

Iowa State Conference Focuses on Balancing Professional and Personal Lives for Tenure Track Faculty

AMES, IA, September 15, 2008 – Iowa State University will take a leadership role in advancing the careers of women in science and technology related fields by hosting a unique, first time conference featuring national experts on the complex subject of balancing a successful and rewarding professional career with a satisfying personal life. The conference titled, *The New Norm of Faculty Flexibility: Transforming the Culture in Science and Engineering*, will be held at the Scheman Building on the Iowa State campus on October 10-11, 2008.

The conference is primarily targeted at faculty and administrative professionals in science and technology related fields who are currently involved in or considering careers as tenured faculty members within a university or other educational institution. This forum will allow the experts and participants to discuss how current programs have been working and what steps need to be taken for these programs to grow and benefit both the participants and the universities. Several academic institutions, including Iowa State, are already testing policies within their organizations, including programs for extending the tenure clock and options allowing faculty members to move in and out of part-time appointments, throughout their careers.

“Educational institutions, such as Iowa State University, will need to recruit as much intellectual brainpower as possible to continue the scientific research and technological discoveries that have made them world class leaders,” said Dr. Bonnie Bowen, Executive Director, ISU ADVANCE Program. “Women are an integral part of the success equation for these organizations.”

Work/life balance programs also have financial implications for educational institutions. Universities invest a considerable amount of resources into their highly trained workforce. If the demands of a career will not make allowances for someone to continue in that position when they have family or other personal commitments, it could be very costly for the organization as they continue to recruit and train new people for existing faculty positions. In addition, precious time and knowledge could be lost in the process, which would have additional implications for the institution.

During the conference, national experts will examine the multifaceted issues related to the ongoing work/life balance questions, including:

- What are the current policies at educational institutions? Although flexible career programs are not a new idea, many programs are still in development phases and are often underutilized.
- What are the intersections between private industry and academia? Although private industry can often affect quicker changes in workplace practices, academic institutions have a very strong impact on work life balance programs as they train future generations of scientists and technology professionals.
- How can these programs and policies be measured for success? As institutions set up flexible career policies, will employees use them? And if they do, what effect will they have on their careers?

This subject is very timely as women continue to be underrepresented in science and technology careers within academic institutions, said Dr. Susan Carlson, Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement and Diversity, Iowa State University. “Women are often trained in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) related careers, but often leave their trained fields when they have families, since it traditionally has been very difficult to take time off or slow down and still succeed in tenure track faculty positions.”

For more information about this upcoming conference, contact Bonnie Bowen, 515-294-6151, advance@iastate.edu or visit www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/isuadvance/home.html.

The Iowa State University ADVANCE program was developed to increase the participation and advancement of women faculty in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields at Iowa State through a comprehensive and integrated educational plan. This program was made possible through a five year grant for \$3.3 million dollars from the National Science Foundation. The ISU ADVANCE program includes faculty representatives in 30 STEM departments across 5 colleges. For more information about the ISU ADVANCE program, call 515.294.6151, e-mail advance@iastate.edu or visit www.advance.iastate.edu.

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