

Gender- and Family-Friendly Academic Environments

The first purpose of this resource guide is to help you identify those departments and universities that are more likely to be supportive of women and faculty with families. This information should also be helpful for those who seek to find ways to change their own departments to make them more gender- and family-friendly.¹

Legal and sociocultural factors have made overt sexism much less common in the academy than was the practice when SWS was founded. Women constitute a greater proportion of students, faculty, and administrators than ever before. There are still barriers for women in the academy: intentional and unintentional gender bias in hiring, compensation, tenure and promotion. Nonetheless, there are many large and small ways that departments and/or institutions can make it possible for feminist faculty to thrive.

Within higher education, there are significant differences in the availability of family-friendly policies across institution type. Large institutions, whether public or private, tend to have more resources for work/life policies than do smaller, less well funded colleges and universities ([Center for the Education of Women 2005](#)). Well-funded liberal arts colleges often have faculty policies that rival those of research universities. National data suggest that faculty members at colleges are more likely to rate their institutions and departments as being supportive of having and raising children ([COACHE 2007](#)).

Institution-level features

There are a number of institutional-level factors that might indicate greater gender- and family-friendliness. You can learn about these by observing and asking questions at your job interview, and once you have been offered the position. There are also unobtrusive ways to learn about departmental and institutional policies: university websites typically offer a plethora of documents that can inform you.

Overall climate. Scan the university's web pages to determine whether there are standing committees that focus on the experiences of female faculty or faculty of color. Find out whether the institution conducts campus climate surveys that address gender, race, sexuality,

¹ In tight job markets, it may be necessary to accept a job even if the environment in the department or institution are not ideal. In such circumstances, you may be able to use some of the information in this guide to foster change in your department or institution. You may want to wait until you have tenure.

and work-family issues. In both instances, look for evidence that the committees and/or surveys are taken seriously. For instance, you might review minutes from the faculty governance web pages and the Board minutes, and examine speeches and initiatives of campus leadership (both administration and faculty leadership). Does the campus have a diversity plan, and if so, how has it been implemented?

Curriculum. Review the overall campus curriculum to see if it reflects an appreciation of the significance of gender, race, sexuality, and class -- in degree programs, departments or interdisciplinary programs. How does the general education curriculum address diversity issues? Are there faculty development opportunities for faculty members who wish to better address diversity issues in their courses?

Employment Benefits. Human Resources websites and personnel are likely to be the least problematic place to ask questions about family leave policies. It's rare for HR to have any kind of feedback to the hiring department about candidates, so you are probably safe to ask about same-sex partner benefits, family leave policies, and the like. Check the human resources and faculty handbook web pages for information on employment benefits. Are there provisions in the tenure and promotion policies to accommodate parental or other care giving responsibilities? Is this regularized or must it be negotiated? Can you stop the tenure clock? Are part-time tenure track positions available? Job sharing? Is it possible to move back and forth between full-time and part-time appointments? Is parental leave available for fathers and mothers, adoptive parents, same-sex partners? Is parental leave provided with pay? Does it require use of sick leave? Can a faculty member accommodate care giving with a period of modified duties rather than use of a leave? Are family leave policies available to same-sex partners? What are the parameters for using family leave (limited to FMLA, or more expansive)? Are domestic partners and/or children of those partners addressed in campus benefits (e.g., health insurance, access to the library or fitness facilities)? Does the institution have partner hiring policies? Some institutions can hire partners outright (more common at large research universities and/or for hires to advanced rank), others provide assistance of various kinds for partners to find jobs in the area. Is there a campus women's center? Does the university have on-site or nearby child care? Is there financial support for child care? Sick child care? Lactation support?

Representation. What is the proportion of faculty of color and female faculty at all ranks, and of administration (at all levels)? Does the institution have policies to recruit underrepresented faculty?

Department-level features

You should not assume a strong correlation between institutional climate and that of the department. You will want to find out what departmental faculty members' experience is with the policies in place. What is the departmental culture with regard to gender, race, class, and sexuality? You will want to determine the department chair's attitudes, as well as those of the faculty.

It's always advisable for job candidates to have some knowledge of the curriculum when they arrive for the interview. Faculty development resources are less often posted on websites, but it would be very good to ask department chairs, deans, and provosts about the faculty development opportunities available.

Find out whether meetings and classes are scheduled to allow faculty to effectively manage both work and family matters. Do the faculty recognize the importance of work life balance for retaining faculty? How are institutional policies manifested in the department?

Is there a bias against faculty members whose research or teaching focuses on gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity? Do there appear to be restrictions on the types of research and teaching that are considered acceptable for tenure and promotion? Are female and/or minority faculty members integrated into the life and leadership of the department?

Resources for Academic Work-Family and Academic Justice Information

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

- *On Campus with Women*, an online publication that focuses on women's leadership, campus climate, curriculum and pedagogy, and research and data on women in higher education.
- The Winter 2004 issue addresses academic work/family issues
- Campus Women Lead is an alliance affiliated with AAC&U. Their focus is on multicultural women's leadership in higher education. They offer workshops, an ongoing column in "On Campus with Women," and a list serve.
- Publications on various topics, including
 - A Measure of Equity: Women's Progress in Higher Education
 - Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees
 - More Reasons for Hope: Diversity Matters in Higher Education
 - Series of publications on Women of Color in the Academy and the Chilly Climate

- Diversity Web, an online publication that reports on research, policy initiatives, curriculum and pedagogy, and institutional leadership with regard to diversity. The Fall 2008 issue addresses socioeconomic diversity

American Council on Education is a membership organization of higher education institutions. It sponsors the Office of Women in Higher Education, which provides a number of leadership development workshops and supporting resources:

- Summits for Women of Color Administrators in Higher Education (in conjunction with ACE's Center for Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Equity)
- National and regional Leadership Forums
- Other resources focused on supporting women's advancement in higher education administration.

The [American Council on Education/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation definitions of faculty flexibility](#) include a series of best practices in promoting flexibility:

- On- and off-ramps, through leave policies.
- Extended time to tenure (tenure clock adjustment).
- Shortened time to tenure, with prorated standard of productivity.
- Active Service, Modified Duties (full-time service, with selected reduced duties).
- Part-time appointments (allowing mobility between full-time and part-time work).
- Phased retirement (partial appointments for finite periods of time).
- Delayed entry or re-entry opportunities (including practices that foster later-than-usual career starts).
- The web site for the ACE/Sloan project includes a link to the [full report](#) on faculty career flexibility.

The **American Association of University Professors** (AAUP) is an excellent source of information on policies and practices that support equity:

- [Faculty Gender Equity Indicators](#)
- Faculty Salary Survey (by state, type of institution, specific institution, rank, and gender): ([chronicle.com/stats/aaup/](#))
- Proportion of minority faculty (requires Chronicle login, or access the print version: Chronicle of Higher Education, September 28, 2007): ([chronicle.com/premium/stats/race/2007/](#))
- Diversity and Affirmative Action
- Discrimination

- Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity
- Sexual Harassment
- Tenure
- Work and Family
- Women
- Publishes *Academe*, which is available online as well as in print. Most issues are thematic, and cover a broad array of subjects of interest to faculty.
 - November/December 2004 issue addresses work and family

American Association of University Women is an organization that promotes education and equity for women and girls. They offer fellowships for students.

- Research reports on topics such as pay equity, education equity, sexual harassment
- Advocacy resources on federal education issues
- Legal Advocacy Fund supports cases on sex discrimination

The **American Sociological Association** has sponsored a series of studies of sociology Ph.D. recipients' experiences with work and family issues:

- [PhDs at Midcareer: Satisfaction with Work and Family](#) (Spalter-Roth and VanVooren 2008)
- [Resources or Rewards? The Distribution of Work Family Policies](#) (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2006)
- [The Best Time to Have a Baby](#) (ASA 2004)
- Race and Ethnicity in the Sociology Pipeline (2007)
- Resources or Rewards? The Distribution of Work-Family Policies (2006)
- Gender in the Early Stages of the Sociological Career (2000)

College and University Work/Family Association

- Membership required to access resources
- Supports development of work/life programs and policies at colleges and universities
- Oriented towards professional staff working on work/life issues

The **Families and Work Institute** is an influential nonprofit research center with three major foci: workforce/workplace, youth, and early childhood. The Institute hosts an annual Work Life Conference and sponsors the National Study of the Changing Workforce and the National Study of Employers. Their website includes information about publications and research, including a number of reports available for download.

The [National Clearinghouse on Academic Worklife](#), a project of the University of Michigan's Center for the Education of Women, has an extensive compilation of resources on diversity and

work life issues in the academic workplace: journal articles, links to other organizations and information on additional resources.

National Science Foundation Advance awards are designed to transform institutions to advance women in science and engineering fields. The Advance portal (<http://research.cs.vt.edu/advance/index.htm>) provides links to information on a number of institutions' reports on activities designed to change the institutional climate.

The **University of California Hastings College of the Law** has a web site on [work life law](#) with links to information for employees, employers, unions, and attorneys as well as public policy information about family responsibility discrimination. There's also a helpful link to information on [gender bias in academe](#) that outlines best practices in promoting gender equity in academia:

- Pregnancy leave defined as other types of disability leave
- Parental leave policies based on caretaking status rather than gender
- Policies that require opting in rather than opting out
- Clear communication of family leave practices (such as stopping the tenure clock) to both internal and external tenure/promotion reviewers
- Training administrators on gender bias and managing with family-friendly policies
- Part-time tenure track
- Cafeteria-style benefits
- Central funding for partner hires
- Re-entry programs for people who have left academe for care giving responsibilities

For more information, see Joan C. Williams and Donna L. Norton, "Building Academic Excellence through Gender Equity," *American Academic* 4, no. 1 (March 2008) 185-208.

Models for university work family policies:

- [University of California](#)
- [University of Michigan](#)
- [University of Washington](#)

Stanford University's **Michelle Clayman Institute for Gender Research** has a recent report on [dual career academic couples](#).

The [Sloan Work and Family Research Network](#) at Boston College is a vast collection of research resources on work family issues (not limited to academe).

DRAFT - Jan 2009

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2009