

# What Have We Been Talking About? What Should We Be Talking About?

From Doctorate to Dean or Director: Sustaining Women  
through Critical Transition Points in Science, Engineering,  
and Medicine

The Committee on Women In Science, Engineering, and Medicine (CWSEM)  
of the National Academies Workshop  
September 18-19, 2008  
Washington, DC

Joan Gиргус  
Professor of Psychology and Special Assistant to the Dean of  
the Faculty  
Princeton University



# What Have We Been Talking About?

- Report from the Committee on Gender Differences in the Careers of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Faculty
  - a national database of information about faculty hiring, tenure, promotion, and allocation of institutional resources in research universities
  - a much more extensive dataset than we have ever had before, more extensive than the many interesting reports from individual institutions that have examined these topics in similar (and sometimes greater) depth
  - analyses that describe the current situation of gender differences on these topics
  - BUT that will leave open many questions about why these gender differences do or do not exist

# What Have We Been Talking About?

- In 2001, the presidents of nine research universities met, at the urging of MIT, and publicly affirmed their obligation “to utilize fully all the creative talent available,” recognizing “that barriers still exist” for women faculty
- They agreed to:
  - analyze the salaries and the proportion of other university resources provided to women faculty
  - work toward a faculty that reflects the diversity of the student body
  - reconvene in about a year to share “the specific initiatives we have undertaken to achieve these objectives”
  - “recognize that this challenge will require significant review of, and potentially significant change in, the procedures within each university”

# What Have We Been Talking About?

- The MIT9 universities have been meeting annually since 2001
- Initially, the universities – and the yearly meetings – were focused entirely on how universities dealt with the professional lives of faculty
- About three years ago, two things began to shift
  - Increasingly, the work on gender equity began to be concerned with how faculty manage the work and family life juggle
  - Increasingly, this work pushed us to think about postdocs and graduate students

# What Should We Be Talking About? Rebalancing the Work-Life Norm

- In a recent survey of Princeton faculty, among faculty who were married or in a domestic partnership
  - Tenured faculty: 98% of women and 75% of men reported working spouses/domestic partners
  - Tenure-track faculty: 96% of women and 81% of men reported working spouses/domestic partners
- In today's most prevalent work-life configuration, men and women have equal claim to careers and (to some extent) to family life
- This has implications for the kinds of resources that faculty need from universities if they are going to be as productive as universities want them to be

# What Should We Be Talking About? The Gender Question

- Both male and female faculty are living in a world with a rebalanced work-life norm
- But it would be foolish to think that the lives of most men and women are identical in this regard
- The kinds of additional supports that universities need to – and have begun to – provide will matter to both men and women, but they will make more of a difference in the lives of female faculty than in the lives of male faculty

# What Should We Be Talking About? Expanding the Frame

- Science and engineering careers begin in graduate school and (increasingly) continue through postdoctoral training and then (sometimes) into faculty positions
- Graduate students and postdocs are often as concerned about issues of work and family life as faculty are
- Universities have not traditionally recognized this or included it in their planning
- The early years of an academic career, which are full of uncertainty, and usually require several physical household moves, are the years when the decision to proceed to a faculty career (or not) is made
- Thus, the supports that universities provide at the early career stages, beginning with graduate school, are especially important

# What Should We Be Talking About? One Size Does NOT Fit All

- We should provide a panoply of different kinds of resources, support services, and programs because one size definitely does NOT fit all
- Individual graduate students, postdocs, and faculty will have individual problems and issues, so variety and flexibility are crucial

# What We Are Doing At Princeton

## Family-Focused Policies and Programs for Faculty

- Maternity leave
- Automatic one-year extension of the tenure clock for each child
- Work-load relief for the primary caretaker
- Backup care program
- Dependent care travel fund
- Employee Child Care Assistance Program
- Expanding on-campus childcare
- Employee Assistance Provider Work/Life Program
- Partner placement assistance

# What We Are Doing At Princeton

## Family-Focused Programs for Graduate Students and Postdocs

- Maternity leave (GS and P)
- One additional term of financial support for the primary caretaker of each child (GS)
- Backup care program (GS and P)
- Dependent care travel fund (GS and P)
- Spousal Travel Program (P)
- Employee Child Care Assistance Program (P) and Student Child Care Assistance Program (GS)
- Expanding on-campus childcare (GS and P)
- Employee Assistance Provider Work/Life Program (GS and P)

# What Should We Be Talking About? What Does This Accomplish?

- Providing a wide range of supports, accomplishes several things
  - it provides actual help
  - it makes it clear to everyone that the university believes that both a professional life and a family life are important
    - graduate students, postdocs, and young faculty feel encouraged and legitimated
    - senior faculty who supervise graduate students and post docs and mentor young faculty understand the overall view of the university

# What Should We Be Talking About? The Overall Argument

- Universities have a long history of providing the resources that faculty need in order to do their best work: these resources have always included life supports as well as work supports
- The changing lives and increasing diversity of those who work and study at universities require universities to increase the amount and types of life support that they provide, and to extend those supports to graduate students and postdocs
- While this will require additional resources in order to create and support a new work-life norm, it will expand dramatically the diversity of the professoriate who will be able to engage fully in teaching and research and the quality of the teaching and scholarship that will result