WISELI
Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Vilas Life Cycle Professorship Program

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From the original grant proposal:

Research grants will be available to women faculty at critical junctures in their professional careers (e.g., between grants, a new baby, parent care responsibilities). These grants are meant to be flexible and women may apply for varying amounts and academic purposes.
LCRG Goals

- Recognize that life events outside of one’s control *happen*
  - Both men and women experience such events, but women are more likely to experience them early in the career, when they are more vulnerable
- Reduce turnover by providing research support for faculty in crisis
- Understand what events are problematic and which career junctures are most critical
- Understand what faculty need when they are in crisis
Life Cycle Grant Program—Timeline

- Fall 2002 – Spring 2004, Pilot Program
  - Four rounds, 17 Applicants, 7 Awards
  - ADVANCE funding supplemented by Graduate School
- Fall 2004, Bridge Funding
  - One round, 5 Applicants, 3 Awards
  - Graduate School and Provost Office funding
- Spring 2005 +, Vilas Life Cycle Professorships
  - Three rounds/year, 27 Applicants, 18 Awards (Year 1)
  - Vilas Trust funding, $310,000 per year
Applicants

- Male: 33.3%
- Female: 66.7%

Awardees

- Male: 27.8%
- Female: 72.2%
Life Cycle Grant Program—Data

Applicants

- Majority Faculty: 70.4%
- Faculty of Color: 29.6%

Awardees

- Majority Faculty: 72.2%
- Faculty of Color: 27.8%
Life Cycle Grant Program—Data

Applicants

- Multiple Reasons 23.9%
- Spouse/Partner Health 8.7%
- Parent Health 6.5%
- No Life Event 4.3%
- New Baby 10.9%
- Divorce 2.2%
- Childbirth Complications 6.5%
- Child Health 2.2%
- Own Health 23.9%

Awardees

- Multiple Reasons 25.0%
- Spouse/Partner Health 10.7%
- Parent Health 7.1%
- Own Health 32.1%
- Child Health 14.3%
- Childbirth Complications 7.1%
- Children 3.6%
How do we know it works?

- Summative Evaluation Report
- Changed Minds
- Institutional Support/Institutionalization
- Continued Success and Recognition
Summative Evaluation—Design

- Purpose: provide information about the impact of the program on the recipients of the grants.
- Focused on years 1-2
  - In-depth interviews with 4 recipients
  - Follow-up emails and calls
- Five main themes emerged
Summative Evaluation—Findings

- The Only Grant Based on Personal Need, Not Professional Merit
  - “We need to change the culture”
- Came at a Critical Juncture in Their Personal and Professional Lives
  - “It helped me realign”
- Provided Psychological Support
  - “I’m out of the downhill spiral”
- Had Impact on Others’ Lives, as Well
  - “I wanted to hire, but I would have had to fire”
- Is an Investment in the Grantees’ Futures and the University’s
  - “It was an investment in me”
Summative Evaluation—Conclusions

- Small investment led to significant outcomes, both qualitative and quantitative.
- The interviewees identified NO negative impacts from receiving the grant.
- All are completely supportive of the program.
- Significantly impacted their professional progress, ability to function personally, and decision to stay at the University.
Changing Minds/Winning Support

- Clip of Tim Mulcahy
Institutional Support/Institutionalization

- Short term: Provost Office & Graduate School
- Long term: Funded by the Estate of William F. Vilas
  - Extended to all UW-Madison faculty and permanent PIs
  - $310,000 per year
  - Renewable annually contingent upon continued positive evaluation results
  - WISELI retains control of grant administration as long as we exist, otherwise reverts to the Provost’s Office
  - Grants renamed: Vilas Life Cycle Professorships
Continued Success

- Annual evaluation to maintain the Vilas award
  - Recently awarded $310,000 for a second year
- Recognition from Sloan Foundation
  - $25,000 award recognizing the program as “a model for innovative policies and practices for faculty career flexibility”
- Widespread support of faculty
Know About Life Cycle Grant Program
Climate Survey Data, 2003/2006
Life Cycle Grant Program "Very" or "Quite" Valuable*
Climate Survey Data, 2003/2006

* Calculated for those who have heard of program.
Summary—Keys to Success

- Innovative and popular program
- Available to both women and men
- Qualitative evaluation..."the power of the quote"
- Access to top-level administrators who value data
- Continued monitoring and evaluation