

**The New Norm of Faculty Flexibility:  
Transforming the Culture in Science & Engineering  
October 10-11, 2008  
Saturday Executive Summary**

*Panel 3: Measurement and Assessment of Policies and Flexibility*

**Analyzing Flexible Policy Options for Faculty: Recommendations from Balance@UW<sup>1</sup>**

*Dr. Kate Quinn, University of Washington*

Dr. Kate Quinn presented the results of data she had collected about flexibility policies and faculty use of these policies at several institutions. She found that half of the universities responding to her survey provided housing for their faculty; this seems to be an up-and-coming issue in flexibility. All her respondents had policies for dual-career couples and clock stoppage, while just over half had modified duties and caregiver policies. The harder data to acquire was data on whether faculty had taken advantage of these policies. The difficulty arises from the lack of a central source where this data is collected; most of it resides in the form of memos in faculty files. Dr. Quinn found that about a quarter of the faculty she managed to survey used clock stoppage, with STEM faculty using it the least. She found that the more clock stoppages a person used the less likely they were to get tenure. However, surprisingly people who used one clock stoppage were more likely to get tenure than those who used none. Women used these more than men did, and for different reasons: most women used stoppage for personal reasons, while most men used them for professional reasons.

*Panel 3: Measurement and Assessment of Policies and Flexibility*

**Breaking the Norms: Measuring the Impact of New Policies<sup>2</sup>**

*Dr. Sandra Gahn & Dr. Susan Carlson, Iowa State University*

In their presentation, Dr. Gahn and Dr. Carlson presented ISU ADVANCE, Iowa State University's work on assessing balance between career, life, and family. As a public university, ISU is in a good position to gather data to measure attitudes and satisfaction of faculty. With funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, they designed a database to assess both the costs and benefits of ISU's flexible career policies, tracking faculty demographics, job search costs, start-up costs, faculty compensation data, faculty flexibility data, and tenure and employment data. In short, they wanted to include every cost possible. From this data, ISU was able to put a specific dollar amount on the costs to retain a faculty member.

In collecting this data, they also wanted to know what faculty believed about policies, such as tenure clock extension and whether gender differences affected those attitudes. For instance, while they found that having a tenure clock policy shows ISU is supportive of faculty issues and helps recruit faculty, it also might hurt chances for tenure. This data provided the incentive to work with faculty to help change attitudes by identifying the gaps and rigidities in the institution. At the same time, they found it hard to find correlations between reasons for leaving and specific policies. In the future, such information can help streamline processes for recruitment and retention, increase use and acceptance of flexible policies, and give them freedom to make arguments that aren't so quantifiable—dollars are only one measure of costs and benefits. They also plan to create a new work-life website, interview policy users, and develop policies to transform the institution through research, training, and community.

<sup>1</sup> summary by Christopher M. Sutch

<sup>2</sup> summary by Karen Gulbrandsen

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**Taking a Strategic Approach to Assessing Cultural Change<sup>2</sup>**

*Dr. Ann E. Austin, Michigan State University*

In “Taking a Strategic Approach to Assessing Cultural Change,” Dr. Ann E. Austin discussed the reasons for assessment and gave an overview of different methods to strategically assess policies, saying, “as we try to move our institutions forward, we have to think about plans and strategies, but we also have to think about assessment. Policy and assessment go hand-in-hand.” Because academe values systematic assessment, if we have data, then we can make a case to colleagues. Assessment also is a catalyst for change, providing benchmarks that help people make decisions and fostering continued progress.

Austin outlined the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative strategies, arguing that different questions are useful at different points in a change process. Before starting data collection, we need to ask why we are doing it and to revisit that question when monitoring progress and helping the institution move forward. Assessment can strengthen cultural change, but it also means considerations about who to involve and how to create conversations around what we have already learned and to make the data reports and findings useful and accessible. Assessment can be the strategic lever to strengthen the changes taking place.

*Panel 3: Measurement and Assessment of Policies and Flexibility*

**Competing on Culture: Academia’s New Strategic Imperative<sup>2</sup>**

*Dr. Cathy A. Trower, Harvard University*

Dr. Cathy Trower opened her presentation by asking, “Are we trying to flex the inflexible?” In response to the question of why there are so few women in STEM, Dr. Trower stated that every system is designed to get results. Even with policies for extending the clock and working part-time, women continue to confront bias, threat, sexism, and racism. The entrenched academic system created these results, these inflexibilities. While it’s important to bring data to this issue, Dr. Trower argued that we also have to ask what system would get the results we want. Designed in the 1940s, the tenure system was created for white men with wives at home.

Flexing the inflexible is about culture, or what we do when no one is looking. Interpretation of policy is about culture and the type of system in place. In the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) initiative, they wanted to know what faculty satisfaction means. In their survey, they found that the nature of the work and the climate matter more than compensation, family leave, and tenure clarity. It is the quality of life on the job and off that means the most. COACHE: startled at the finding that Harvard is one of the best places to work.

In trying to understand climate dimensions, they found that sense of fit is the single most important factor. Sense of fit means fairness in work evaluation, interest of senior faculty in your work, opportunities to collaborate, and professional and personal interactions with colleagues. Do people have a sense of autonomy or are they isolated? As Dr. Trower noted, while autonomy is chosen, isolation is not. To improve the experiences of STEM women, Dr. Trower recommended that we focus on fit. In doing so, it is important to remember the idea of framing and reframing: we design things to get the outcome we want. “We know the

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problem. We have the data. Now what are we going to do about it? We need to frame, reframe until we get tenured faculty to help us solve the problem.” The way that we shape the problem also shapes the solution.

**Panel 3 Question & Answer<sup>2</sup>**

**Comment:** We are framing things in our conversation. One thing is clear, that there are many ways in which STEM and non-STEM faculty have similar experiences. I encounter STEM women who assume that faculty in other fields have a different life. There is the thought that we don’t have to make things better for them and that they have nothing to offer from their experiences and struggles. Keep in mind others as you look to collaborate.

The other thing to keep in mind is in pricing out flexibility. If we want to convince people that it’s a good thing, we can’t ignore the costs to the people who are affected by those who need the flexibility.

**Q:** Can you give examples of framing and reframing?

**Dr. Trower:** Questions to ask are: How are we framing right now, how do we see lack of women in STEM? What’s another way to look at it? How can we take advantage of the full talent pool? Or thinking about the full person? What are we trying to create here? What does it mean to develop the whole person? What if we look at it from a division of labor? What is that work place? One of the ways we have done it is to say that what is a great place to work is a different kind of question.

**Q:** How have you disseminated data on campuses? What has been the response?

**Dr. Carlson:** At ISU, we began with deans to make sure we had their buy-in for the kinds of data we had and whether it made sense. Most had seen the data in one form or another. What we haven’t done yet is to take the costs, mostly replacement costs, and to connect it to the second set of data, to connect it to policy use. We are rolling out the survey data about attitudes with the Provost, and also talking broadly about results with brown bags.

**Dr. Quinn:** We shared results with advisory team, sharing it across administration. The Faculty Senate is really interested, and we are asking what additional information is needed to look at tenure to full professor track.

**Q:** What system would get us where we need to be? It seems that any system that has an up and out ramp would exclude women. If you have a system like that it will be unfriendly to women. Thinking about companies such as Google and Best Buy, we can look at what makes an attractive work place for human beings. Is anyone in academe looking at both good for human beings and excellence?

**Dr. Trower:** It’s about human beings. Company after company has made vast changes all about the workplace, creating a place people want to be.

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**Response:** We can also look at the Chronicle's academic workplace survey and in conversation with the COACHE survey. A conversation is beginning, naming institutions and defining what a good workplace looks like.

**Observation:** It may be complex as to what makes a great workplace. Cornell measured dissatisfaction on one survey and satisfaction on another.

**Comment:** Sometimes we don't celebrate the flexibility there is. Flexibility in thinking and scheduling and how they interact with the constituents they serve. We can point out areas where there is flexibility in the culture.

**Response:** We do a better job with graduate students to help visualize that workplace and to help them recognize advantages they will have.

**Comment:** It is important to remember one benefit of tenure—job security, a huge issue for Americans. That is a big benefit. Also, it is fine to talk about making work life better. Can we change the institution so that you don't have to work 70 hours a week to be successful? What is enough? We seem to be valuing people who work a lot as somehow better, a big issue for academics.

*Keynote Presentation*

**The Athena Factor: Reversing the Brain Drain in Science, Engineering, and Technology<sup>2</sup>**

*Dr. Laura Sherbin, Center for Work Life Policy*

In a worsening worldwide labor shortage of qualified professionals in the Science and Engineering fields, 52 percent of female scientists, engineers and technologists are bailing on hard-earned careers. They are abandoning their training and going to another sector. In her research, Dr. Laura Sherbin found that the women surveyed had serious credentials in fields with Masters and PhDs, only to have to leave the field and a job they loved. A key moment makes that decision to leave for them. They recalibrate on a daily basis is it really worth it. The answer starts to shift to "no" when things start to pile up. For instance, when women need to cross the chasm to a higher position, they all of a sudden need global experience, team experience, etc., at the same time as they are having children.

**What undermines their desire to stay on?**

- Hostile male culture: just because they are women.
- Extreme work pressures: jumping ship to find an easier sector to work in.
- Isolation: not just the only woman on the team or the only woman, but the only one whose voice is constantly questioned.
- Mysterious career paths: it would seem everyone would know where to go and what step is next. What they don't know is how to get there. Who do you need to know, how do I tell them I can do it? Without a blueprint, 40 percent of women felt stuck, that they couldn't get any further.
- Systems of risk and reward.

**Why do we care?** Diverse teams create better science. Women in science do science for women. Why should Bill Gates care? They have been complaining that they don't have enough talent. Headlines confirm

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this assertion. Reducing that attrition by just 25%, would add x highly qualified women. Talent is literally in the backyard.

**What do we do about it?** The best programs have nothing to do with women, but are good for the business. They also happen to benefit women. These programs are not about accommodations, but about what is good for the business. For instance, MIT has midcareer acceleration program. Because many women are out of workforce for two years or longer, they need re-skilling program to bring them back into the workplace, to get the skills needed in a short time to reenter. MIT partners with companies to on-ramp as well as up-ramp for current employees.

At the **Center for Work Life Policy**, companies pay a membership fee, but they also have to do something on the ground toward changing the work model and challenging our assumptions about work life. Dr. Sherbin noted that jobs are getting bigger and harder to manage for men and women, so these work-life issues have taken on new urgency. In her presentation, Dr. Sherbin argued that the conversation about women in careers and academia should not be just about quantity but the quality of what they bring to the workplace—women increasingly want to contribute to the well-being of society, a factor that is more motivating than money.

**Dr. Laura Sherbin Question & Answer<sup>2</sup>**

**Q:** Just as companies and their leaders interact with each other at the CWLP, how might universities also interact? What are strategies do you use with these leaders?

**Dr. Sherbin:** Working with a key person in the company is important: budget and clout with CEO paired with buy-in is a key turning point. You need to structure opportunities to interact. For instance, at the annual meeting include task force members who have to bring change agent teams, people they think need to be educated, to facilitate and talk about what to do in company. We also give our members a lot of press. It is important to give companies the branding they need to encourage them to do something else.

**Q:** How do we retool the academic workforce? Would on-ramps be a solution?

**Dr. Sherbin:** Women want to get back in, but there are severe barriers to reentry because of stigma and attitudes. On-ramp programs are starting to change the culture, start the dialog. It is important to give women the road to get back on. Companies have found that retooling is a lot cheaper. You can do this inter-university to share costs.

**Q:** What is the case for support that you make to companies that see each other as competitors?

**Dr. Sherbin:** We were more worried about it than we should have been. One person's program doesn't mean that another loses out. They work closely. There is some back office stuff that they keep to themselves, but working together on these issues is not a significant problem.

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**Q:** My impression is that women don't want to go back to original company.

**Dr. Sherbin:** Yes, how do we catch women before they leave? When employees take off-ramps, you need to make sure they know how to get back on.

**Q:** Is there difference in success rates in programs that are changing structures v. getting women back into existing structures?

**Dr. Sherbin:** It's important to have gradual change. Flex policies was about incremental change. It is important to have a pilot program. Pick a division and prove it won't blow up.

**Q:** How does this work at a Research I with grants?

**Dr. Sherbin:** You have to think in terms of teams v. individuals. Try it with someone, try teaming.

**Observation:** We are in an inherited system. But there is interest in granting agencies—NSF has a different culture to get people engaged in a new conversation. The time is now to start these inquiries.

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