



# NIH **U**pdates on Women in Science News for Yo**U** to Use!

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*NIH Updates on Women in Science is brought to you by the [NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers](#). We encourage you to forward this e-newsletter to colleagues who may find it of interest.*

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## ***President Obama Shows Continuing Support for Women***

On March 11, 2009, President Barack Obama signed an executive order creating the [White House Council on Women and Girls](#). The Council will focus on advancing women's health care, reducing violence against women, improving women's economic security by expanding their career options and potential, and ensuring that all government agencies develop and promote work/life balance and family-friendly policies. The Council will be composed of Cabinet Secretaries and the heads of Cabinet-level agencies. Valerie Jarrett., Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor, will serve as the Chair of the Council and Tina Tchen, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Public Liaison at the White House will serve as its Executive Director.

Following on the heels of the nomination of Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius as the next Secretary of Health and Human Services, President Obama named Nancy-Ann DeParle, J.D., the Director of the White House Office of Health Reform, the so called "Health Care Czar." Two weeks later, Institute of Medicine member Margaret Hamburg, M.D., was nominated to serve as the next Commissioner of Food and Drugs, the head of the Food and Drug Administration.

[Obama Announces White House Council For Women And Girls \(The Huffington Post\)](#)

[Nancy-Ann DeParle Names to Health Care Post \(The Washington Post\)](#)

[President Obama Names FDA Chief \(Reuters\)](#)

## ***NIH Regional Meeting Addresses Women's Careers in Science***

On March 4-6, 2009 the Office of Research on Women's Health and Washington University in St. Louis hosted the first of four scientific workshops and town hall meetings to help update the research agenda in women's health for the NIH for the next ten years. Each meeting will feature a working group on women's careers. At the St. Louis meeting, the working group was co-chaired by Phoebe Leboy, Ph.D., President of the Association for Women in Science (AWIS), Rebekah Gee, M.D., M.P.H., a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, and Walter Schaffer, Ph.D., Senior Scientific Advisor for Extramural Research at the NIH. The meeting also featured a keynote address by Dr. Leboy which included the results of her own study and two studies carried out by AWIS staff of the female/male composition of several medical school biochemistry departments and departments advertising tenure-track positions for biochemistry or microbiology in 2007. The studies showed that not only are women underrepresented as current tenured or tenure-track professors of biochemistry, but the proportion of applicants that are women is well below the available pool for these positions. These results were published in the March 2009 edition of *ASBMB Today*.

The proposed reasons for this underrepresentation were also reflected in the discussion and recommendations of the working group on women's careers at the St. Louis meeting. The group discussed the inherent family-unfriendliness of the academic system and suggested that rather than teaching women to play the game better, the rules of the game need to be changed. While programs such as extended tenure-clocks, onsite child care, and increased emphasis on mentoring at all levels

were seen as much needed measures, in the long run, participants felt that if academia is to remain a career choice for the next generation of physicians and scientists, departments and institutions are going to have to take a critical look at how scientists are trained, recruited, evaluated, retained, and promoted.

[Women's Health and Careers are the focus of Workshop at Washington University \(STLtoday.com\)](#)

[Biochemistry Department Diversity: A Lack of Sex Appeal \(page 19-21 of ASBMB Today\)](#)

### ***Cornell Study Indicates that Sociocultural, Rather than Biological Considerations are Responsible for Women's Career Choices***

A recent study by Cornell researchers Stephen J. Ceci, Wendy M. Williams, and Susan M. Barnett carried out an extensive review of thirty years of published literature on sex differences in math and science careers. They used the often conflicting biological data, numerous surveys, and studies of discrimination to refine a causal model for women's choices regarding math-intensive careers. They concluded that mathematical ability is not a sole predictor of choosing a math-intensive career, but rather the relative strength of math versus verbal abilities, along with personal preferences and the academic environment combine to guide the career choice. That is, women who are strong in both math and communication, may choose a career that stresses the verbal skills rather than the math skills, especially if they perceive math-intensive careers as being a less viable option due to culture and work environment. The authors also found that in all academic fields, not just math-intensive ones, the choice to have children was predictive of career success and noted a definite penalty associated with having children before attaining tenure. They noted, however, that this is one of the most "malleable" factors in their model since there are steps that could be taken by institutions to avert this "childbearing penalty" such as deferred start-up of tenure-track positions, part-time work that segues into full-time tenure-track positions, and courtesy appointments that give women access to university libraries and networks so they can remain engaged and up to date on the literature while on extended leave.

[Women's Underrepresentation in Science: Sociocultural and Biological Considerations \(PDF\)](#)

[Lack of Ability Does Not Explain Women's Decisions to Opt Out of Math-intensive Science Careers \(Science Daily\)](#)

### ***UCLA Study Reports Women Faculty are Less Satisfied and More Stressed than Men***

A recent report, published by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles reports on the activities and beliefs about undergraduate education and faculty work-life of over 22,000 full-time faculty at 372 colleges and universities across the country. The survey indicates that faculty are generally moving toward an increased emphasis on undergraduate education and community outreach. The majority of faculty feel that diversity on campus is of inherent value and

greater efforts are needed to recruit women and people of color. Overall, nearly seventy-five percent of faculty report high career satisfaction, but women report lower career satisfaction than men and are less likely to feel secure in their jobs. The report indicates that there are significant differences between the feelings of men and women towards various aspects of their careers. For instance, women are less satisfied with their opportunity for scholarly pursuits, prospects for career advancement, and teaching load.

The report also details the different levels of satisfaction reported by professors of various rank. While the differences between men and women at the assistant professor level are quite small (under 5% for each category), the differences are larger at the associate and full professor levels, particularly concerning opportunity for scholarly pursuits which shows a greater than 10% difference between the levels of satisfaction of women and men. Only 34.2 percent of faculty reported striking a good balance between work and family, with women reporting more difficulty striking this balance. Finally, women reported higher levels of almost all stressors including lack of personal time, managing household responsibilities, job security, high personal expectations, and subtle discrimination.

[The American College Teacher - National Norms for 2007-2008](#)

### ***Studies Show that Housework and Having Children Have a Negative Impact on Women's Wages but Women are Just as Ambitious as Men***

A recent *Statistics Canada* report found a substantial earnings gap between Canadian women with and without children. The study, which used three sets of data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, compared the hourly earnings of women with and without children adjusting for age, education, length of interruption of work, and marital status. The study's author Xuelin Zhang found that differences in salary were smaller for younger woman and those who stopped working for less than three years than for older women or those who took more extended leave. Interestingly, more highly educated women who delayed having children faced a larger pay gap than less educated women or women who have children earlier.

In an analysis of American Time Use Survey data from 2003 -2006, Joni Hersch presents a mathematical model to analyze the relationship between earnings and the amount of time spent on daily housework. Daily housework was defined as cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc. but not home maintenance and repair, shopping, or childcare. The evidence indicated that the earnings of both men and women were negatively correlated with the amount of time greater than one hour per day spent on housework. Further, the coefficient for the relationship was greater for women and since women reported spending more time on housework, the aggregate effect was greater for women than for men.

On the flip side, the Families and Work Institute recently released a report based in data collected from the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce which indicates that attitudes towards working women and the dynamics of dual-career relationships are changing. Authors Ellen Galinsky, Kerstin Aumann, and James T. Bond note that women under the age of 30 are just as likely as men to express a desire for jobs with greater responsibility regardless of whether or not they have children. Further, approximately sixty percent of both men and women agree that the traditional gender roles of men as

sole wage earners in a family are no longer valid and seventy-three percent of respondents agree that women who work outside the home can be as good a mother as women who do not. The full report contains a number of other analyses of how American workers see the roles of men and women in the workplace and at home.

[Earnings of Women With and Without Children \(Perspectives on Labor and Income\)](#)

Home Production and Wages: Evidence from the American Time Use Survey (Review of Economics of the Household – [Subscription only](#) or [Preprint](#))

[Families and Work Institute - Times Are Changing \(PDF\)](#)

### ***Insights from Industry on Recruiting and Advancing Women***

While academia struggles with developing programs to help scientists reenter the lab after taking time off for family responsibilities, several companies are actively recruiting such highly skilled women, even during this down economy. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* detailed some of these programs at IBM, Honeywell, BBN Technologies in Massachusetts, and General Electric in India, as well as MIT's "Career Reengineering" program. The programs emphasize retraining, mentoring, and flexible scheduling. The NIH Office of Research on Women's Health has had a [reentry grant supplement program](#) since 1992.

Rather than focusing on helping women reenter the workforce, Deloitte & Touche has focused on ways to help employees work through periods of increased family responsibility. Their Mass Career Customization program is more than just flexible work schedules, but a full spectrum of options which allow employees and managers to adjust four parameters - pace, workload, location/schedule, and role - as needed to accommodate the needs of the employee and the company. By making customization the norm, the stigma of reducing ones work load for a period of time is removed and employees are more likely to take advantage of the flexibility and remain with the company.

[In Science and Technology, Efforts to Lure Women Back \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)

[Mass Career Customization \(Training Magazine\)](#)

### ***New Feature: Highlighting Best Practices – Princeton University***

The NUWS is adding a new feature. Each month the NUWS will highlight best practices for sustaining the careers of women in science. This may include a profile of a particular university, college, academic health center, or organization which has implemented such practices, or it may be a description of an innovative program which is in use at multiple institutions. This month, the family-friendly policies of Princeton University are presented.

For Princeton faculty, these policies include paid temporary disability leave from three weeks before to six to ten weeks after birth, automatic extension of the tenure-clock for any assistant professor who becomes a parent, one semester of full workload relief from classroom teaching and administrative committee work, or two semesters of half relief from such duties (at full pay), unpaid parenting leave for up to a year for any faculty, back-up childcare services, support for dependent care while traveling, child care subsidies, and partner placement services to help dual-career couples stay together. Similarly, family-friendly initiatives for graduate students include six weeks of paid leave for birth mothers, extension of financial support for graduate students who are primary care givers, onsite childcare, childcare grants, back up care, and support for dependent care while traveling.

Not only does Princeton have these policies in place, but they are all listed on the websites of the Office of the Dean of Faculty and the Graduate School. According to the websites, faculty and students are not only encouraged to take advantage of these policies, but are expected to do so. These policies were also presented by Joan Girgus at the [From Doctorate to Dean or Director: Sustaining Women through Critical Transition Points in Science, Engineering, and Medicine](#) Workshop which was co-hosted in September 2008 by the National Academies Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine and the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health.

[Princeton Family-friendly Policies for Faculty](#)

[Princeton Family-friendly Policies for Graduate Students](#)

[University Expands Family-friendly Policies for Graduate Students](#)

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