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POLICY BRIEF

FACULTY CAREERS AND FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT[1]

By David W. Leslie, The College of William and Mary and TIAA-CREF Institute Fellow

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Major changes in the faculty labor market are pushing colleges and universities to consider more flexible policies. As more young women enter the academic marketplace during their prime childbearing years, and as large numbers of faculty enter their 60's, colleges and universities are exploring ways to negotiate these unprecedented work force changes. This report, based on research undertaken with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, explores why as many as half of all colleges and universities now offer flexible employment options.

New data from a federal survey of faculty shows that just over half – 50.3% – of all faculty hired in the 5 years preceding 2004 were female. And the mean age of all faculty, who are now free to choose when they retire, has increased from 46 to 49 since 1988. Consequently, more support is being developed for young faculty with families and early retirement, phased retirement, and retirement incentives are helping older faculty step away from careers as they approach traditional retirement age.

This report concludes with a series of recommendations, including:

- Accommodations for spousal employment.
- Provisions for campus childcare (or compensation for options like a nanny).
- Providing resources such as grant funds to conduct research, hire graduate assistants, and hire home help when family obligations compete.
- Making goals of policies explicit, e.g., encouraging more retirements or retaining more senior faculty.
- Adopting policies that provide faculty transitioning into retirement with adequate income, health insurance, access to professional colleagues, and support for teaching and research.
- Allowing individuals to negotiate retirement options that consider both their needs and their institutions' needs.

Flexibility is important because there will be fewer qualified applicants for more faculty jobs in the foreseeable future. The competition from opportunities in other fields will be strong. Colleges and universities may have little choice as competition for talent increases and as other employers make their jobs more attractive to the best and brightest.

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INTRODUCTION

Major changes in the faculty work force and in the market factors that affect it are pushing colleges and universities to consider more flexible employment opportunities. More young women are earning Ph.D.'s in a wider variety of disciplines. They are entering the academic marketplace during their prime childbearing years in unprecedented numbers. They are more likely than ever to be in dual career marriages and facing – as will their spouses – a variety of concerns about how to succeed professionally while raising a family.

At the other end of the continuum, large numbers of faculty are entering their 60's. As individual faculty age and change, they will have to choose how they leave the active work force. Options give them a sense of control and accommodate the varied ways in which they adapt to advancing years and in which they choose to retire.

Institutions are also operating in a dynamic environment in which the body of knowledge grows and is reshaped constantly. Students bring new interests and ambitions – as well as changing needs – to their studies. Generational change among students may be more effectively accommodated by a generational change among faculty. Competitive excellence demands a continued quest for faculty working at the cutting edge in teaching, research, and service. Funding, on the other hand, seems to get tighter in every passing year, requiring more strategic reallocation of positions and faculty effort than ever.

These realities – accommodating a changing faculty work force and a more competitive market – have led as many as half of all colleges and universities to acknowledge the need for flexible employment options. More support is being developed for young faculty with families and more accommodating rules about the pre-tenure probationary period are being tried. Early retirement, phased retirement, and retirement incentives of various kinds have been initiated as ways to help older faculty step away from full-time work as they approach traditional retirement age. These policies complement one another when flexible retirement policies promote turnover, and turnover opens more positions for new hires. Flexibility for new hires and junior faculty may help expand the pool of talent from which college and universities draw, and may help hold the best and brightest in a more attractive and rewarding work/career setting.

This paper draws on findings from a recently completed study of flexible employment in higher education supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The findings and

conclusions are based on analyses of data from the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (1999), and from just over 100 field interviews of faculty and administrators at a sample of varied institutions. The technical report (Leslie and Janson, 2005) is available at http://www.wm.edu/education/Faculty/Leslie/PhasingAwayBooklet.pdf .

THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

An increasingly dynamic and competitive marketplace shapes terms and conditions on which colleges and universities employ faculty. Although it may have been possible at one point (say, in 1940, when the Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure was adopted and the foundations for academic employment policy virtually chipped in stone) to visualize the academic marketplace as uniform across campuses and disciplines, the vast changes in higher education over the past 65 years beg for reform.

While these changes probably affect the entire life-course and career trajectory of all faculty, they are particularly profound for both younger and older faculty. Newer hires are, and will continue to be, far more female than ever before. (Just over half – 50.3% –of all faculty hired in the 5 years preceding 2004 were female. Ten years earlier, 45.6% of recent hires were female.) And, with no mandatory retirement age, the mean age of all faculty has increased from 46 to 49 since 1988. Older faculty are also freer than ever before to choose the time, place, and manner of their retirement.

At the same time, colleges and universities are pressed by increasing demand (in most states) and tighter funding, as well as an increasingly global competition for reputation and faculty. Jones, reporting in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* in 2002, noted, ".... the National Science Foundation concluded that overall labor market conditions have been good for new doctorate recipients over the past decade, with ***gains most notable in nonacademic sectors***." (p. 33)

Against this competition with non-academic employers, higher education is constrained by tight funding and increasingly unattractive working conditions and career prospects. The BLS report asserts:

> Without the necessary funds, colleges and universities may be forced to find alternate ways of dealing with increasing enrollments, such as increasing class sizes or faculty workloads. Reliance on non-faculty, such as graduate assistants and postdoctoral students for teaching and research, might increase as well. Colleges and universities also may not replace retiring

> professors or may rely increasingly on part-time or non-tenure track faculty to teach classes. In fact, lower paid part-time or adjunct positions have been growing at a faster rate than full-time positions. And although employment of adjunct instructors is more prevalent among 2- year institutions, this trend is also a concern for 4-year institutions. Some faculty members may prefer part-time employment, but poor labor market conditions may impel others who want full-time positions to take adjunct positions that offer little potential for upward mobility. (p. 32)

Baldwin and Chronister (2002) chronicled this substitution of non-tenure eligible faculty in increasing numbers of faculty positions. For new Ph.D.'s who have invested years in preparation, the prospect of relatively low-paying work without prospect of long-term security can only discourage interest in academic careers. Coupled with the pressures and constraints that make tenure track positions more challenging for those with family responsibilities, institutions will have to develop more attractive work and career options for the best and brightest prospects.

HOW DO FACULTY RETIRE?

In spite of earlier fears that abolition of mandatory retirement would allow too many to work too long, faculty do retire. Our analysis suggests that they "normally" do so between ages 64 and 66, but enough individuals prefer to retire earlier, later, or in stages, that it is important for institutions to consider flexible retirement options.

Men and women show differing tendencies in their retirement preferences and patterns. Income, job satisfaction, family, and workload variables play slightly different roles for the genders. With the very large majority of retirements likely to be men in the near term future, it appears to us that flexible work arrangements that accommodate varied retirement patterns will be increasingly appealing to those men who pass age 60 before retiring.

In the case of women, flexible employment options appear to be attractive at all career stages, but may prompt more decisions to phase into retirement prior to age 60, perhaps shortening these women's careers. If true, this presents a dilemma to a profession that has had difficulty attracting women and may increasingly lose them to earlier retirements.

However, predicting the probability that any individual would retire at a given age or date is difficult. In fact, we find that uncertainty about a particular retirement age or date increases as individual faculty grow older. This is probably an unanticipated consequence of prohibiting mandatory retirement – at one time, individuals knew with greater certainty that they would have to retire at, say, age 65. Now, with more freedom to choose, and – at many institutions – more options, faculty appear less committed to any particular choice. That means it is far more likely today that faculty will seek terms and conditions for retirement that accommodate their own individual circumstances.

Better paid, and more "successful" academics (on the traditional measures of academic success), particularly men, are more likely to continue working until (or beyond) age 70. Single women whose pay appears not to have kept pace with men's pay also are more likely to elect to work past age 65 – perhaps because retirement seems less affordable. We estimate this population to be on the order of 14% of all tenured faculty at 4-year institutions (Leslie and Conley, 2003).

Women are proportionally overrepresented among those who would consider retiring early. Family considerations almost certainly play a large part. Spousal income appears to correlate with women's interest in early or phased retirement, for example. Also, work issues, such as carrying a heavy teaching load appear to affect the age at which women consider retiring.

Although 65 is a reasonably good estimate of the average retirement age for women and men faculty, it is only an average. In the absence of any mandatory retirement age, greater and greater variability appears to have emerged in when and how faculty choose to leave active work. Institutions may need to know a lot more about this variability than they did before they discontinued mandatory retirement. Understanding when and how faculty prefer to step away from full-time employment might help develop a wider array of options and possibilities to help individuals plan and to give institutions more information about individuals' intentions. If colleges and universities provide enough viable options to accommodate the range of faculty interests, they may be able to manage retirement processes and patterns more precisely and more effectively because they will know who is electing each option, and, therefore, know more about when positions will open.

We should point out that "knowing more" about how individuals retire should also include an assessment of retirement plans of younger faculty. As the proportion of women

faculty grows, and as the generational norms of "work" evolve, it appears to us that there will be increasing interest by faculty in flexible employment arrangements of all kinds, and particularly for a period of flexible work before retirement. Data from the NSOPF survey show that younger faculty (those now under 50) plan to retire earlier than the current generation. In fact, both men and women plan to retire about 3 years earlier, a substantial and unexpected shift in retirement patterns if it should be borne out in reality.

IMPLICATIONS OF AN INCREASINGLY FEMALE FACULTY: BALANCING CAREER AND FAMILY

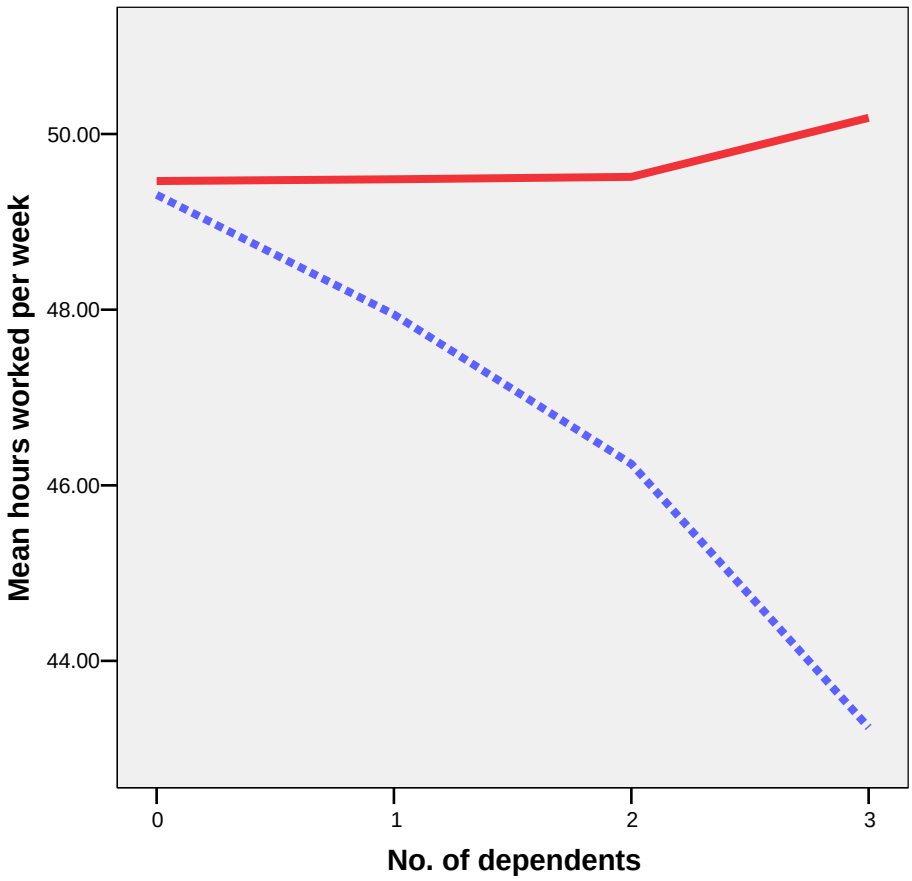
Institutions will undoubtedly want to shape their employment policies around the changing expectations of the coming generations, especially because signs point to an increasingly tight market for institutions looking to attract highly-qualified faculty. With large numbers of (mostly) male retirees now entering prime retirement years, and the need to attract their replacements, who will far more likely be female than ever before, the academic profession must be seen as a more accommodating arena for balancing the conflicting demands of family, work, and careers.

These younger women will face competing pressures of family and career in ways previous generations of overwhelmingly male faculty did not. The profession is – quite simply – structured to work against their success because its existing norms require such an intense commitment to both teaching and research and such long working hours to succeed at both. Ample evidence shows that the burdens of family fall more heavily on young women than on young men (Mason and Goulden, 2002; Mason and Goulden, 2004), evidence that compels colleges and universities to change if they are to attract and retain the best qualified faculty of the present generation (American Council on Education, 2005).

A number of recent reports confirm the disparity between increasing numbers of terminal degrees awarded to women and lagging indicators of career entry and success. (Fogg and Wilson, 2004). Women are underrepresented in many academic disciplines but overrepresented in "traditional" fields such as education and nursing, and their rates of publication, research grant awards, and time-on-the-job[2] measures all tend to lag behind those of men. Women are more likely to take part-time and non-tenure track jobs in lower status institutions than are men. They are also more likely to retire earlier than men. In short, the route to a fully-successful academic career is more problematic for women.

Women appear to make the greater personal sacrifice in choosing an academic career. Over three-quarters (77%) of men under 40 who have terminal degrees and positions at research or doctoral universities are married (or cohabiting), while only 62% of women are married (or cohabiting). Career-long, tenure-eligible full-time women faculty at research and doctoral universities are far less likely to be married than male faculty in the same age cohort. Among the younger women who have invested heavily in academic career success, 57% report having no dependents. Only 34% of men in the same situation report having no dependents. So women appear to have been much more likely to forego marriage and children if they choose academic careers (NSOPF-99).

When women do marry and have children, the academic workplace handicaps them for



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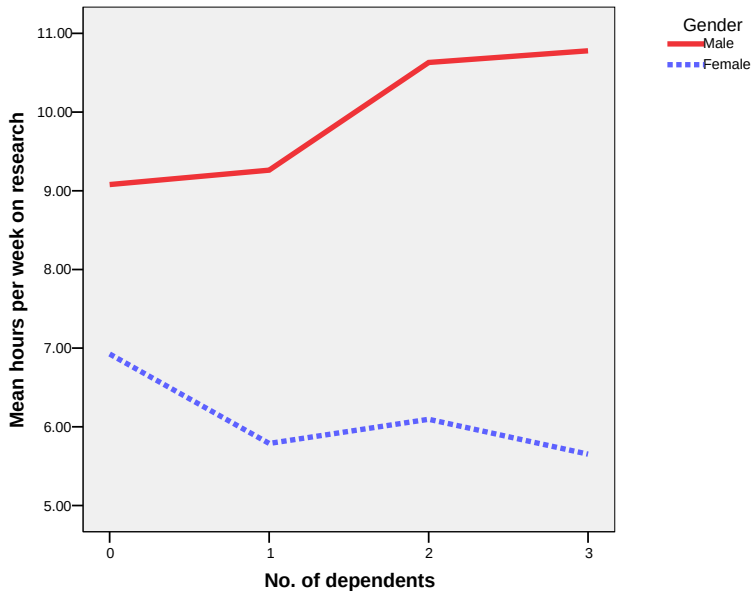
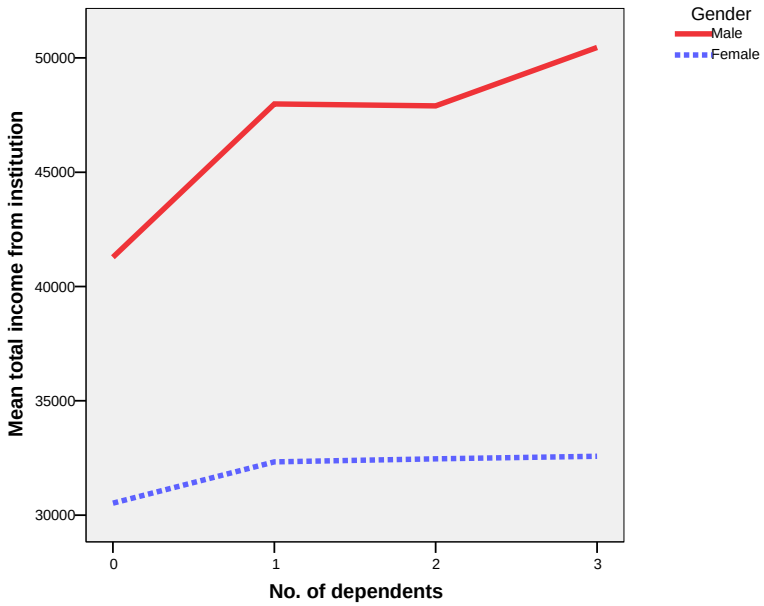
The effects of having children on women's research activity, and therefore on their ability to succeed career-wise over the long term, is marked. Figure 2 shows a steady, linear decline in the average number of hours full-time women faculty spend on research per dependent, compared to a slight increase for men. The effect is clearly to women's competitive disadvantage. Mason and Goulden (2004) have reached a similar conclusion using data from the National Science Foundation's Survey of Doctoral Recipients.

Figure 2: Mean hours per week on research: All full-time faculty by number of dependents.



Although further work is needed on this aspect, our preliminary analysis shows that both of these measures – hours on the job and hours on research – correlate positively with other measures of career success. (Hours worked per week correlates at .33 with basic academic year pay; percentage of time on research correlates at .35 with pay. NSOPF-04.)

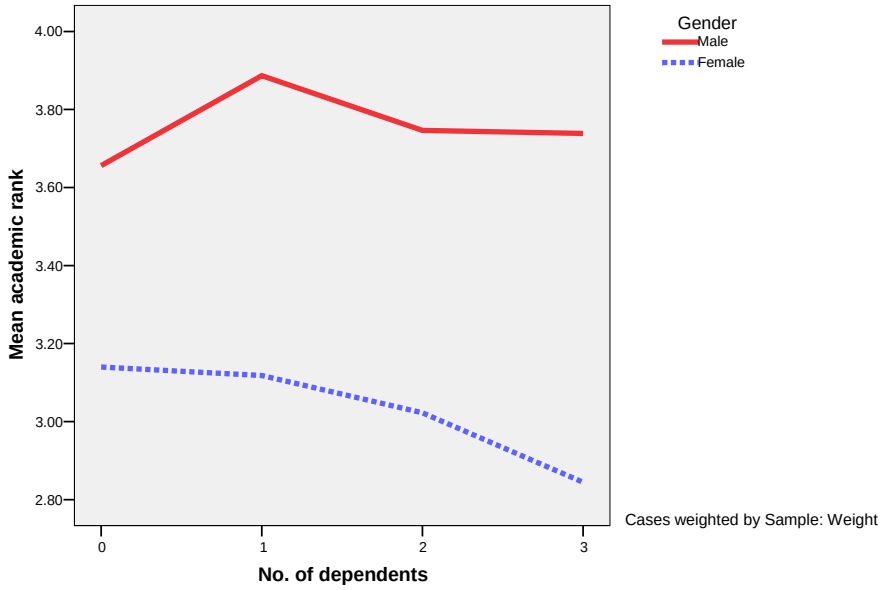
Figure 3: Mean total income from institution: All faculty by number of dependents.
Having children may also constrain women's advancement through the academic ranks to full professor compared to men.



No controls were employed for age or experience.

Figure 4: Academic rank of full-time faculty by number of dependents.

Having dependents lowers women's chances of achieving tenure, as well.

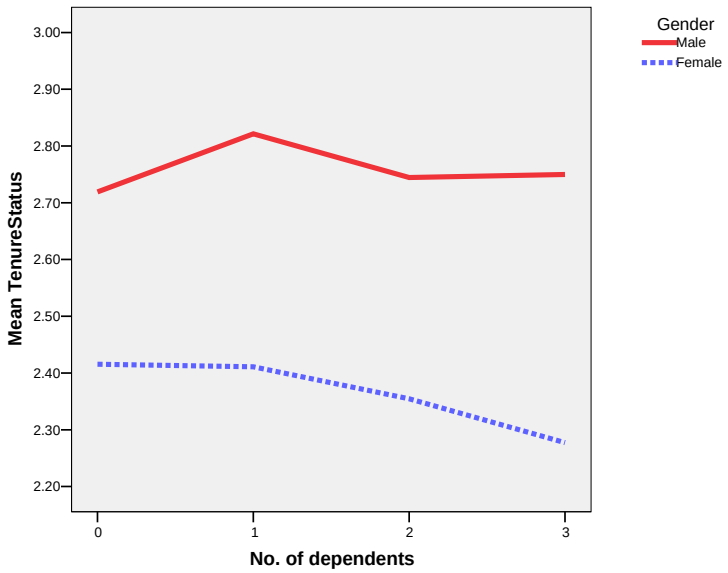


Cases weighted by Sample: Weight

Academic rank is scaled as follows: 4=Professor, 3=Assoc. Prof., 2=Assistant Prof., 1=Instructor

Figure 5: Tenure status: All faculty by number of dependents.

If institutions want to be successful in attracting and holding young women interested in academic careers, then they will have to find ways to mitigate the unequal impact of



Mean tenure is scaled as follows: 1=no tenure system, 2=not eligible, 3=on track, 4=respondent is tenured

having children. Young women who can achieve in academe need to see that institutions are committed to both a fair working environment and to their career success, which involves some flexing by the institution so that women can manage their jobs and families.

That visible commitment will most clearly be demonstrated by policies that a) allow more flexibility than earlier generations have enjoyed, and b) compensate for the disadvantages that marriage and family pose (statistically speaking) for women.

FLEXING TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF FAMILY OBLIGATIONS: CAN AN INSTITUTION FLEX AND BE FAIR?

Marrying and having children create conditions that make it difficult for women to enter and compete successfully in academic careers. We also know that we cannot treat men and women differently per se.

Because there is no easily non-discriminatory way to compensate women for the competitive disadvantages associated with marriage and family, the idea of providing a "cafeteria" of flexible employment options may be the most practical way to balance out career opportunities for both genders.

Perhaps the way to address these obvious inequalities is to attack the most immediate causes. A few examples, by no means exhausting the possibilities, might promote more discussion:

- Marriage affects women's pursuit of academic careers. Women often feel more place-bound or committed to follow if they are in a marital or other relationship. But as women achieve an increasing share of advanced degrees, spousal employment issues may apply as much to men as to women. (In fact, the current generation of new academics – male and female alike – may be as concerned about spousal employment opportunities as about almost any other issue.) Any institution recruiting or negotiating with prospective women faculty needs to consider affirmative spousal employment policies. If more women feel free to work where they have the most promising professional opportunity – as either trailing or leading spouse – more women will undoubtedly enter the "pipeline." Affirmative spousal employment could apply equally and fairly to men and women alike.
- Marsha Mason and Marc Goulden (2004), among others, have documented burdens of marriage and family on women. Whether for childcare or other purposes, women appear to spend consistently more time on family responsibilities ("home work" and child care) than men do. In fact, marriage appears to release men from these responsibilities and provide them with more discretionary time to work, especially if the spouse elects to remain out of the workforce during child-rearing. In any case, the birth of a child appears to result (statistically) in fewer hours on the job for a woman, but more hours on the job for men. The more children in men's families, the more (not less) time they spend on the job. The effect is the opposite for women. But to avoid discrimination, institutions need to flex in direct proportion to the responsibility of the individual (regardless of gender) for a child's welfare. Over a certain minimum obligation, the individual might be made eligible for campus childcare (or compensation for an equally appropriate private option, a nanny, for example). No gender restriction or preference would be needed, nor need the benefit extend beyond some reasonable minimum time period.
- Time on the job is correlated with indicators of competitive success – publication, grants, consulting, etc. Marrying and having children reduces women's time on the job, and it reduces their achievement of success – career long, not just in the early,

pre-tenure years. Because these relationships are probably very contingent on a host of factors beyond gender, it has been more difficult to deal with their impact on pay, rank, and tenure decisions, in particular. There is probably no simple or single way to compensate without discriminatory intent or result.

- Tenure decisions are normally time-bound. Some flexing of the up-or-out time limit has been tried, and appears to be a useful, and gender-neutral way to support faculty with bona fide child-care responsibilities. Pay and rank are generally tied. Perhaps institutions can deal with this with a cafeteria of optionally available resources like grant funds to conduct research, hire graduate assistants, and even hire home help on which individuals can draw when their time-on-task is impeded by family obligations.

An array of good practices that accommodate the need for flexibility for faculty appears in the American Council on Education's new report, An Agenda For Excellence (2005).

DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES FOR LATE-CAREER FACULTY

The demographics of faculty retirement do not appear to have changed as much after the end of mandatory retirement as most institutions assumed they would. In general, faculty do not plan to remain on the job much beyond the standard retirement age of 65. Nor does it appear that faculty have responded in great numbers to incentive programs designed to encourage either early or phased retirement.

Data from NSOPF-99 shows that as many as half of all faculty express an interest in phased retirement. There is no specified question on the NSOPF survey about whether an individual is actually in phased retirement. To attempt an estimate, I combined items from the survey that ask if an individual a) has retired and b) is currently employed part-time. About 16% of all faculty over age 55 answered "yes" to both questions. I estimate that some unspecified fraction of those – roughly 40%, based on whether they reported having left a non-higher education job – came from careers outside higher education. That would leave about 10% of faculty over 55 in what might be "phased retirement." But many of those work on an informal contract-to-contract basis, not in a "phased retirement" relationship based on institutional policy. If we assume that half of these ARE phasing, based on the general coverage of phased retirement policies nation-wide, then about 5% of faculty over 55 may be assumed to work in a phased retirement relationship. But there is wide variation from institution to institution. Over 80% of all retirees elected to phase under a generous policy at one of the case study institutions in

our Sloan study, but very few elected to phase at institutions with more restrictive policies. It appears to us that the potential variability of motives to retire and preferred patterns of retirement could be more fully accommodated in policies that are designed to provide attractive options.

Many existing policies examined in the course of our project reflect an ambivalence of purpose: They provide incentives for faculty to retire in predictable and orderly fashion, but often seem designed conservatively to limit the numbers who might elect to "phase." More generous programs do seem to encourage more participation. But financial incentives alone are a blunt instrument, helping neither individuals nor institutions successfully navigate the complex process – a mix of financial, career, psychological, and social factors – that affects decisions to retire. Nor do "blunt instrument" plans help institutions navigate the strategic and work force issues that emerge as faculty "take up" the options they are offered.

Obviously, a deeper understanding of all of these factors is needed. We have found that retirement is a profoundly individual process, with decisions often being made at the intersection of many – often uncontrollable – considerations.

However, if both men and women perceive a supportive environment and have a hand in making informed choices about how to retire, they appear willing to renegotiate the terms and conditions of their employment. Thoughtful navigation of this complex and little-understood process can serve both individuals and institutions well, particularly if both sides have enough freedom (and wisdom) to bend to one another's interests. Research (Floyd, et al, 1992) showing greater satisfaction with retirement by individuals who voluntarily choose to do so for positive reasons seems to support negotiated rather than strictly standardized phased retirement agreements.

As desirable as individually negotiated agreements about retirement may be, there is great potential for discrimination unless these negotiations fall within a policy that clearly specifies eligibility to participate, outlines acceptable terms and conditions of employment, and establishes principles concerning pay and benefits. Otherwise, individual arrangements could be much different from department to department or even individual to individual – and based on no more than a chair's or dean's whim.

Faculty appear to consider an increasingly complex – and profoundly individual – set of issues that affect their decisions about when to retire. Some faculty see continued

rewards, psychic and material, in continuing to work. In a good proportion of cases, that means a different kind of work – teachers turn to research or service; researchers turn to teaching, etc. Others want to pursue different pleasures like new career challenges, travel, hobbies, warmer climates, living closer to grandchildren, playing more golf, or caring for a family member. This suggests that more options and more flexibility in choosing among the options would serve both retirees and institutions better than the "blunt instrument" (one-size-fits-all) approach.

One implication may be that the older the individual, the more flexible the phased retirement options should be. A policy might, in fact, allow an individual to trade flexibility of options against length of the term. Older potential phasees might opt for greater flexibility of choice in work assignment while accepting a shorter term of eligibility. Conversely, younger potential phasees might be more willing to accept given work assignments in exchange for a longer term.

Institutions can help the decision along by focusing on the basic security issues: adequate income, health insurance, access to professional colleagues, and support for their work. Beyond this, and attention to equity for all, retirement is so much an individual matter that the standardized terms of policies may have only minor effects. Deans and chairs are not particularly well-prepared to counsel their senior faculty or to negotiate retirement arrangements in a way that allows individuals to meet their needs. But careful attention to the process, respecting and regarding individual interests in a way that allows "productive disengagement" may build good will among those who are considering retirement. Supporting them with personal, professional, and financial counsel might alleviate the need to provide expensive incentives like "golden parachutes" that are designed to attract people to retirement through one-time financial windfalls.

The goals of retirement policies should be explicit. Institutions may want to encourage retirements or encourage retention, depending on their strategic position. With that major premise in mind, some foundations for policy can be offered:

- Age is the main determinant of retirement. Institutions should have good data on the age profile of their faculty – by discipline.
- More faculty would elect phased or early retirement than presently do if policies were more accommodating and information about options were more clearly communicated.

- Responses to incentives will vary by age, gender, wealth, health, workload, and satisfaction. But responses will be highly individual (and therefore random, as well).
- "Mutuality" is at least as important as standardizing terms and conditions in phased retirement policies.
- Flexibility in accommodating individual interests must be balanced against the need for fair and equitable treatment of all eligible retirees, as well as against the institution's goals and resources.
- Senior faculty who phase can add value in both conventional (credit-generating courses, grant-funded research) and unconventional (preserving institutional memory, mentoring, advising) work roles. Value-added, rather than formula-based assignments should be part of the "mutuality" agreement.

Policy Recommendations

- Faculty should be involved in developing policies, in part because recognizing their interests will promote more realistic policies, and in part because their involvement will help broaden awareness of the institution's good faith and of the policies themselves.
- Institutions should provide for broad eligibility to phase, and terms that will encourage individuals to phase as long as mutuality can be satisfied.
- Pay, benefits, and general guidelines on length of term, workload, and other conditions such as access to office or lab space and support services should be established at the institutional level; specific details about actual work assignments should be negotiable – subject to review and approval for consistency – at the department level.
- Faculty approaching retirement may need comprehensive financial planning support, as well as – for some – more personal counseling. While colleges and universities may not be in a position to provide it, they should routinely recommend financial planning as early as 10 or 15 years prior to the time when faculty will reach a "predictable" retirement age. They should also be prepared to assist in locating other resources faculty may need as they consider phasing.
- Individual circumstances may require special consideration and may be essential to securing an agreement. Institutions should be prepared to be flexible in exceptional cases.
- Faculty who elect to phase often feel marginalized and disenfranchised. Deans, chairs, and colleagues should understand the social and psychological vulnerabilities associated with partial or full retirement as individuals disengage

from the professional and social activities on which their identities have depended for many years. Supportive gestures and continuing respect for phasees should be routine.

- Departments should be provided incentives to encourage phased retirements. To the extent possible, salaries and benefits vacated by "phasing" individuals should be returned to the most affected departments. If larger strategic considerations prevent such redistribution, the principles by which decisions are made should be clearly communicated. (Of course, once an individual fully retires, then the department will have to make its case anew for the position and/or the funding.)
- Departments that find themselves unduly impacted by many simultaneous phased retirements ought not to be penalized either advertently or inadvertently. They may need rebuilding with an accelerated infusion of new positions and support beyond anyone's expectations. Although it may be tempting to put limits on what fraction of a department's faculty may phase at any given time, or to impose a queueing requirement to spread "phasing" out, it is probably more important to provide departments with incentives to encourage phasing.
- Long-term planning should allow for an increasing interest in flexible employment options. Women represent an increasing fraction of the academic work force, and show a greater interest in flexibility at all career stages, therefore it is likely that the overall number of faculty who will consider phased retirement in the future seems likely to increase. As we have noted, the availability of flexing makes academic employment more attractive in a highly competitive marketplace.
- Phased retirement programs at individual institutions should be evaluated to assess the outcomes – and compared with outcomes of programs with different provisions so new policies can build on others' successes. More public sharing of experiences among institutions would help identify the most successful practices.

For older faculty, phased retirement is one way in which institutions can serve several interests at the same time. By giving faculty several options, they can open discussions with potential retirees and help individuals plan the end-phase of their careers. When individuals commit to a particular retirement option, institutions will know when a faculty position will come open and be available to fill. These available positions can be used in a variety of ways, including hiring of new faculty, providing for spousal employment where it might help attract a particularly attractive prospect, or providing temporary faculty (or other support) for faculty members with family responsibilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taken together, research on phased retirement and on the impact of family on work and career indicate the need for more flexible employment options for early- and late-career faculty alike. The age and gender distribution of faculty argue strongly for such options. The number of faculty approaching retirement age is substantial and older faculty express more interest in options as they enter their 60's. Younger faculty are proportionally more likely to be women than ever before, and the need for flexibility among faculty with family obligations is abundantly clear. Although the burden of these obligations falls heavily on young women, equitable policies that also support men who care for children can make academic work more appealing to dual-career couples and help change norms that have pressed young women to put family responsibilities ahead of career considerations.

Flexibility can serve the academy's need for the best and brightest faculty by making academic work more accommodating and more attractive. There are more likely to be fewer qualified applicants for more faculty jobs in the foreseeable future. The competition from opportunities in other fields is also likely to be strong. One of the best ways to recruit newer faculty and to hold them longer will be to respect their commitments to their spouses and families. Similarly, as faculty approach their 60's, they respond well to options allowing them flexibility in retiring. Flexing for faculty career-wise can make the profession more attractive and competitive. Colleges and universities may have little choice as society's workplace norms change in the direction of more flexibility and as competition for talent increases.

ENDNOTES

[1] Prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, PA, November, 2005.

[2] "Time-on-the-job" measures include responses to survey items in the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, conducted approximately every 5 years since 1988 by the National Center for Education Statistics. Survey items include estimates of hours worked per week, and hours (and percentages of time) spent on teaching, research, service, and other functions.

[3] All figures that follow were generated from weighted (to population parameters) raw data from the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty, 1999. All faculty of all appointment types, at all types of institutions, across the entire age spectrum, are included unless otherwise indicated. The analysis was restricted to cases in which the number of dependents reported by respondents was three or fewer. The number of cases fell sharply as number of dependents increased, so results became progressively less meaningful as the number of dependents rose beyond three.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Leslie, Chancellor Professor of Education, received his B. A. in Psychology from Drew University, the M. Ed. in School Psychology from Boston University, and the Ed.D. in Educational Policy Studies with a concentration in Higher Education from the Pennsylvania State University. He has served on the faculties of the University of Virginia, University of Illinois, and Florida State University. At the University of Illinois, he also served as Assistant to the President, with responsibility for managing the President's Office and serving as the President's chief of staff, and as liaison to national organizations, to faculty senates on three campuses, and to internal university administrators and committees. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and as Vice President and President of the Association. While at Florida State, he was granted a partial leave for two years to serve as Resident Scholar in the Office of Policy Research and Improvement, a staff group reporting to Florida's Commissioner of Education. He provided staff support to a blue ribbon commission developing a plan to improve mathematics and science education in Florida, and undertook special studies and assignments related to policy development. His research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the Exxon Education Foundation, the National Institute of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics, TIAA-CREF, the Lilly Endowment, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. He has served as a consultant to state postsecondary coordinating agencies in Illinois, Florida, and Virginia, legislative committees in Florida and Maryland, the Association for Governing Boards, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. He is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, was named an Alumni Fellow of the Pennsylvania State University in 2000, and received the Research Achievement Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education in 2002. He is an honorary member of Kappa Delta Pi (2003) and is a TIAA-CREF Institute Fellow (2004 -2006).