

ACSP 2010 FWIG Lunch Presentation

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you all today about some research that I think is very important to women faculty – and really all planning faculty.

A bit more than a year ago, I, with support and interest from a number of female colleagues at several universities initiated a study of birth and adoption related policies affecting male and female faculty. This work was somewhat initiated by my own experience, but even more so by the stories I heard from other planning faculty about their even worse experiences. The research addressed three policies:

- 1) Parental leave
- 2) Tenure clock stoppage
- 3) Flexible work hours

To explore these issues, I conducted two surveys, one of planning faculty and one of chairs of planning programs in late 2009 and early 2010. Thank you very much to those who responded.

Now, the challenge of presenting findings from a survey without powerpoint is that I can't bore you with numbers. You'll need to take my word on a few things.

- 158 faculty responded to the survey – a 23% response rate
- We used a web-based survey
- We used a multi-wave Dillman-inspired method to maximize participation
- Survey respondents were generally representative of the population – a few more women and assistant professors (not unexpected), but good representation across categories

With that brief introduction, I'll refer you to the full set of findings available in a report on the ACSP and FWIG websites.

To get us started in highlighting some of the findings, I want to highlight a couple of quotes from survey respondents that hint at some of the challenges faced by faculty related to this issue:

From a female assistant professor - "I received course releases from 2 courses, but was supposed to substitute increased service and research activity. I wrote a memo detailing what my activities would be "in lieu of teaching" to the College, and this was kept on file. Activities including playing a lead role in our planning program's reaccreditation process. I still directed one independent study during my semester "off", and was available to advise students, primarily via email. I also attended several departmental meetings by choice."

From a female associate professor – "For my first maternity leave, I taught one of my classes for a single semester and had very few service requirements. I was paid at 50% of my regular salary. (I should note that I was still fairly new and my service plate was not so full then.) For my second leave, I decided to ask for a slightly better deal. This time I again taught one of my two courses and was paid 75% of my regular salary. I maintained most of my service requirements but they were not very onerous."

With these experiences as a bit of context – and I'm sure many of you are familiar with positive or negative experiences that you or your colleagues have had – I'd like to highlight 3 findings.

One – things are a lot better than they used to be. I've heard informally senior faculty say things like - "it's so much better now than when I had my kids – there were no policies then."

Admittedly, things are better:

- More than 50% report having access to paid parental leave
- More than 70% report having access to clock stoppage, and
- Just under 50% report access to flexible work hours

Just because the policies exist, doesn't mean that they are working. One of the most compelling findings in the study is the percentage of respondents who don't know what the policies are – across the 3 policies – 20-40% of respondents don't know what policies exist (this is likely underreporting the % who don't know since those familiar with the issues may be more likely to respond to a survey on this topic)

Also compelling is the variation in perceptions of adequacy of policies across groups of faculty. While most agree that policies are insufficient to meet the needs of faculty with children, male faculty and tenured professors take a slightly more positive view than tenure track and female faculty.

Also compelling is that 44% of faculty say that birth/adoption policies have never been explained to them. At the same time, none of the 22 chairs that responded said that that faculty are never told – most say that policies are explained in the event of pregnancy or adoption and sometimes when faculty are hired.

The problem in this is that birth/adoption related policies seem to be “off the radar”

- They are not being discussed
- Policies are unclear or difficult to find
- Many people just don't know

The nature of this problem is the uncertainty that it creates.

Some might argue that this is not an issue relevant at the department/program level – *the policies are set at the college or university level* – However, significant authority for implementation is held in individual units and administrators.

They have authority to make decisions on things like salary reductions, responsibilities during leaves, and covering teaching and service responsibilities. The quote is below is quite telling and emphasizes the amount of discretion that often exists and the importance of negotiation in actually implementing birth/adoption related policies.

From a female professor - “A person hired to take another professor’s place (sabbatical) took one course. The chair took over another – both courses had to be prepped by me so each week was ready. I was given a heavy load in the spring to make up for my “easy” 2 course fall. I continued to serve on a Masters committee as advisor....and served on another defense committee. Also prepped up three spring courses. It was too much with a newborn.”

This quote pretty clearly illustrates the importance of negotiation in these situations.

This points to the second key finding – first, the lack of written birth/adoption policies; second, lack of guidelines for implementation; and third, lack of access to information about policies seems to be limited some institutions and departments – leading to the need for negotiation

The survey clearly reveals that some institutions and departments lack policies. Even where they exist – as noted earlier – faculty may not be aware of them – particularly policies at the departmental level.

When policies are lacking, administrators have significant discretion in implementing policies - such as determining the length and conditions of a parental leave. This is not to vilify administrators, as a number of respondents reported very positive experiences.

Overall, it seems that faculty are in the position of having to negotiate. However, negotiation can create great uncertainty and may create particular disadvantages for women and untenured faculty. The survey confirms this assumption. Notable in this survey finding is a relatively large standard deviation. This seems to suggest wide variation among individuals, even when broken down by gender and rank, in terms of how much disadvantage they perceive relative to negotiating good outcomes.

Another issue related to access to information and uncertainty comes out relative to tenure clock stoppage. While concerns about stigma or negative reaction associated with clock stoppage aren't substantial, there is some concern perception that stigma exists – and faculty actually perceive slightly higher rates of stigma for male faculty. The lack of information about policies and seemingly discussion about policies within departments/programs may be a factor in this. Without this discussion, faculty may be unaware of how colleagues might react if they stop their clock, take a long leave, or leave a 4 everyday to pick up your kids at daycare. Based on the survey, chairs and tenured professors perceive lower stigma than assistant or associated professors --- further evidence that discussion might be valuable in reducing some of the uncertainty that exists and produce a more informed basis for negotiation.

The third and final finding is that there is a good level of support for ACSP and FWIG to play a role in fostering conversation around birth and adoption policies issues.

There is a good level of support for ACSP and especially FWIG to play this role – though again large standard deviations suggesting a quite wide range of perspectives.

Both faculty and chairs see value in policy links on ACSP and FWIG websites. With a new update of the FWIG website this fall we'll add this information, based on policy research conducted by Katherine Lieberknecht at Cornell. She located policies for nearly all planning schools – including broader family leave policies related to care for elderly parents, etc. There

is also support for sessions at the ACSP Administrator's Conference – something I'm organizing for next spring's conference. Negotiation training, conference roundtables, and other ideas are supported as well and we'll be looking for ways to make this happen.

As a wrap up

- 1) There is clear evidence of concern about this issue and huge variation in policy and especially policy implementation.
- 2) This issue affects everyone – women and men – and our families – and our students. Even those without children can be advantaged or disadvantaged if these policies are not working.
- 3) We all have a role to play. Learn about policies in your own university/program. Initiate conversations in your departments/programs - both informally with colleagues and formally in faculty meetings and other venues. I vow to do this, this week upcoming week and hope that you will do so as well and let me know about your successes and failures so that we can continue to move this issue forward.

Thank you.