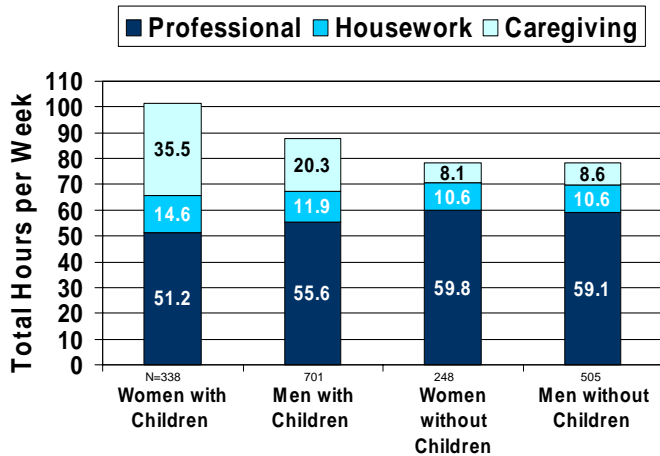


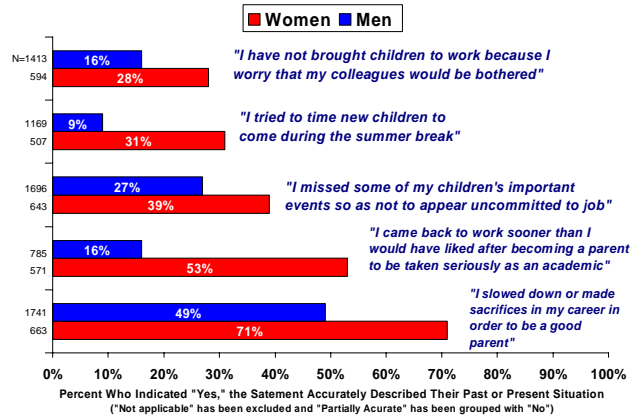
Addressing Academic Climate Issues that May Disadvantage Faculty with Family Caregiving Responsibilities

In their responses to the 2002-2003 University of California (UC) Faculty Work and Family Survey, thousands of UC tenure-track faculty men and women cited considerable difficulties in negotiating the competing demands of work and family. These difficulties are pressing for all faculty, but women faculty with children, ages 30 to 50, are particularly affected by them. Faculty parents in general are faced with the tough decision of either prioritizing their career over their family or prioritizing their family over their career. Indeed, the majority of UC faculty parents indicate that they have had to slow down their careers as a result of their parenting—over two-thirds of women and nearly half of men.

Everybody is Very Busy (UC Faculty, ages 30-50)



UC Faculty Parents Experience Work-Family Conflict



Family Friendly Scheduling

The competing, often simultaneous demands of work and caregiving create a disadvantage for faculty parents trying to excel in both. A particularly striking example of this is the common practice of scheduling required departmental meetings and functions at times when the majority of child care centers and providers are closed. Therefore, one way to ease the burdens experienced by faculty parents is to take into account caregiving responsibilities when scheduling faculty meetings, classes, seminars and receptions. For the most part, departmental events should be scheduled between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., during regular child care center and provider hours. A small change of this type can have a large impact on departmental culture, feelings of inclusion among faculty, and the ability to succeed in the academic arena.

Faculty Peer Reviews

Further cultural change in the academy is contingent on wide-scale acknowledgement and acceptance of the diversity of faculty family structures, situations, and needs. For example, dispelling myths about lack of seriousness among faculty who use tenure clock extension to meet family needs, or nursing mothers who bring babies to conferences or presentations would go a long way toward fostering a UC family friendly culture.

Review committees can also be encouraged to focus on quantity and quality of scholarly productivity rather than time since degree or job hire so that faculty who slow down due to family obligations are not unduly penalized in the peer review process.

Entering the Academy

For scholars who delay starting their academic careers to start families or provide care to others, it is extremely difficult to return to academia by securing tenure-track or postdoctoral positions. Faculty hiring committees often view these applicants as suspect because of gaps in their vitae and the time that has elapsed since they received their PhDs.

The University of California can set an example for the nation and help to combat the loss of potentially excellent scholars by encouraging faculty hiring committees to discount caregiving related resume gaps.

A true family friendly climate would be one that does not allow or accept even seemingly innocuous disadvantages to faculty with children. These small but noteworthy steps would go a long way toward that goal.