



WISELI

Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Vilas Life Cycle Professorship Program

What is it?

- ▶ The Vilas Life Cycle Professorship Program provides funds to faculty and permanent PIs who experience a life event that interferes with their research productivity at a critical career juncture.
- ▶ The maximum amount available for each award is \$30,000. Recipients may not use the funds for their own salary, and the funds must be used in one year.
- ▶ The program began as a pilot funded by the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program in 2002. The success of the program led to permanent funding provided by the Vilas Trust from 2005 to the present.
- ▶ We receive approximately 21 applications each year, and fund approximately 15 of them. We distribute \$372,000 per year via this mechanism.

Why is it needed?

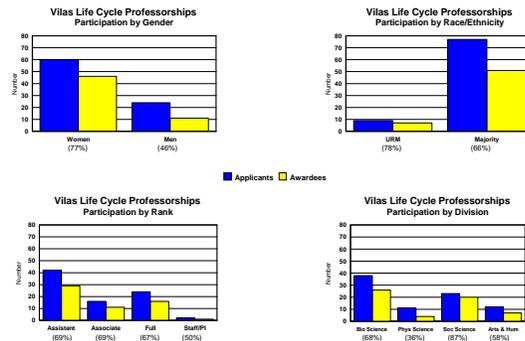
- ▶ Faculty who are at critical junctures in their professional careers and whose research productivity has been directly affected by personal life events are at great risk for leaving the university, not receiving tenure, or not progressing in their careers. This is an enormous loss not only to the individual, but also to the institution.
- ▶ Women are disproportionately affected by these events at earlier stages in the academic career.

Application Process

- ▶ Calls for proposals are issued by the Provost in May, September, and December. Proposals are solicited three times annually, because life events can be unpredictable.
- ▶ Applicants fill out a budget, current and pending support form, provide a CV or biosketch, and write a short personal statement of need. The statement must address:
 - ▶ Why is this a critical juncture in your career?
 - ▶ What is the life event you are experiencing, and how has it affected your research progress?
 - ▶ How will the requested funds help you through the crisis and enhance your research program?
 - ▶ What are the costs/consequences of not receiving the funding?
- ▶ Applicants may solicit letters of support from their department chairs but they are not required, as some applicants prefer not to inform their chairs about their personal issue(s).
- ▶ To the extent possible, applications and awards are confidential.
- ▶ A four-person committee, with members representing each of the four disciplinary divisions on campus (Biological Science, Physical Science, Social Studies, and Arts & Humanities), evaluates the applications and makes awards.

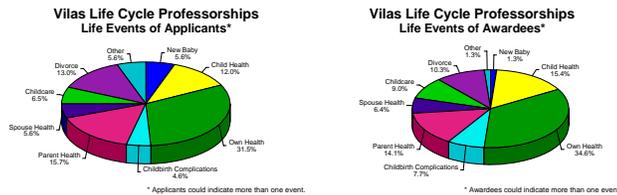
Who Applies?

- ▶ From 2002-2007, 84 faculty and permanent PIs have applied to the program. 57 faculty and permanent PIs have received awards through this program.
- ▶ Women are more likely than men to apply and to receive an award. Under-represented faculty are more likely than majority faculty to receive an award. Faculty of all ranks apply and all ranks are equally likely to be funded. Faculty from all disciplinary divisions apply, but many fewer applications are received from Physical Science departments.



Why do they apply?

- ▶ The most common reasons for applying for the award are due to health issues—one's own health, a child's health, the health of a parent, and/or the health of a spouse/partner.
- ▶ Many applicants (~25%) report more than one life issue occurring simultaneously.



"This is a completely different mechanism...It's a crisis line....a lifeline, a life raft. That one year was critical, and if I didn't have the [grant] then I probably would say 'I can't make it, and I'm leaving'"

"The grant gave me the space to continue my work and it also gave me the confidence to get back to my writing after my recuperation."

"If I had not received the Vilas grant, one of my students, who is an especially gifted student, would have gone without funding, and might have been forced to leave graduate school. As it is now, I have enough funding to support her until...she plans to graduate with her Ph.D. This is a very happy ending."

Does the program work?

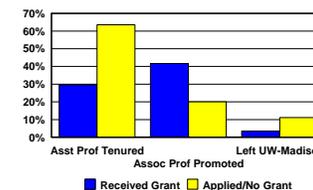
- ▶ Evaluation results show that the faculty who receive the Vilas Life Cycle Professorship awards are able to get "back on track" and progress in their careers. The grant.....
 - ▶ is the only grant of its kind
 - ▶ came at a critical juncture in recipients' personal and professional lives
 - ▶ provided psychological support
 - ▶ impacts others' lives (e.g., students, postdocs, staff in faculty work groups) as well
 - ▶ is an investment in the grantees' futures and the University's future
 - ▶ enables grantees' continued success; helps people maintain career success and productivity
 - ▶ decreases attrition in the faculty
 - ▶ application and award process is a positive experience.
- ▶ All faculty—recipients and others—report that the existence of the program provides evidence that the UW-Madison is committed to their success and recognizes both the personal and professional aspects of their lives.

"Without the extra help made possible by this grant, I would probably have explored possibilities for either an unpaid leave of absence or a move to a job closer to my [family]."

"The program was very helpful to me. It allowed for me to continue my research while I did not have the time and will to write grant proposals. Eventually, I got more grant funding from NSF."

"This program generates a feeling of commitment to this institution, and a desire and willingness to give back, to help ensure that others benefit from similar institutional support in the future. . . I have mentioned it to job candidates as an illustration of how this institution takes seriously life cycle issues and is genuinely humane and supportive."

Vilas Life Cycle Professorships Faculty Outcomes



For more information, visit <http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/>

