidates.

Table 8: ECAPD Selectees by race, national origin and gender (Classes 14-20)

Class	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	AIF	AIM
14	3	4		1				1		
15	4	5					1			
16	2	5							2	
17	3	6	1		1					
18	3	7		1						
19	4	6			1					
20	4	2	2				1			
Totals	23	35	3	2	2		2	1	2	70

Source: GAO data

The Selection Process by Gender

Women, across the spectrum, made gains in representation in GAO's feeder pool, with white and black women gaining significantly in both numbers and percentages by 2009. Overall, women constituted 36% of the feeder pool in 2001 and nearly half of the pool (48%) by 2009. Over the course of this study, they were 46.4% of the applicants and 46% of the selectees for the ECADP.⁴⁸ Women make up 44.9% of the SES corps at GAO and lead 8 of the Agency's 13 mission teams.⁴⁹ In addition, two of the three members of the Agency's Executive Committee, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Acting General Counsel, are female. In the Executive branch, women are 30.7% of the SES; they constituted 24.4% of the corps in 2001.

The Selection Process by Disability

GAO employees reporting targeted disabilities are less than 1% of the workforce; no member of the SES reports having a targeted disability.⁵⁰ According to GAO's 2009 Workforce Diversity Plan, new hires reporting targeted disabilities declined from .8% in 2008 to .3% in 2009. Further, the percentage of staff with targeted disabilities who left the Agency exceeded

⁴⁸ In December 2009, the GAO workforce was 57.3% female and 42.7% male.

⁴⁹ Women were 33.6% of the SES at the beginning of the time period of this study, compared to 31.5% of the SES at the conclusion of the Board's last study in 1998.

⁵⁰ Targeted disabilities are: deafness; blindness; missing extremities; partial paralysis; complete paralysis; convulsive disorders; mental retardation; mental illness; and distortion of limb and/or spine. The term "targeted disabilities" was first officially recognized by EEOC in 1979. Individuals with a targeted disability are a subset of people who have a reportable disability. Criteria used to select the nine disabilities that make up the group of targeted disabilities included the severity of the disability, the feasibility of recruitment, and the availability of work force data for individuals with targeted disabilities. According to the EEOC, the purpose of focusing on targeted disabilities is to encourage the hiring, placement, and advancement of selected individuals with disabilities in affirmative action planning. *Improving the Participation Rate of People with Targeted Disabilities in the Federal Work Force* at 4, EEOC (2008).

the percentage hired.⁵¹ The 2009 Plan does report that 4.3% of the SES members at GAO have self-identified as having a non-severe disability, compared to 2.6% of the GAO workforce.⁵² Within the seven ECADP classes constituted during this study, only one person reported a non-severe disability.

Table 9: Change in Percentage in the SES Feeder Pool by disability from 1995 to 2009

	None	Nonsevere	Severe	Total
1995	621 95.6%	25 3.8%	4 .6%	650 100%
2009	620 97%	17 2.6%	2 .4%	639 100%
Change in percentage	+1.4%	- 1.2%	-.2%	

Source: Analysis of GAO data

CG Career Appointments

From 2001 through 2009, the Comptroller General selected 12 people, all from GAO, to serve under a CG Career Appointment. Of those selected, 8 were female; 8 were white, 1 was Hispanic, 2 were black, and 1 was Asian; all were between the ages of 40 and 59. None of the selectees reported a disability. During the time period of the Board's earlier study (1992-1997), there were 11 CG Career Appointments, all of whom were white (8 males). There was a wider age range in the appointments during that study, with one appointee under 40, five between the ages of 40-49, three between the ages of 50-59 and two over 60. One selectee had a non-severe disability.

⁵¹ 2009 Diversity Plan at 18.

⁵² *Id.* at 75.

Table 10: CG Career Appointments to the SES by race, national origin & gender (1992-97 & 2001-09)

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM
1991-97	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
2001-09	7	1	0	2	1	0	0	1
Totals	10	9	0	2	1	0	0	1

Source: GAO data

Table 11: CG Career Appointments to the SES by age (1992-97 & 2001-09)

	< 40	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 69
1992-1997	1	5	3	2
2001-2009	0	3	9	0
Totals	1	8	12	2

Source: GAO data

Limited Term Appointments

During the time period of this study, the CG made 53 Limited Term Appointments; 41 of the selectees were from outside the Agency. During the Board's last study of the SES, only 5 appointments were made under the Limited Term authority: two white males; two white females; and, one black female. Two of the females were between the ages of 40-49 and the others were over 50. None of the five claimed a disability. Tables 12 and 13 show the race, national origin, gender and age of the 53 people selected under the CG's Limited Term authority.

Table 12: Selectees under Limited Term Appointments (2001-2009) by race, national origin, and gender

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	AIF	AIM	Total
2001-2009	14 26.4%	32 60.4%	1 2%	3 5.6%	0	0	0	3 5.6%	0	0	53 100%

Source: Analysis of GAO data

As noted in Table 13, 16 of those appointed under the Limited Term authority were between the ages of 60 and 69 and nearly 80% were between the ages of 50 and 69.

Table 13: Selectees under Limited Term Appointments (2001-2009) by age

	< 40 Female	< 40 Male	40 - 49 Female	40 - 49 Male	50 - 59 Female	50 - 59 Male	60 - 69 Female	60 - 69 Male	Total
2001-09	0	1 2%	3 6%	7 13%	6 11%	20 38%	6 11%	10 19%	53 100%

Source: Analysis of GAO data

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Much has changed in the Senior Executive Service at GAO in the eight years since the Board last took an in-depth look at the corps. The SES is now 44.9% female; it was 31.5% female at the end of the Board's study in 1998. In addition, after years of very few, if any, people 50 years old and over being selected for the ECADP, the disparity between the percentage in the feeder pool and those selected is in single digits (7%) compared to the earlier study (31.5%).⁵³ There has been some stagnation of diversity on the basis of race and national origin in the SES corps itself but recent gains in diversity in the feeder pool may prove fruitful over time.

GAO compares favorably to the Executive branch in minority representation (16.3% v. 16.9%) in its SES and GAO has a significantly higher percentage of females (44.9%) in its corps than the executive branch (30.7%). When looking at the four agencies close in size to GAO (NARA, NRC, OPM and SBA), GAO has a higher percentage of minorities (16.3%) in its SES corps than NARA (0%) and is about even with the NRC (16%). The SBA's percentage of minorities in its SES is the highest among the five agencies (41%); OPM registers 20%. When gender is factored in, GAO at 44.9% and OPM at 44% are the highest, with the SBA at 38%; NARA at 30%; and, the NRC at 20.4%.

In the time period of this study, -- eight years, seven classes -- 26 eligible minority candidates applied to the ECADP for consideration for the program. No Asian Americans or black females applied for the September 2007 ECADP vacancies; no black males or Asians applied in 2008; no Hispanic males applied at any time during the study.

⁵³ As previously noted, the first 10 classes constituted at GAO had no members 50 years old or older.

Perhaps the most important change over the years has been in the selection process for the ECADP. Previously, GAO employees had to request nomination to the ECADP, in writing, from the heads of their units who, in consultation with the requestor's SES supervisor, would determine each employee's potential to perform successfully at the SES level. Currently, all applicants, including those from GAO, apply directly to the ERB. The unit screening appeared to be a system in which consistency in the selection process itself and in the criteria used could not be assured. The Board commends the Agency for adopting a centralized application process under the aegis of its Executive Resources Board.

In pre-publication comments, the Agency informed the Board that it had recently requested that all GAO employees update their demographic information, including disability status, to ensure that its workforce data is accurate. As this report points out, GAO is not meeting its benchmarks in the employment of persons with targeted disabilities. The Board has noted in other studies that the Agency generally has not provided employees with the opportunity to update their disability status after their entry into the workforce and reiterates its recommendation that such opportunity should be made available to employees on an annual basis.

Finally, in crafting its recommendations, the Board took note of statements before congressional committees from two of GAO's senior managers. The first from the former Managing Director of O&I indicated that his office reviews the applicant list for ECADP vacancies to, among other things, determine whether there are concerns about diversity management practices with respect to any of the candidates. The second statement was an explanation from the Agency's Inspector General about why so few external candidates are

accepted into the ECADP. Those statements formed the basis for the first two of the Board's recommendations.

Recommendations

- The Managing Director of the Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness should undertake an annual review and assessment of current members of the SES to determine whether there are any issues regarding the diversity management practices of any member.
- The Agency should try to attract a greater diversity of external applicants for its SES vacancies by continuing to target relevant professional associations with diverse membership. Although the Board appreciates that acclimating to GAO's unique methodology and culture is difficult, especially at the senior management level, there are disciplines from which top level recruits would be more able to "hit the ground running" substantively.
- The Agency or O&I should survey its Band III population to determine their level of interest in the SES; their reasons, if any, for opting out of consideration; and whether they perceive barriers in the application process.
- Since 1990, the Board has been recommending that GAO encourage its employees to update information about their disability status on an annual basis. The Board notes that the Self-Identification of Disability Form (SF 256) has recently been modified so that it can now be completed electronically and at any time. The Board recommends that GAO advise employees via a Notice on its Intranet that the information is confidential and will only be used to identify individuals for survey response or for agency-wide workforce data collection and reporting, thereby ensuring that its available programs and services are adequate for the population in need of them.

Appendix

Table 14: Change in Percentage in the SES at GAO by race, national origin, and gender from 2001 to 2009

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	Total
2001	32 30%	62 57.9%	2 1.9%	5 4.7%	1 .9%	3 2.8%	1 .9%	1 .9%	107 100%
2009	46 35.7%	62 48.1%	6 4.6%	5 3.9%	4 3.1%	0	2 1.5%	4 3.1%	129 100%
Change in percentage	+ 5.7%	- 9.8%	+2.7%	- .8%	+2.2%	- 2.8%	+ .6%	+2.2%	

Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 15: Change in Percentage in the Executive Branch SES by race, national origin & gender from 2001 to 2009

	WF	WM	BF	BM	HF	HM	AF	AM	AIF	AIM	Total
2001	1357 19.7%	4544 66%	209 3.1%	368 5.4%	46 .7%	142 2.1%	40 .6%	79 1.1%	23 .3%	60 .9%	6874⁵⁴
2009	1858 24.1%	4528 58.8%	306 4%	388 5%	80 1%	212 2.7%	87 1.1%	133 1.7%	35 .5%	63 .8%	7712
Change in percentage	+4.4%	-7.2%	+ .9%	- .4%	+ .3%	- .6%	+ .5%	+ .6%	- .2%	- .1%	

Source: Analysis of OPM data

⁵⁴ In 2001, there were 6 members of the Executive Branch SES whose race and/or national origin was “unknown”; in 2009, that number was 22.

Table 16: SES Feeder Pool by age (1995, 2001 & 2009) & Change in Percentage from 1995 to 2009

	< 40	40 - 49	50 +	Total
1995	80 12.3%	320 49.2%	250 38.5%	650 100%
2001	69 11.4%	226 37.5%	308 51.1%	603 100%
2009	71 11.1%	227 35.5%	341 53.4%	639 100%
Change in Percentage 1995-2009	-1.2%	-13.7%	+14.9%	

Source: Analysis of GAO data

Table 17: Change in Percentage for Selectees for the ECADP from 1992-97 to 2001-09 by age

	< 40	40 - 49	50 +	Total
1992-1997	7 16.3%	33 76.7%	3 7%	43 100%
2001-2009	6 8.6%	32 45.7%	32 45.7%	70 100%
Change in percentage	- 7.7%	- 31%	+ 38.7%	

Source: Analysis of GAO data



G A O

Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

July 20, 2010

Ms. M. Gail Gerebenics
Director, EEO Oversight
Personnel Appeals Board
Union Center Plaza II, Suite 560
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Gerebenics:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Personnel Appeals Board's (PAB's) draft report on the Senior Executive Service (SES) at the Government Accountability Office (GAO). We appreciate that the overall positive trends in minority representation in GAO's feeder pools for the SES, as well as the gains made with respect to increasing the representation of women and minorities in GAO's SES/Senior Level (SL) corps were noted in the report.

Following are our comments regarding the recommendations in the report:

- *The Managing Director of the Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness should undertake an annual review and assessment of current members of the SES to determine whether there are any issues regarding the diversity management practices of any member.*

We actively take steps to hold managers at all levels accountable for the fair and equitable treatment of all staff through our performance management systems; analyses of responses to the annual employee feedback survey; results from agency reviews of key human capital processes; and data from other sources, such as equal employment opportunity complaints, exit surveys, and comments from employee group representatives. The Managing Director for Opportunity and Inclusiveness and the Special Assistant to the Acting Comptroller for Diversity Issues have important roles in supporting these activities.

Beginning in 2009, the Acting Comptroller General reemphasized as key among our people initiatives our commitment to workforce diversity and inclusiveness. In his 2009 memo to all SES on performance expectations, the Acting Comptroller General reinforced his expectation that each SES/SL staff member be personally committed to, and demonstrate personal leadership in, ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of all GAO employees. In 2010, he restated this expectation and added the expectation for their continued leadership in recruiting and hiring a talented, diverse workforce and increasing their focus on ensuring that our supervisors have the requisite skills to effectively develop all GAO staff.

We have conducted annual employee feedback surveys for more than 10 years. The annual survey helps measure how well we are supporting our staff and providing an environment that fosters professional growth. The web-based survey, which is conducted by an outside contractor to ensure the confidentiality of every respondent, is administered to all employees once a year. Through the survey, staff are encouraged to indicate what they think about GAO's work environment and organizational culture and how they rate their managers – from immediate supervisors to the Executive Committee – on key aspects of their leadership styles. These aspects include the extent to which managers empower their teams, build trust, provide recognition, act decisively, lead by example, value diversity, ensure equal opportunity, and provide work/life balance. Beginning in 2008, we added three inclusive culture questions to our survey. We found that a higher percentage of staff overall gave more favorable responses to each of the questions in 2009 than in 2008 and a lower percentage of staff gave negative responses. For example, in response to a question on the extent to which managers/supervisors/team leaders work well with employees of different backgrounds, 72.4 percent of the employees gave a positive response in 2008 and 76 percent gave a positive response in 2009. Survey results are reported annually in GAO's Performance & Accountability Report and are available to staff via an Intranet website, Notices, and Management News. Detailed data analyses are provided at the team and the GAO-wide level, and team managers are specifically accountable in their SES contracts for addressing the results. Further, we have been doing trend analysis of our survey responses and found that generally our employee responses to the survey are very positive. Based on the responses, GAO has been ranked as the second best place to work in the federal government among large federal agencies in the Partnership for Public Service's rankings.

We have also conducted GAO-wide reviews of promotion and performance management activities for several years. These reviews are intended to provide reasonable assurance that these processes are conducted consistently and appropriately across the agency and produce outcomes that are consistent with GAO's commitment to fair and equitable treatment of all staff. The Managing Director of the Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness and the Special Assistant to the Acting Comptroller for Diversity Issues play key roles in these reviews. Also, these reviews and subsequent discussions with appropriate senior executives provide GAO's Executive Committee with assurances that our senior executives are aware of and act in a manner that supports our diversity and inclusion goals.

Additionally, we launched our 2-part diversity training program in March 2010. The training, which is focused on valuing people, is designed to help our participants (1) understand the definition of diversity and inclusion, (2) increase their awareness of diversity best practices (3) identify and discuss diversity-related issues, and (4) learn and apply a model for developing plans to address issues. We initiated the training delivery with the Managing Directors and Executive Committee, with all employees scheduled to participate in this training during the next year. Diversity training is a best practice intended to help

managers better understand issues related to working with diverse employees and better support an inclusive work environment.

- *The agency should try to attract a greater diversity of external applicants for its SES vacancies by continuing to target relevant professional associations with diverse membership.*

Recently, we identified several professional associations with diverse memberships with whom we can develop and enhance relationships to improve the diversity of our applicant pools. We will continue our outreach to these associations for future opportunities, as we are committed to continuing our efforts to attract diverse applicants for our SES vacancies. As noted in the report, we have advertised our Executive Candidate and Development Program (EACDP) opportunities to internal and external candidates for many years. Also, we have recruited broadly for other executive positions. In the last two years alone, GAO successfully hired several diverse external candidates for a number of key executive positions (e.g. the Deputy Managing Director for Controller and Administrative Services Office (currently the Controller and Deputy CFO), Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer (currently the Chief Human Capital Officer), Managing Director for Opportunity and Inclusiveness, and Chief Learning Officer). We also hired an external candidate as GAO's Chief Scientist.

- *The agency or O&I should survey its Band III population to determine their level of interest in the SES; their reasons, if any, for opting out of consideration; and whether they perceive any barriers in the application process.*

We agree that it is important to have a good understanding of the reasons eligible employees may opt out of consideration for the SES, and this is a regular discussion area for our Executive Resources Board (ERB). We have found, consistent with the Senior Executives Association's report on Attracting the Next Generation of Federal Leaders, that one of the main detractors cited by our employees for applying to the SES was the potential negative impact on the balance of work and family responsibilities.

Further, our SES members, as part of their performance management responsibilities, discuss with staff their interest in promotion opportunities. We solicit feedback from these discussions to determine whether there are any emerging cross-cutting issues that we should address. The results of these discussions inform our Workforce Diversity Plan, as well as appropriate internal initiatives.

We are actively engaged in examining data on the percentages of eligible staff and applicants at the Band III and other band levels to determine the extent to which eligible employees are not applying for promotion opportunities. In our 2010 Workforce Diversity Plan, we noted that for the most part, the representation of women, minorities and staff 40 years old and over who were promoted equaled or exceeded their representation in the respective applicant pools. For example, African Americans comprised 10 percent of the applicants and 15 percent of the staff (March 2010) promoted to Band III positions (which exceeds representation

in the relevant civilian labor force). Also, this document provides data on the eligible staff for the promotion opportunities in the analyst and analyst-related positions during the last year, as well as data on those selected for promotions in the attorney and APSS communities. We will continue to monitor these and other data and take steps as needed to address issues that may negatively impact the diversity of our future leadership corps.

As the report recognizes, GAO's executive corps has increased in many areas of representation over the last eight years. Further, the report notes that GAO compares favorably to the Executive Branch in minority representation in its SES and has a significantly higher percentage of females compared to the Executive Branch. We agree that we still have room for improvement in some of our racial groups, and we are heartened by the representation of women and minorities in our feeder pools. We will continue our efforts to maximize their interest in and promotion to the SES level.

- *Since 1990, the Board has been recommending that GAO encourage its employees to update information about their disability status on an annual basis.*

In March 2010, we requested updated information from all staff on their personnel information, including disability status, race, ethnicity, and veteran status to ensure the accuracy of the information. Employees were asked to submit change requests on or before April 23, 2010, and we received three requests for changes to disability status. The appropriate corrective actions are being processed, and HCO is continuing to work with various organizational stakeholders to enhance the timeliness and quality of agency-wide workforce data. We are committed to undertaking updates to our employees' personnel data on a regular and recurring basis.

We remain committed to maintaining a work environment in which everyone can maximize his or her contribution to the agency and having a diverse workforce at all levels. Our diversity and inclusion strategy includes several key components and many efforts. While, as noted in your report, we have made gains in the representation of women and minorities in our SES and feeder pools, we plan to continue our efforts with the goal of enhancing this representation as we move forward.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this report. I am happy to discuss any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely yours,



Patrina M. Clark
Chief Human Capital Officer