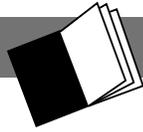


WOMEN

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Work/Life Programs: Lifesavers in a Scary Economy

Recession means shrinking endowments, fewer donations and less state funding. Colleges must cut budgets and eliminate frills. Work/life programs are at risk.

Meanwhile the economic downturn stresses faculty, staff and students as they fear for their jobs, see their partners get laid off and worry about paying the mortgage. After the layoffs, the workload increases for survivors.

They need work/life programming more than ever, just as colleges wonder if it's an unaffordable luxury. What's a school to do? Three panelists responded at the College and University Work/Family Association (CUWFA) conference in Seattle in June:

- **Dr. Jan Civian**, senior consultant at WFD Consulting in Newton MA
- **Julie Nuter**, associate VP for HR, DePaul University IL
- **Nancy Costikyan**, director, Office of Work/Life, Harvard University MA

"There was a great deal of energy at the conference about keeping work/life programs going," **Dr. Jan Civian** told *WIHE*. They're low cost, high impact and vital in surviving the current hard times.

Stressed out

WFD Consulting analyzed work/life and work environment issues from a nationwide database including 6,500 faculty and 20,000 university staff. Four in ten faculty and staff have a child under 18. Many have a child under 6, more men than women in every group:

University Employees with a Child Under 6

	Women	Men
Assistant professors	34%	46%
Associate professors	21%	29%
Staff	16%	20%

Eldercare responsibilities fall about equally on faculty and staff, with 12% to 13% currently dealing with eldercare issues and another 27% expecting to do so in the future. Faculty women and men are equally likely to be caregivers. Among staff, women are slightly more likely than men to be responsible for eldercare.

That's a lot of faculty and staff with significant family responsibilities. They're crunched both at home and at work. Faculty in particular feel stressed and unsupported.

Among university staff, women report more stress than men. Faculty are more stressed than university or corporate staff. Women associate professors report the most stress of all, whether or not they have children.

While flexibility provides a safety valve in many jobs, for faculty it's an illusion. Working largely when and where they wish actually means they're on duty 24/7. Email and cell phones follow them home. After classes, meetings and office hours, they head home to grade papers, write grant proposals and work on a book or journal article. "It's a job with high spillover. They can never get away from it," Civian told *WIHE*.



Dr. Jan Civian

Why are women associate professors hit the hardest? The data doesn't show. Perhaps they get less departmental support than pre-tenure faculty, yet are expected to be as productive as ever and do more service. Perhaps some are starting the families they delayed before tenure. Perhaps women get tapped for service more often than men.

Faculty are much less likely than staff to feel supported by university policies, top leadership, colleagues and their manager or chair. While staff women feel slightly more supported than men, women faculty feel the least.

Make the business case

Faced with shrinking budgets, can schools afford to care? Cost/benefit analysis supports the value of a family-friendly culture. Budget-conscious decision makers are wise to maintain and expand work/life programs.

Benefits. "There's a very strong relationship between an employee feeling supported in work/life terms and employee engagement," Civian said.

Engagement includes discretionary effort (Would you go above and beyond?), satisfaction (Would you recommend this employer?) and personal alignment with orga-

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nizational goals. "Employees who are engaged are more productive, and employees who are more productive help organizations meet their goals," she said.

Stress and burnout have a negative effect on engagement, reducing productivity. "If you support them in managing their family responsibilities, they're very committed to the organization and very willing to go above and beyond," she said.

Costs. Many work/life programs are low cost; some even reduce expenses. Seminars can happen online or by podcast. Volunteerism offers low-cost empowerment and networking. Yale's transportation/cycling program supports its green goals and eases parking. Boosting job satisfaction saves dollars in retention and recruitment.

Wellness and stress reduction programs on campus have met an increase in demand. Existing staff may lead them in existing space, or a low fee may help cover any expense. Since stress-related disorders are a significant part of health care costs, wellness translates into health care savings.

Flexibility boosts morale, lowers burnout and costs little or nothing. The University of Michigan and MIT leveraged job flexibility to address space needs on campus. Letting staff work from home or stagger their hours cuts pressure for high-cost building programs.

Faculty flexibility is different, including parental leaves and the tenure clock. Faculty need to be able to schedule classes at times that work for them and attend meetings at family-friendly hours. Options for tenured part-time work and phased retirement can cut salary costs.

Get creative to help people cope

Some family-friendly changes don't cost much. **Julie Nuter** described initiatives at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and DePaul, drawing on material from Kathy Simons, manager of MIT's Center for Work, Family and Personal Life.

By late spring 2009 the MIT work/life center was getting four times as many stress-related inquiries as the previous fall. Their Web site had a 60% increase in visitors.

People were looking for ways to cope. More were feeling overworked. Economic stress and job stress triggered fear, anger, relationship issues and health problems such as anxiety and depression. Some were looking for ways to connect or help others from compassion and gratitude. MIT responded with new initiatives designed to make a big difference at very little cost.

Seminars. Along with continuing seminars such as "Meeting Your Financial Goals" and "Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Aging Relatives," in 2009 they added seven new topics in response to employee concerns. Among them: "Managing Your Career for Work/Life Balance" and "Talking With Children About Money."

"Mind-Body Month" seminars last February and March added relaxation tools such as meditation, yoga, chair massage, and workshops on sleep, reflection and mindful eating. Most were free of charge; a few like chair massage carried a small fee.

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Flexibility. As stresses increase, so does the need for flexible work arrangements. One MIT building had to be vacated for six months. Coping with that led to wider flexibility when staff moved back in.

Especially in this financial downturn, flex helps employees save money and manage related life changes and work stress. It's an inexpensive way to reduce burnout and help employees feel supported.

Social networking website. This online community lets members of the MIT community and their partners seek out buddies, babysitters and information, start or join interest groups and forums.

In tough times the Web site serves as a gateway to one-on-one support. A user can find someone who lives near her, speaks her native language or has children the same age. Attendance has increased to more than 1,000 people a year.

Get creative to sustain the spirit

DePaul is a Catholic university named for St. Vincent de Paul and dedicated to his principles of service, social justice and personal attention. That makes it easy to tie work/life to core institutional values.

Campus programs that began without regard to the economy are meeting an unexpected level of need. "What we found with the economic situation was that people were taking more advantage of the programs," Nuter said.

Service days. The annual Vincentian Service Day offers students, faculty, staff, alumni and others a chance to volunteer in groups across Chicago and celebrate together afterward in the Quad. It supports the mission and helps individuals feel connected and empowered. Volunteers address practical needs, which increase in a poor economy.

Wellness seminars. They're part of a new wellness program that grew out of a training-and-development needs assessment in connection with the strategic plan. Their goal is to link learning opportunities to stages of the employment life cycle, especially for staff. Recent seminars include stress management and financial planning.

Spiritual retreats. A year ago campus ministry at DePaul started offering a spiritual retreat twice a year for 40 to 50



Julie Nuter

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participants; now it's held quarterly in response to rising demand. "They've done a tremendous job of making it happen on a shoestring," she told *WIHE*. Not limited to only Catholics, it's always overbooked with a long wait list.

Faculty and staff at all job levels mix as equals for a full day of reflection offsite. They connect over life issues and come out renewed. Grants from the Vincentian Endowment Fund support the retreats and the follow-up monthly "Thursdays with St. Vincent," inviting ongoing reflection.

Could similar programs work on a secular campus? It depends how they relate to the mission. For DePaul, Vincentian principles are the glue behind the retreat. "When you're faced with tough choices, it really comes back to what's core for your university," Nuter said.

Get more bang for the buck

Work/life at Harvard is a freestanding department outside of benefits, with entrepreneurial freedom to innovate and pilot new directions. Nancy Costikyan said, "Think of an ocean liner vs. the Mars Rover." Creative and nimble like the Rover, it focuses on partnerships.

She prefaced many remarks with the phrase "before we got poor," referring to the 30% decline in Harvard's endowment. Since then, new ideas have brought these suggestions for how to get the most for your money:



Nancy Costikyan

- Share the glory; make partners look good.
- Recruit partners for hazard duty.
- Respond to constituents at all levels.
- Seek opportunities to share costs.
- Seek cost-neutral opportunities.
- Find common ground for getting to *yes*.
- Know when to say *no*; don't waste political capital.

Help leaders to link financial decisions to organizational values and recognize the risks of *not* acting. When competition for senior faculty drove Harvard to offer them major childcare funding, they also had to fund childcare for those who clean the toilets. "If we don't do this, can't you see the headlines? *Harvard Gives \$20,000 to Elite Professors*," she said.

Cultivate loyalty in vendors such as employee assistance programs or childcare providers. Eat lunch with them. Talk on the phone. Ask for what you want, respecting principles and the bottom line.

Think outside the box. They re-thought backup childcare and now allow paying a relative to do it, not out of love but out of economic necessity.

"Be willing to make mistakes. You will, anyway," she said. Have an exit strategy in case a program doesn't work as intended or can be replaced by something cheaper. "Don't let perfection be the enemy of the good."

Work/life should be like breathing, automatic rather than something we have to work at. We are more than our work, and our work can make us more than we are. With a little creativity, helping people succeed at home and at work won't cost much and it will pay off in spades. 📖

—SGC

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Darwin and Gender Project to Study His Letters, Support for Women Scientists

Charles Darwin's views on evolution revolutionized science, and a new project to organize and publish his private letters will make them available to the world.

Cambridge University will undertake the groundbreaking new three-year project with a grant of more than \$780,000 from The Bonita Trust, one of whose core activities is the support of women in science and technology around the world.

Darwin had continuing correspondence with 148 women throughout his life, including a surprising number of female scientists whom he encouraged.

Although he believed women were best suited to domestic life and the care of children, he went out of his way to support the scientific interests of women who wrote to him.

- Mary Boole, widow of George Boole (Boolean logic) was a teacher and gifted mathematician.
- Lydia Becker was a leading campaigner for women's right to vote and botanical observer.
- American botanist Mary Treat received Darwin's letter of encouragement for a project on larval nutrition determining the sex of butterflies. He advised her to repeat her experiments and publish her results in "some well-known scientific journal," which she did in *American Naturalist*.
- His elder surviving daughter Henrietta, while too young to be involved in his *On the Origin of the Species*, is expected to emerge as a key figure in writing *The Descent of Man*, Darwin's first public statement on human evolution.

"These are extraordinary letters that deserve a wide audience," noted project director Professor Jim Second. "Differences between the sexes played a key role in Darwin's thinking, which in turn had a major impact on Victorian society."

The project will address specific areas including Darwin's domestic life, gender in a scientific context and gender and society. Scholars and the general public will have access to accurate transcripts of the letters, as well as contextual material.

For example, botanist T.H. Farrer wrote to Darwin in October 1879, having been recently widowed and left to care for a family of small children. His letter reveals the attitudes toward the contribution of women and intellectual life at the time:

"One grudges the infinite number of small things to be done, and feels sympathy with women's lot in life. Surely the fact they have all the little daily things to do is enough to account for their not succeeding in work requiring devotion and abstraction."

Details from Mary Glanville: info@bonitatrust.org

Survey Cites 150 'Great Colleges to Work For'

More than 120 four-year and 28 two-year colleges are being recognized as Great Colleges to Work For as a result of recent survey data.

The accolades come as a result of a survey conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. More than 300 schools signed up for the survey and 247 completed the entire process. *The Chronicle* surveyed administrators, faculty and