

ADVANCE Program for Inclusive Excellence

Advancing women, transforming the University, investing in a culture of inclusive excellence



Work-Life Climate

The UMD ADVANCE Grant Towards an Institution for Inclusive Excellence (UMD = T12E), the Office of Faculty Affairs, and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, are all engaged in efforts to improve professional growth opportunities and work environment for UMD faculty. A critical part of those efforts is research to benchmark the current status of faculty work environments and to see if there are important differences by gender, race and ethnicity, career stage, and college. This report presents findings from a spring 2013 UMD work environment survey.

The UMD Work Environment Survey assessed specific aspects of faculty work environment, such as faculty perceptions of their own professional growth, institutional and unit supports for professional growth, climate for work-life balance, fair treatment and diversity, and satisfaction, all of which have been linked to retention, advancement, and productivity. There were 784 tenure track respondents, approximately 47% of full-time UMD tenure track faculty in fall 2012. Here major findings are reported for tenure track/tenured respondents. A full institutional report with all data and tables, as well as college-specific reports can be found at the ADVANCE website: www.advance.umd.edu.

"If there's a bump in the road, it's very difficult for many of us to manage our work and home responsibilities."

Faculty who are well-supported in their lives both in and out of their work environment tend to be more satisfied in their roles (Armenti, 2004; Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Led by NSF-ADVANCE, the Sloan Foundation, and the ACE, many attempts have been made in research universities to change policy and cultures in order to be more supportive of academic parents on the tenure-track and work-life balance more generally (Lester & Sallee, 2009). The UMD Faculty Work Environment Survey asked questions regarding participants' opinions of the climate for and supports of a work-life balance at the university. The survey was also used to investigate the use and value of certain policies and programs aimed at supporting work-life issues for faculty.

Major findings:

- 47.6% were satisfied with their unit's culture for work-life balance.
- 34.2% agreed that the university does what it can to make family life and the tenure track compatible.
- 37.7% agreed that there are role-models for work-life balance.
- Women were generally less satisfied with their unit's culture around work-life balance.
- Assistant and Associate Professors and women were less satisfied with certain aspects of work-life balance at UMD than Full Professors and men.

"Think beyond simply women having children as "the" career impediment that women face. My career got derailed while trying to care for my terminally ill mother, who lived on the opposite coast. I've had zero help or support trying to restart it since she died."

The findings related to work-life climate at the university were mixed (Table 2). A few aspects of work-life climate were positive for the majority of faculty. Two-thirds (67.2%) of respondents agreed that they have taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance and 56.3% agreed that faculty can be honest about family/life roles and responsibilities. In contrast, several survey items demonstrated a negative work-life climate. Only about half (48%) of respondents were satisfied with their unit's culture for work-life balance and only one-third (34.2%) agreed that the university does what it can to make family life and the tenure-track compatible. There were a few significant differences in the usage of work-life policies by gender and rank.

"[I am] balancing work & life, particularly my desire to begin a family as I begin the tenure-track process. I am unclear if the department would grant me a semester off following the birth of a child, as is increasingly becoming the practice with many of Maryland's competitors."

DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

Women were significantly more likely to have used childcare referral services (8.2% for women and 3.2% for men; $\chi^2=7.792$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$).

Open-ended comments underscored the role that participants felt gender, being a parent, and having other family or partner roles had on agency in work-life balance and their access to supports. For example, participants noted women seemed to be particularly disadvantaged with regard to work-life balance, and some were even "punished" for perceived decreases in productivity after having children, which influenced their sense of agency.

"...acknowledge that women have a greater burden and find a way to support that."

"Remove the stigma for women associated with the "life" part of work-life balance. Women often fear the

<i>Perceptions of Work-Life Climate at UMD</i>	<i>% Agree/Strongly Agree</i>
I have taken strategic steps toward creating a satisfactory work-life balance.	67.2
I feel I have control over creating a satisfying work-life balance.	56.5
I am satisfied with my unit's culture around work-life balance.	47.6
There are role-models in my unit of how to create a satisfying work-life balance.	37.7
The institution does what it can to make family life and the tenure track compatible.	34.2
My unit supports faculty scheduling work commitments around family schedules.	54.0
In my unit, faculty can be honest with colleagues about family/life roles and responsibilities.	56.3
There is NO bias against family care-giving in my unit.	48.5

repercussions of asking for time off to have children or care for children, but the burden still mostly falls on them to do so."

There were also some very strong comments made from faculty who were not parents observing that they felt there were no supports for work-life balance for them and they wished there were. Faculty without children said they were often perceived to be able to work all of the time, and they wanted a definition of work-life balance beyond having children.

For example, one faculty member noted she wished there was more work-life information tailored and disseminated to unmarried faculty and another asked for,

"More evening and weekend events for faculty to meet informally, hike, go biking, attend lectures, make friendships."

Additional analysis (chi-square tests) revealed faculty respondents who were single and with no children reported taking fewer actions to achieve

work-life balances goal than those who were married and had children. Likewise women were more likely than men to struggle with feeling in control of work-life issues, as were assistant professors (O'Meara & Jones, 2013).

DIFFERENCES BY GENDER AND RANK

Women were generally less satisfied with their unit's culture around work life balance. Specifically, they reported lower control over creating a satisfying work-life balance, fewer role-models in their units, and were less likely to agree that the institution does what it can to make family and the tenure track possible.

All items in work-life balance scored significantly higher for full professors. Associate professors were less likely than full professors to agree that the institution does what it can to make family life and the tenure track compatible, that there is no bias against family care-giving in their unit, and that faculty can be honest with colleagues about family/life roles and responsibilities.

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