

WISELI'S EVALUATION OF CAMPUS CHILDCARE: A SUMMARY

Having children as a faculty member requires a balance between responsibilities at home and the demands of one's professional life (i.e., the work-life balance). Faculty members make complex personal and professional decisions to raise children. According to the Study of Faculty Worklife Survey and the interviews with 26 faculty women conducted by WISELI's Research and Evaluation Team, faculty members had varying degrees of success at the work-life balance.

Women and the Work-Life Balance In the Study of Faculty Worklife survey, we asked whether faculty agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *I am usually satisfied with the way in which I balance my professional and personal life.* Overall, 60.2% of faculty agreed that they were balancing the two roles satisfactorily. Women faculty, however, were significantly less likely than men faculty to agree with that statement (49.4% vs. 65.3% of men). We also asked whether *personal responsibilities and commitments have slowed down [your] career progression.* Almost half—42.5%—agreed that this was true (over half of women agreed—51.0% of women compared to 38.8% of men).

ACHIEVING BALANCE

Make children and work the main priorities Women prioritized their goals so that their family and work were at the top. For many, this meant separating their work and home by setting time limits on their working schedule, and by doing minimal, if any, work when they were at home. It also meant spending little time on anything other than work and family.

The pursuit of science is never finished—it could go on for 24 hours if you let it. So I just have starting and stopping points, and organize my day almost neurotically and finish at a particular time. I go home and I'm with my family 100%.

Use the flexibility of the faculty position A key factor in women's ability to balance their family and work lives was the flexibility inherent in their faculty position. Many women described creating work arrangements different from the typical "9-5 schedule"—they worked at home some days, began or ended their day at unusual hours, or left in the middle of the day.

I tried to balance the two in ways I could. After the kids were in bed, when I was writing grants I was here until 1 a.m. People saw the effort and really tried very hard to work with me if there was a conflict in schedule. They really always tried.

Have support at home Women noted that a critical factor in their ability to balance work and family lives was to have support at home, particularly from a spouse or partner.

R: Unless my husband had said that he wanted to keep our son out until he was a year old, we would've had to seek in-home care of something, you know it just would've been very difficult.

I: So does your husband do a lot of the childcare?

R: Yes he does. Starting next week, we decided to keep all of our children at home during the summer so my husband will do that. So I stayed home most of last fall, and my husband's been staying home most of the spring, and he'll stay home this summer.

Don't have children, or don't use childcare Some people don't see childcare as an option. One interviewee said that she just never felt there was time to have a child, and then was eventually too old to have one anyway (but had no regrets about this). One had a spouse who stayed home.

I: So is it important for you that you have a spouse at home who takes care of things?

R: Yeah that is probably the most important thing in my life.

I: How would your career be different, I'm just asking you because not everybody had that—

R: Oh I know. I think first of all I wouldn't have had children. I wouldn't have ever had a child unless one of us stayed home.

Others chose not to use childcare based on their own philosophy of childrearing.

I don't think providing 50 hours a week of daycare for children is the right answer for women or men who choose to be really involved in their family for balancing family and career. I think what you want is to allow for parents, but women in particular, to have the time that they need with their children, and have enough uninterrupted time for their work that they can still make significant headway.

FINDING CHILDCARE

Knowledge about childcare in Madison Some interviewees seemed confused about their options for campus childcare.

The (chuckling) childcare has been the worst part of my job move. . . . When I came here to interview, because [there is] only [one other] female in the section and she has no children, there was no one who could tell me anything about childcare, because I met only [my colleagues] and all their wives take care of their childcare. And when I did call the places that I was able to get recommendations, you know they were full for the next year or whatever. All the good places are full way, way, way in advance.

On-campus vs. off-campus

Survey respondents showed a strong preference for on-campus care, and valued the high quality of care we do have on campus. Parents of preschool-aged children (under age 6) using UW-Madison childcare centers were more likely to say they are “Very Satisfied” with their current childcare arrangements than parents not using these centers (78.8% vs. 49.5%).

I wish that I had gotten into the childcare on campus. I was hired in May and started in August, so everything was filled up, so I ended up having to go down to [a suburb]. So that's not working so well. I mean it's great childcare, but the commute. . .

Priorities

- **SCHOOL-AGED CARE—AFTER SCHOOL AND SUMMERS.** By far the biggest priority for faculty with school-aged children was after-school and summer care—71.7% of survey respondents (81.8% of women, and 65.5% of men) indicated after-school care is a “High” or “Quite” a priority.
- **INFANT CARE—NOT ENOUGH SLOTS ON CAMPUS.** The biggest priority for faculty with preschool-aged children was more infant care (68.9% rated it “high” or “quite” a priority).
- **BACK-UP CARE/SICK CHILD CARE.** Childcare for when one’s child is sick was “high” or “quite” a priority for 54.1% of faculty with school-aged children, and 59.4% of faculty with preschool-aged children. Back-up or drop-in care when one’s usual childcare arrangements do not work is a priority for 51.6% of faculty with school-aged children and 63.2% of faculty with preschool-aged children.
- **COSTS OF CHILDCARE—PROBLEMATIC FOR SOME FACULTY.** Faculty of color and single parents with children aged 6-17 placed a higher priority on cost assistance with childcare than did their counterparts. Over half of women faculty with children under age 6 as well as untenured faculty rated cost assistance with childcare a high priority. Over 60% of underrepresented minority faculty with young children reported that cost assistance with childcare was a high priority, although this is not statistically different from majority faculty due to the small numbers of faculty of color with small children.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase the satisfaction level of childcare arrangements for faculty with children under age 18, UW-Madison might consider the following:

- Continue to work on improving departmental climate for faculty parents, especially mothers. One relatively simple way to do this is to highlight the flexibility of work time for faculty; perhaps enhancing existing campus policy in this regard. WISELI climate workshops for chairs are a recommended avenue for this effort.
- Make after-school and/or summer care available to parents on campus, or work in cooperation with community programs to provide such care.
- Increase availability of infant/toddler care on campus. Consider developing a campus-wide plan for “reserving” several slots so that new faculty who arrive in August have access to slots that are normally filled by that time.
- Provide a clear pathway to information about campus childcare; reach out to people who don’t envision campus childcare as an option for their family; and partner with areas on campus that deal with childcare- and childbirth-related policies (e.g., the Tenure Clock Extension Policy, the Parental Leave Policy, etc.).
- Continue trying to make campus childcare affordable for everyone, but especially for women, single parents, and underrepresented minorities. We usually think of faculty as being in a position to afford good childcare; however, our results show that this is not uniformly the case.
- Finally, our estimates show that faculty in the Biological Sciences departments, in particular, show high rates of child production relative to other departments. Any campus initiatives that begin to address issues of tenure clock extensions and parental leave may want to make sure to have representatives from that division on the planning committees.



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