

**THE CLIMATE AT UW-MADISON:
BEGINS SUNNY AND WARM, ENDS CHILLY**

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March 26, 2006

This material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0123666. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

The Climate at UW-Madison: Begins Sunny and Warm, Ends Chilly

Executive Summary

The following is a summary and technical report of the results of semi-structured interviews with nine female faculty members who left the UW-Madison and seven faculty members presently employed at the UW. The interviews were conducted on behalf of the Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI), an initiative funded by the National Science Foundation¹ that seeks to increase the number of women as faculty and as leaders on the UW-Madison campus. To achieve this goal, WISELI staff and the leadership team envisioned the campus as a living laboratory to promote gender equity for women in science and engineering by conducting “issue studies,” carrying out dynamic research and evaluation, and continuing and developing campus initiatives and programs. The following report documents the second issue study funded by this grant.

Initially, sixteen interviews were conducted and the data were collected for two separate studies and purposes: 1) to identify the factors that influenced women faculty in science and engineering to leave the UW-Madison and, 2) to explore dual-career hiring experiences of university employees. It was only after the interview data from both studies were analyzed that we began to see how many of the findings were actually related. The executive summary explains the interrelated nature of these studies; the technical report explains the methodology and results for each study separately.

Cross-cutting Findings

Interviews with seven men and women who were hired at the UW-Madison with their spouses indicate that the university is doing good things to attract dual-career couples. The interviewees described how the university had been “accommodating,” “proactive,” and “helpful” overall. In these cases, each member of the couple was offered a position at the university—the ideal situation for the couple’s personal and professional needs. In all cases, the initial hire received the desired faculty position and in two cases, the “trailing” spouse went into an academic staff position.

The results from interviews with nine women faculty who left the university reveal two central themes—negative departmental climate and work-life balance issues. The women faculty consistently described specific negative incidents from their personal experience and how those incidents affected their decision to leave the UW. Further, competing and often conflicting demands between rigorous professional responsibilities and those of their families provided further justification for their decisions.

The interviews to discover why women faculty leave the university demonstrate that the issue of negative climate seems to be interwoven with the experiences of dually-hired couples. It appears

¹ NSF SBE – 0123666, \$4.75 million provided from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2006; the ADVANCE Program is subtitled “Increasing the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers.”

from the interviews that these hires are a very attractive means for recruiting professional couples to campus. According to the results of the dual-career study, the university is successful in attracting these couples. Once the couple is here however, both individuals are not necessarily happy. Surprisingly, approximately half of the interviews with women faculty who left revealed that their husbands were not having positive experiences within their departments, which ultimately prompted both to seek positions elsewhere. In these instances, the wife made the decision to leave the university, which is of particular concern since many of these women were successfully recruited into a science or engineering department.

In summary, there appears to be a discrepancy between recruiting couples to campus and actually retaining them. This disconnect influences the decision for either or possibly both members of the couple to leave the university. In these instances, if the husband was unhappy in his department, but the wife content in hers, she ultimately made the decision to leave the university with him. The positive experiences with dual-hire recruitments seem, for some, to have been overshadowed by the spouse having a negative departmental climate experience.

Recommendations to Improve Recruitment, Retention and Overall Climate

Based on the stories of the women and the dually-hired faculty described in the subsequent technical report, several recommendations emerged. These recommendations are aimed at improving the overall experience of faculty in science and engineering departments with recruitment, retention and improving the climate for all.

Recruitment

- Make sure start-up packages include items such as space, personnel, and other resources—enough to ensure a successful beginning for a new hire.
- Honor contracts offered during recruitment efforts.
- Delineate tenure guidelines immediately.
- Make spousal hire policies transparent; document and communicate what they are and how they are implemented.
- Disseminate information regarding sick and maternity leave, tenure-clock extension, and other UW policies.
- Ensure that the “trailing” spouse is offered a position that is consistent with her/his professional and personal needs and goals.
- Encourage collaboration across departments to make spousal hires a possibility.

Retention

- Integrate new faculty into the department with deliberate strategies to address isolation.
- Offer an initial reduction in teaching loads, advising, and committee work for new hires.
- Delineate and document tenure and promotion guidelines.
- Support realistic performance expectations within varying specialties (i.e., clinical expectations in addition to grants, teaching, research, and publishing).
- Provide guidance for junior faculty in seeking grants, teaching, publishing, research, and clinical work.
- Improve departmental mentoring, both formal and informal.
- Implement strategies to decrease isolation felt among women, those doing non-mainstream research, etc.

- Invest in a new hire for their own well-being, the department's and for the university.
- Fund permanent positions for dual-career hires.
- Offer life-cycle research grants in times of personal and professional struggles.
- Create and sustain zero tolerance policies on illegal and unethical practices in departments.
- Designate an ombuds position to address dual-career and climate issues on campus.
- Develop and disseminate information about work life-family balance policies.
- Increase opportunities for networking with women scientists and other professionals.

The interviews that were conducted for two separate studies, dual-career hiring and why women leave the UW-Madison, are more meaningful when they are described together. Separately, the two studies are just a few brushstrokes on a canvas. Together, they paint a picture of some of the stories and experiences of couples hired at and then leave the UW-Madison. The following technical report explains the methodology and results for each study separately.

The Climate at UW-Madison: Begins Sunny and Warm, Ends Chilly

Technical Report

Introduction

This report describes the methodology and results of interviews with nine female faculty members who left the UW-Madison and seven men and women presently employed by the UW-Madison. The interviews were conducted on behalf of the Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI), an initiative funded by the National Science Foundation that seeks to increase the number of women as faculty and as leaders on the UW-Madison campus. The purpose of the interviews was to: 1) identify the factors that influenced women faculty in science and engineering departments to leave the UW-Madison, and 2) to explore the experiences of dually-hired university employees.

Methods

Dual-Career Hire Study

In the fall of 2004, staff at Virginia Tech approached WISELI's Executive Director and asked for help in obtaining contact information for the couples who were "dually hired" at the UW-Madison in recent years. As a funded ADVANCE site, they were studying dual-career policies and wanted to include information from faculty and staff at UW-Madison. In return, they provided us with the transcripts from the interviews they conducted with these individuals. The interview protocol used for this study is found in Appendix A.

Ultimately, seven people were interviewed. Each was identified as the "first hire." Four are men; three are women and all were hired into faculty positions between 1997 and 2002. In these interviews, the faculty members noted that five of their spouses were hired into faculty positions; two were hired into academic staff positions.

Why Women Leave Issue Study

In fall of 2004, a list of women who were in science and engineering departments and who left the university between the years of 2001-2004 was obtained. From this list, names were omitted if they appeared to have retired or were deceased. Approximately seventeen names remained and all were contacted and invited to participate in this study. From this group, nine women agreed to participate in interviews² using the interview protocol found in Appendix B.

Each interview took between 20 and 60 minutes to conduct and all were completed over the telephone and taped using recording equipment to capture both the interviewer and the interviewee. The resulting tapes were transcribed, and the transcripts analyzed using ATLAS.ti coding software.

² Eight interviews were conducted by Christine Maidl Pribbenow, one was conducted by Deveny Benting.

Analysis

For both studies, the interview transcripts were inserted into ATLAS.ti and reviewed and coded by at least two members of the WISELI evaluation staff. When coding the “why women leave” data, 93 codes were identified with 1-11 instances or “quotes” included in each. These codes were further combined into the thematic areas described below. For the “dual-career” data, 85 codes were identified, which included 1-10 instances or “quotes” in each. These codes were further collapsed into the major thematic areas described below.

Results

It makes intuitive sense to discuss the dual-career study first, as the process of being hired comes before the decision to leave. Consequently, these results will be described, followed by the results of the interviews of women who left the university.

Dual-Career Hire Study

Several of the interviewees discussed the deliberate decision that both they and their spouses made to come to UW-Madison so that they could be together. This seemed to be a good draw for these professional couples. For example, Susan³ explains:

One of the reasons that we chose UW in the first place was that both of us would be able to come. That was one of the things that we had decided earlier in our marriage, that we didn't want to be separate because we had seen too many of our friends separate, both in their academic locations and then subsequently marriage. And we just didn't want that to happen. So we were determined that we were either going to take positions, academic positions together, or if he wanted to go into academe and I went into industry, but it would be in the same place. And Wisconsin gave us the opportunity to both be in academe and the same place.

Tim describes how this strategy affected his decision to accept the position:

The University has this spousal hire program that worked really well for us, and I am sure it made the difference in whether or not we came here or went somewhere else. We had three offers and we chose to come to this university largely because we thought it was not only the better place for our family and had the right level of sort of pressure on two of us since we were both going to be assistant professors at the same time, and moreover we had simultaneous offers because of the spousal hire program.

As seen in these examples, many of the interviewees had positive reactions to this recruitment strategy. Jane and others also describe how surprised, and even shocked they were at receiving two offers for the couple:

³ All names have been changed to protect the identity of the interviewees.

Actually I was amazed at how well the university functioned in spousal hiring. I came from a place where this was unknown. It just absolutely floored me, how proactive they were, how accommodating. I didn't bring up the issue, they did...they just assumed that to attract me, they would also need to come up with a second position. Well, we both came in at the same time initially, but then they asked him to come back once they decided. We actually applied for one position. We said we would compete for it or share it. And then they went through their process and offered me the position. And then they indicated that they would try to come up with a comparable position. There's actually a person whose job it was to develop spousal hires. I was so impressed. And then they asked my spouse to come back and interview again. At UW, it's a matter of finding the right place. It's not a matter of 'if.'

It just sort of happened as far as our offers were concerned after I interviewed. Once I had the first offer and at that stage I told them that it would be very important that [wife's name] also get an offer or find something that is meaningful here, and then within a week, I think she had three different departments that were all sort of interested in having her be a part of their faculty. And, she came out and interviewed and everything sort of worked smoothly.

In addition, co-workers within the departments seemed to agree that this was a plus not only for the couple, but for the department, as well.

I think it's only positive... in the [] department where I am, we've hired during the last 5 years, two women have joined our program that we would say, that both came on as spousal hires, but very senior spousal hires and they have been extremely high caliber people. I think they are equivalent to the top 10% of our department, one came from the university of [], one was a tenured faculty member in a more prestigious department than ours, the other person was very well known from the University of [] and she came here and also added clout to our department. The interesting thing is in both of these cases, they would have been first round people all by themselves, we would have bent over backwards to recruit them, but they happened to just show up as spousal hires for our department, and so in that sense it seems to work really, really well in our case. We are getting some high quality people in areas that we wouldn't have necessarily been able to hire before. I think my colleagues have a very high opinion of [dual-career hires], it seems to work really well for us.

Generally, across campus, dual hires also seemed to be perceived as a positive strategy for attracting quality people. Tim notes:

I think that the answer there is 'yes,' across the university it has worked out, it works out really well, the only criticism that you could have is that you would be bringing in people who aren't as high of quality, the quality level could drop, but in fact I think it is just the opposite. I think we've gotten higher quality people overall because we have been able to simultaneously hire couples that are really both superstars, so that seems to work pretty well. And, I think that is the general opinion also.

Though most of the dual hire stories shared were positive, a few interviewees shared concerns about their departmental experiences. These centered around the perceptions voiced by various departments, worries about potential divorce and “voting blocks,” lack of transparent policy implementation, and the lengthy period of time for the hiring process. Karen explains:

We wanted to be in different departments which we thought was good, because bringing two people in who are in different departments, I think people have less issues associated with that than bringing a married couple into the same department, whether they be in the same area within the same department. And I initially had thought, well, why are people prejudiced against that, why would they not want to bring a married couple in? I guess there is the horrible thought that they are going to get divorced and then you're going to have this situation, I think there is also the issue that they are going to be a voting block, that there is going to be two people that are probably going to have the exact same beliefs and it's going to be hard to work with these people on committees, especially if they are in the same area.

She also shares concerns about ensuring that it is handled smoothly:

I don't know anywhere where [dual hiring] is really streamlined, it all seems to be, it is not as straightforward to bring in two people as it is to bring in one, and it just adds further complications and stress to it.

Tim echoed Karen’s uncertainty in regard to the formalized workings of the program:

I didn't, we didn't see too much of the inside workings of the program if you will...I am still not fully aware of what the policy is. I think I appreciate that there is a chunk of money that is made available to departments to hire that is outside their normal hiring plan, that they have agreed with the dean on, and it happens at [UW], so I know those two things happen.

Michael had concerns about the possibility of policy inconsistencies in varying departments across campus:

I think there is quite a bit of variation among departments. I think it also differs when it comes to faculty positions. There is more resentment in general, than towards an academic staff position for two years and things like that.

Finally, Margaret shares how the “receiving department” with the dual-hire can sometimes be an obstacle to be overcome:

The difficulty was in the receiving department that didn't initiate the hiring, they emphasized that this additional hiring has to fit their long-term plans. And obviously they found it did fit into their long-term plan, so they did. But it was a big barrier to overcome.

From those interviewed about the dual-hire experience, some did offer recommendations for improving the overall process. These suggestions included establishing and streamlining a standardized process, making this process transparent for campus and potential university candidates, encouraging collaboration across campus departments, identifying funding for permanent dual hire positions other than soft monies, and the establishment of an ombudsperson for dual hire inquiries.

I think it would be good to say, this is our spousal hire policy and provide that to every job candidate during an interview, because there is a lot of advice given—‘don't mention spousal hire during an interview, it may work against you.’ And I think just being up front about it would be good... there is a lot of rumors about what the university would do for an assistant professor, an associate professor, for spousal hires, but no one quite knows. So, having a more explicit policy... I think that would be good. Maybe even having an ombudsman that you could ask on campus. If I would interview again, someone who I could talk about the spousal hire process, not the department chair or someone on the search committee to whom if I may have just mentioned it, I could have blown my chance. I think that would be good.

I think being as open and honest from their side from the very beginning...it seemed a little bit like smoke and mirrors here a little bit, I didn't know what was going on for a while... there is a lot of, ‘we are going to make you an offer,’ but it took a long time to see it in writing, a really long time and just ways that it could be made more clear, that would have helped. More transparent...we felt a lot of the time that we did not know what was really going to happen, it was really stressful.

I hope there is a standard policy or program across colleges and when this type of issue comes up it is able to be handled professionally and timely...because in many spousal hiring cases it doesn't always happen within the same college. In our case, one was the [] school and one was in []. And there had to be a discussion between these two colleges and then it had to be forwarded to the graduate school. I think it is important for the university or institute to have a program established to facilitate the discussion across colleges.

Why Women Leave Issue Study

Of the nine women who were interviewed, seven continued in faculty positions at other universities, one took a position as a Lab Researcher in industry, and one took an academic staff position at a university. When asked, there were a number of reasons that women faculty in the science and engineering departments identified to explain why they left. Essentially, the information that emerged was clustered around the central themes of poor departmental climate and work-life balance issues.

Interestingly, the issue of poor departmental climate surfaced in an unexpected way. The issue of negative climate seems to be interwoven with the experiences of dually-hired couples. It appears from the interviews with dually-hired couples, that these hires are a very attractive means for

recruiting professional couples to campus. As discussed, the university seems to be somewhat successful in attracting these dual-career couples. However, once the couple is here, they may not both be happy. There appears to be a tension between recruiting and attracting these couples to campus and actually retaining them. This disconnect seems to have influenced the decision for both members of the couple to leave the university, as described below. In these instances, if the husband was unhappy in his department, but the wife content in hers, she ultimately made the decision to leave the university with him. In some instances, the science and engineering departments experienced the loss of women faculty because their spouses were having difficulty within their own departments.

Dual-Career Issues

Interestingly and unexpectedly, interviews with about half of the women revealed the situation that their husbands were having within their own departments, which ultimately prompted them to seek positions elsewhere. In these instances, the wife made the decision to leave the university, as well. Some of these experiences include poor communication, biased allocation of resources, inadequate mentoring, feelings of isolation, and arbitrary performance and promotion guidelines. Even more serious, a couple of women described legal and ethical issues such as not honoring contracts, intentional sabotaging of careers, violent departmental meetings, co-workers serving jail sentences for charges of fraud, and fraternization with students.

Susan describes her husband's difficult experience:

The main reason that we left was not because of my experience, but because of his experience and because his experience was just opposite of mine. And so it was a family decision, that even though mine was great, I wasn't going to stay and have him leave and take another position in a different state.

She continues:

His very first faculty meeting, some of the professors in that meeting, for the lack of a better term, didn't know how to control their anger about a particular issue and began cursing and someone [became aggressive]...and after that, he didn't go to faculty meetings anymore, which was not a good thing politically of course... In the department, they did a lot of partying and drinking and there were some instances where some of the professors... would encourage their students to go to bars with them. And my husband was really uncomfortable with that. And there were just some other things where he wasn't very comfortable with his colleagues in terms of the things that they wanted to do and how they were conducting themselves, because he had one view of what a professor was supposed to be and it wasn't working.

Susan's husband and others also dealt with unethical behavior, as described in the following two examples:

He had another professor who wanted to put him on a grant and worked with him to get his work on the grant, but then submitted the grant and never acknowledged him.

It's really a shame, because you have professors that are just terrible teachers, don't reach out, have no rapport with the students, but because they are bringing in great money, they're there... There was a significant amount of [fraternization] with male professors and [department] students and that's overlooked because they are bringing in money.

Subsequently, the women faculty emphasized the importance for departments to create optimal climates for both members of a couple.

I think just if there is a spouse situation that things have to go right in the spouse's department too, because in a situation like that, well in a situation like ours, I feel like they lost two people...

And so we never went in thinking, 'okay well you know we're just going to do this part-time and we're not going to put in our full, our all in it.' I put my all in it. I guess the message is that the spousal support has to be there. If the spouse is also a faculty member that they have to have mentors also, even if they come from outside of the department, and there has to be some things that are in place for his success too. I think that would be the main thing, to just look at both sides because many times one side affects the other.

I think that my department tried to support me more, which was very helpful, but he just wasn't getting anything on his side. And I think that again the final thing came down to... I think their communications just broke down—there weren't conversations. There were mutters, 'no you can't do this and you're not going to be renewed if you do things like that'. There were legal issues and I think at that time, I was upset for him and he just wanted to leave. And I was like, 'okay, should I sue them?' And that was one of the things that had come up, and it was just one of those things like, 'let's just get out of here.' So, there were just a lot of misunderstandings and things that just didn't go right and not enough support from other people who were willing to understand.

Climate for Self

Poor climate emerged at the departmental level and manifested itself in many consequential ways. The women we interviewed noted the apparent fragmentation within departments. This fragmentation was exacerbated by poor communication between and among faculty members, as well as between the department chair and the faculty. Perceptions of a poor departmental culture were characterized as colleagues berating other colleagues, an atmosphere of the “golden boys” versus “the others,” and professionals not being treated with respect by their department chairs. Any attempts at change in these situations were seen as temporary fixes or patches instead of changing big-picture problems. The following women share sentiments about their departmental experiences.

The fact that the department was really fragmented and the chair was actually not able to administer, administrate the department well, which was very demoralizing.

I felt that I did not fit in my home department and at the time, the department was pursuing a culture of mediocrity that I, and a number of other faculty, found unacceptable.

Laura describes her feelings of helplessness in regard to her departmental home:

I used to come back from department head meetings, or department meetings, and I'd sit in my office and cry for a while, it was just awful. Because the climate was so chilly. I felt like there was no one in that room that was someone I could talk to about these very strange problems and figure out a solution. It was such a ludicrous situation, it was hard for me to go and talk to anyone.

A few women also described an overall lack of departmental support. This was frequently discussed in terms of wishing investment in the person existed “up front,” so that not only would this benefit the person, but the department, as well.

I think upfront they should have thought about how they hired me. I think they hired me to hire a woman in the department. And they didn't think about how I was really going to be integrated in... I was going to have a research group that I worked with or are they just hiring this woman faculty member to hire a woman. I just don't think they gave much thought about it, they saw me as a potentially successful faculty member, but that was it. They were going to just let me go. I understand that you have to prove yourself and all of that, when you're an assistant professor. But I think there's some responsibility to integrate you in the department and I just didn't see that happening. And I think, again through that integration, there would have been this support structure that would have been built in and I think that would have been good.

But when you bring people in and you make the effort to be on these committees to recruit the best you can and you have a person who's obviously applied and wants to be there, you have to do everything you can to keep them. Because that's the whole point. A lot of money was invested in me and it's gone and they'll never get that back. And they can't hire anybody else to take my place. So if you want to keep this person because you think they are obviously the best person for that position, then you need to try to— whoever, in that department or the head of the department of whomever is working with them, really every everyone in that department needs to make some kind of conscious effort to mentor that person to make sure that they make it. Because if all these other people are tenured, they've made it, and you know, whatever it takes to do it you have to instill in this little fledgling until you wean them and they're on their own. But you've got to do everything you can.

A number of the women faculty discussed their concern with the lack of formal and informal mentoring once they had arrived here on campus. Their lack of mentoring left them confused and uncertain about the amount and types of publications they should be producing, advice and procedures on the pursuit of prestigious grants, types of innovative research directions and the protocols for promotion and tenure. The issue of guideline for the promotion and tenure process was one that was talked about frequently. Some women noted a lack of understanding about the promotion and tenure process, arbitrary departmental performance and promotion guidelines, and blatant lack of adherence to documented departmental performance and promotion guidelines. In one particular instance, a faculty member was recruited with the promise (and a contract letter) of promotion, which did not happen during her time here. She describes this experience and its impact on her decision to leave:

I left because my husband took a job in [city]. However, there were a few things that made it easier to leave. Those things included—when I first came [to UW-Madison] I had negotiated with the chair to be promoted to full professor and even the appointment letter said that I would be a professor, but then when I got there they said ‘oh, we have to go to the committee and you have to be an associate professor.’ That never should have happened. And then they even changed the letter and wanted me to initial it. And I said, ‘no way, I’m not going to do that.’ It was poorly handled by the chair.

In her opinion, the following needs to happen:

I think if you really want to recruit and retain, you have to have people in the department nurture them and really stay on them. Because basically what, pretty much every university is about bringing in money—publish or perish, and that’s the bottom line. And if you have to write a book in African-American Studies or if you’re in biochemistry or whatever, you have to be really mentored to make sure you publish in the right journals that are looked at. That if you need to get NSF or NIH or USDA funding, and you need to publish in such-and-such refereed journal, you really have to be mentored to make sure you are getting your 1 to 2 publications a year and you bring in some good money.

Stephanie agrees and shares how her lack of mentoring affected her faculty performance and promotion process:

I had a mentoring committee—the head of the department and three other faculty—an associate dean and then two in the department that were all tenured obviously. And I attended a few of the tenure meetings that they had for campus-wide, primarily women that are starting, and I had an outside mentor. What the problems is—the department did not follow faculty policies and procedures. And I really wasn’t so cognizant of that, that none of my meetings were documented. So when this went before the executive committee, there was no documentation of anything. Not even minutes from my mentoring meetings. And I just think that for me personally, I should have probably been more cognizant of that because that was extremely important and that’s a violation of FPP.

She continues:

And I believe the head of the department is aware of the [violation of FPP] because he has been called into the Provost's office specifically for that reason and subsequently letters have gone out to every head of the department on campus that this should never happen. That you do have to follow FPP and there has to be documentation of mentoring meetings.

Another climate issue was reflected in how departmental resources were allocated. Some faculty members felt that there was a clear bias in the way that resources were distributed. These resources included, but were not limited to, allocation of raises, support from staff and students, and laboratory space. In the following statement, Beth discusses how differing types of research were privileged and consequentially rewarded within the department:

I felt that the leadership in my department wasn't great. My research was more theoretical, at the theoretical end of [discipline], and my department valued more applied research and didn't particularly value interdisciplinary research. Those kind of biases just sort of showed themselves all the time when it came to giving resources, came to giving students, came to giving raises... anything.

Kelly describes her discomfort with the inconsistency in procedures when petitioning for needed additional space:

When it became clear that both the quality and quantity of space I was allocated were completely insufficient, given the size and level of activity of the program, I requested additional space. I was required to present a 'case' to the faculty that involved toting up lots of statistics in a very un-modest way. I found this quite humiliating, and a deviation from other space allocation decisions involving other faculty at about the same time. I was given one additional small room...this was still far insufficient. When it came to the need for more space, it seemed easier to leave.

In addition to the lack of departmental support, another sentiment that frequently emerged in the women's stories was the feeling of isolation. The faculty talked about being ignored within their own departments, feeling like outsiders, and feeling like they didn't fit. In some instances, women described their actual physical isolation based upon where their offices or laboratory spaces were located. Many expressed the desire for connection with others in their department, as well as with other women scientists across campus. Following are just a few of the sentiments of isolation:

And I was in the [] science, which is one of the two areas that those two groups work in, and I was the only, I think there were only two other faculty members, none of which had an active research program that weren't in one of those two groups. And I tried to sort of work into those groups and I just wasn't welcome. There were just men in these two groups and I just wasn't welcome in either group. And so I felt really, really isolated and that's probably...the isolation combined with the harassment, were the two things that led me to just leave.

I went straight to UW from graduate school. I would like to say that the department was supportive, but I am not sure that they were especially so. I worked very little with other current faculty...I was sort of ignored the first few years by most of the current faculty. I was always outside of the major department groupings.

Work-Life Balance Issues

The final issue that the women faculty identified was the difficulty in balancing the requirements of a rigorous research career and competing home-life demands. Some managed by attempting to be creative with their academic and research schedules, but many times they felt this was met with scorn from others within their departments. A few women discussed how they wrestled with professional and family demands.

I also, we have three children, all teenagers now and I was looking for a less stressful life than being a faculty member. I was working on quite a few committees and not just at the university but on review panels for NSF and NASA, so I was traveling for that. And, teaching and trying to head a research group by myself. I had two post-docs, and three graduate students and it was just kind of chaotic. And I felt like going back to just doing research, would be better for my family and [would be] fewer hats for me to wear. And in fact, it has worked out that way.

So, first I was commuting to the [East coast] and then I was commuting to the [West coast] and after 3 years we decided to get married and also at that time he's doing pretty well at [other university]. It's pretty clear that he'll be tenured. So either I want my family or I want my career, and at that time, I decided that I want a family first.

Some of the women faculty reported leaving for various other reasons. These included pursuing a career track in university administration, opportunities for greater collaboration and interaction, higher salary, and other institutional offers that provided more flexibility between teaching and research and priorities at home. These reasons were not the impetus for leaving. Typically, either their own stress or the climate in their spouses' departments contributed to their decisions, as well.

Interestingly, prior to their departure, most of these women were presented counter-offers to stay at the UW. By that time, many felt that it was a classic example of "too little too late." Further, the overarching issues of climate still loomed.

I almost stayed, but in the end I left. I just felt like even though people really worked hard to make it attractive for me to stay—they offered to hire more people in my research area, they offered me a bigger salary, which I didn't necessarily care about although I think that if they hadn't I would have felt slighted. But they did, they came through, they offered me everything. But in the end, things would happen and I would realize that, if I stayed, two months later, I'd be back to square one.

And even though UW offered me a huge, great retention package—the dean went way beyond his means to offer me all this stuff before I left. I knew that I would have to walk down the hallway and the climate was too chilly for me to be there, and so money just wasn't worth it in the end.

Cross-cutting Findings and Recommendations

Interviews with seven men and women who were hired at the UW-Madison with their spouses indicate that the university is doing good things to attract dual-career couples. The interviewees described how the university had been “accommodating,” “proactive,” and “helpful” overall. In these cases, each member of the couple was offered a position at the university—the ideal situation for the couple’s personal and professional needs. In all cases, the initial hire received the desired faculty position and in two cases, the “trailing” spouse went into an academic staff position.

The results from interviews with nine women faculty who left the university reveal two central themes—negative departmental climate and work-life balance issues. The women faculty consistently described specific negative incidents from their personal experience and how those incidents affected their decision to leave the UW. Further, competing and often conflicting demands between rigorous professional responsibilities and those of their families provided further justification for their decisions.

The interviews to discover why women faculty leave the university demonstrate that the issue of negative climate seems to be interwoven with the experiences of dually-hired couples. It appears from the interviews that these hires are a very attractive means for recruiting professional couples to campus. According to the results of the dual-career study, the university is successful in attracting these couples. Once the couple is here however, both individuals are not necessarily happy. Surprisingly, approximately half of the interviews with women faculty who left revealed that their husbands were not having positive experiences within their departments, which ultimately prompted both to seek positions elsewhere. In these instances, the wife made the decision to leave the university, which is of particular concern since many of these women were successfully recruited into a science or engineering department.

Based on the stories of the women and the dually-hired faculty described in this report, several recommendations emerged. These recommendations are aimed at improving the overall experience of faculty in science and engineering departments with recruitment, retention and improving the climate for all.

Recruitment

- Make sure start-up packages include items such as space, personnel, and other resources—enough to ensure a successful beginning for a new hire.
- Honor contracts offered during recruitment efforts.
- Delineate tenure guidelines immediately.

- Make spousal hire policies transparent; document and communicate what they are and how they are implemented.
- Disseminate information regarding sick and maternity leave, tenure-clock extension, and other UW policies.
- Ensure that the “trailing” spouse is offered a position that is consistent with her/his professional and personal needs and goals.
- Encourage collaboration across departments to make spousal hires a possibility.

Retention

- Integrate new faculty into the department with deliberate strategies to address isolation.
- Offer an initial reduction in teaching loads, advising, and committee work for new hires.
- Delineate and document tenure and promotion guidelines.
- Support realistic performance expectations within varying specialties (i.e., clinical expectations in addition to grants, teaching, research, and publishing).
- Provide guidance for junior faculty in seeking grants, teaching, publishing, research, and clinical work.
- Improve departmental mentoring, both formal and informal.
- Implement strategies to decrease isolation felt among women, those doing non-mainstream research, etc.
- Invest in a new hire for their own well-being, the department’s and for the university.
- Fund permanent positions for dual-career hires.
- Offer life-cycle research grants in times of personal and professional struggles.
- Create and sustain zero tolerance policies on illegal and unethical practices in departments.
- Designate an ombuds position to address dual-career and climate issues on campus.
- Develop and disseminate information about work life-family balance policies.
- Increase opportunities for networking with women scientists and other professionals.

In summary, there appears to be a discrepancy between recruiting couples to campus and actually retaining them. This disconnect influences the decision for either or possibly both members of the couple to leave the university. In these instances, if the husband was unhappy in his department, but the wife content in hers, she ultimately made the decision to leave the university with him. The positive experiences with dual-hire recruitments seem, for some, to have been overshadowed by the spouse having a negative departmental climate experience. The interviews that were conducted for two separate studies, dual-career hiring and why women leave the UW-Madison, are more meaningful when they are described together. Separately, the two studies are just a few brushstrokes on a canvas. Together, they describe the stories and experiences of a number of key couples hired at and then leave the UW-Madison.

Appendices

Appendix A: Dual-Career Hire Interview Protocol

1. Would you describe for me your experiences with a dual-career hire at the university, including how and when the issue was raised, who raised it, and how the process unfolded?
2. What are the similarities and differences between you and your partner's credentials and expertise?
3. At the time of the initial hire, did you and your spouse/partner have any kind of spoken or unspoken agreement about the priority of your careers and how you would approach the job search?
4. How did your experience with the issue of dual-careers at this university compare to experiences you had at other universities or colleges?
5. How satisfied are you with the process and the positions you and your partner secured?
6. How satisfied is your spouse with his/her current employment opportunities?
7. What are your co-workers attitudes about spousal hires?
8. How do your experiences with a spouse/partner hire compare to others you know about?
9. What role does your spouse's employment status have in your own overall life and work satisfaction and ability to get your work done?
10. What kind of resources, including equipment and to attend professional meeting, do you need to do your research and advance your career and what has the university been able to supply?
11. Would you consider leaving the university to improve the employment opportunities for you and your spouse?
12. In an ideal world or a best-case scenario, what would both of your jobs look like?
13. What recommendations do you have for how the university can maximize the effectiveness of a spousal hiring process?

Appendix B: Why Women Leave Interview Protocol

Demographics: Name
 Age
 Length of time at UW
 Promoted? Title/status when left
 Current title/job, location

1. What are you currently doing?
2. Describe your experience in the [NAME] department. Best things, worst things.
3. Describe your experience on campus. Best things, worst things.
4. Why did you leave the UW?
5. How far into being here did you know that you were unhappy? Wanted to leave?
6. Did you have these concerns when you accepted the position at UW?
7. What types of things could the UW have done to improve your experience? The department?
8. What types of resources did you seek for support? Were they helpful?
9. Would you recommend others to apply to or accept a job at the UW?
10. Do you remain in contact with anyone at UW?
11. What types of things are different in your current job?
12. What could an organization like WISELI do to improve the experience for women on campus?