



W I S E R I

*Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute  
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

# Talking about Leaving: Why Faculty Leave UW-Madison and What We Can Do About It

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April 29, 2008



# Acknowledgements

- Jessica Winchell
- Deveny Benting
- Kathleen O'Connell
- Jenn Sheridan
- Research participants
- The NSF

This material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0123666. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

NSF SBE – 0123666, \$4.75 million provided from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2006; the ADVANCE Program is subtitled "Increasing the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers."



# General Thoughts

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- Study of faculty attrition is timely and important
- Approximately 2-3% of UW-Madison faculty leave every year (not retirees)
- Greater percentage of faculty think about leaving, but stay
- Goals of studies are to identify reasons, describe experiences, explain decisions— not predict behavior of faculty
- No one factor to explain why people leave— people are far too complicated



# Overview

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- UW-Madison Attrition, 2006-07
- Description and Methods
- Recommendations
- Discussion: Implications for Policy and Practice



## The “Leavers” of 2006-2007

- Years at UW-Madison: 8.34 (avg)
- Extramural support of over \$30 million
- 35 (73%) received doctorate at Research U/Very High
- 28 (70%) remain on tenure track; other have positions in staff, government, industry, private practice, or are unknown
- 19 (83%) currently at Research U/Very High



# The “Leavers” of 2006-2007

- 31 (65%) male; 17 (35%) female
- 11 (23%) faculty of color
- 23 (48%) tenured; 25 (52%) are not
- 25 (52%) Assistant Prof; 11 (23%) Associate Prof; 12 (25%) Full Prof
- Division
  - Social Sciences-23 (48%)
  - Biological-16 (33%)
  - Physical-5 (10%)
  - Humanities-4 (8%)



# Study Descriptions

- ***Why Women Leave (WWL) and Dual-Career Hire Study (DC)***

Interviews with nine female faculty in the sciences and engineering who left in the three years previous to the study (2002-2005); data complemented by a study of dual-career hired faculty (seven men and women).

- ***Study of Faculty Attrition at UW-Madison***

Interviews with sixteen male and female faculty across campus (left in 2006-07).



# Methods

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- Informed and positioned subjects
- Semi-structured interviews lasting 30-45 minutes, audiotaped
- Interviews transcribed, thematically coded and weighted
- Used publicly available data
- Multiple researchers, member checks





# Cross-Cutting Findings

- **Issues with Research and Tenure**
  - Research not supported or understood
  - Positions are not aligned with tenure criteria
  - Ineffective mentoring
- **Economic Issues**
  - Financial relationship between State and UW
  - Effects on faculty, staff and students
  - Lack of raises and salary compression



# Cross-Cutting Findings

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- **University and Departmental Climate Issues**
  - Experiencing discrimination, harassment and other behaviors
  - Lack of recognition and overall morale
- **Balancing Professional and Personal Lives**
  - Dual-career issues
  - Respecting the needs of family
  - Consideration of the faculty lifestyle



# Issues with Research and Tenure

- *And you know the big [reason I left] was that I didn't have the support for my research that I needed as a junior faculty person... I couldn't find mentorship for grants... I couldn't find co-investigators on grants. I had to search outside the university [for mentorship and collaborators] and that's something, particularly junior faculty members, shouldn't be doing.*



# Issues with Research and Tenure

- *For those who are part of a basic science department, we need to know how to meet our teaching requirements or at least provide means for which we'll be successful at our teaching requirement. I was told I was 100% research and so most of my focus was on research. And then I find out later that the teaching activities that I had were not sufficient. Somebody should have told me...this is the way you need to go about making sure that you have enough teaching activity.*



# Issues with Research and Tenure

- *They had a mentoring committee for me, which was one of the very appealing aspects when I took the job, that there was this mentoring committee. But then there was somebody on the mentoring committee that should not have been on the mentoring committee. And nobody wanted to...not only should they have protected me against this person, which they didn't, but then they stuck him on my mentoring committee because he basically forced his way on and nobody would stand up to him. And then the mentoring committee completely broke down because nobody wanted to deal with him, nobody wanted to meet with him. So it went from trying to schedule mentoring meetings to when he couldn't make the meetings to finally just not having meetings.*



# Economic Issues

- *I think Madison as a university has done an extraordinary job with the resources that they've been given... I realize that they were under deep structural constraints in the state, but when I was there they had, I think there was only one year of merit increases. And there were either two years of a freeze and one year of [raises] just across the board. So, by the time I was put up for tenure, my salary was not at all competitive with what new people were getting on the junior faculty market.*



# Economic Issues

- *My department voted to hire new people, they basically had to follow market logic, but of course there was tremendous salary compression for people that had already been hired. So, by the time I came up for tenure, I was already being paid substantially less than some of the first-year, incoming assistant professors...[the department chair] took me in his office and said, 'I want to talk about salary with you.' What's there to talk about? I know what the university's going to do... it's going to give me the minimum possible raise for tenure.*



# Economic Issues

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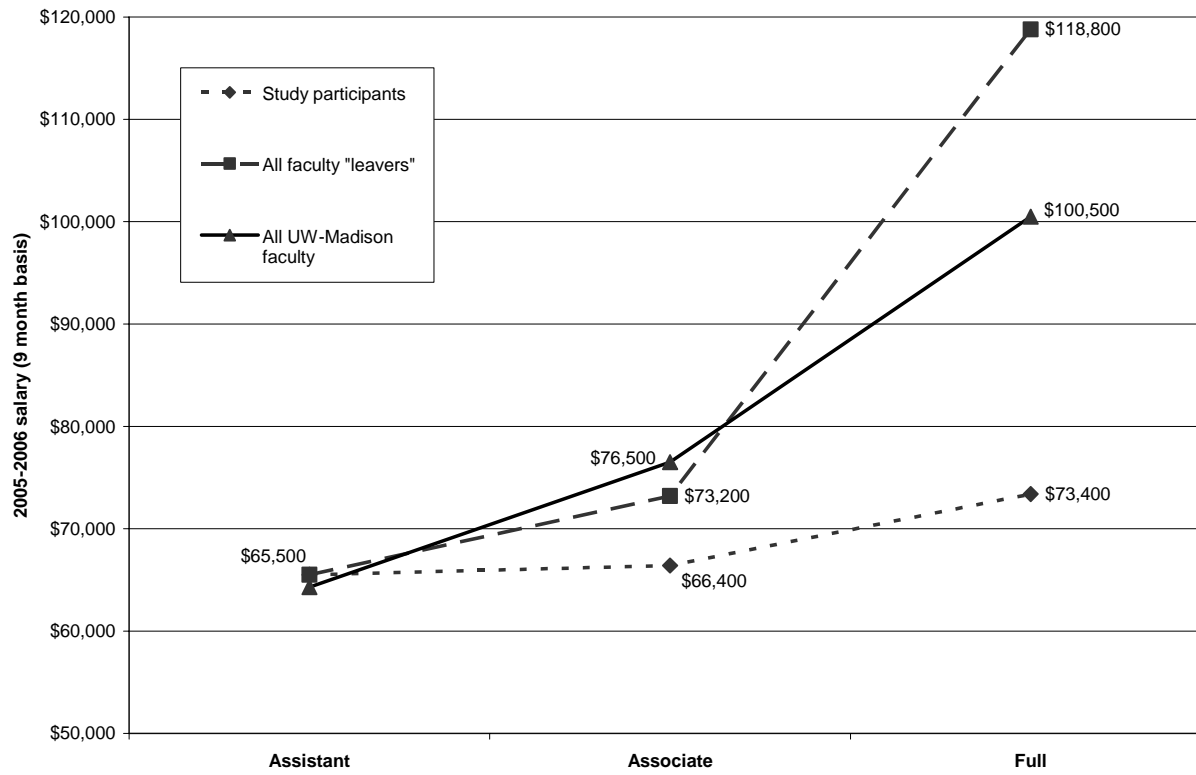
- **Salary Compression:**

*“describes a shrinking gap between the salaries of junior and senior professors... Salary inversion occurs when junior professors—in some cases, those who have just earned their doctorates—earn more than senior professors who may have more experience and publications.”*





## Figure: Salary compression among UW-Madison faculty, 2005-2006





# Economic Issues

- *I realized this less than six months into my time at Wisconsin.... The only way to get a market salary after you've been hired, is to get an outside offer.... So that I knew, I had a plan quite honestly. That I would take the third year off to finish my book. I would finish my book, get my tenure. And then I would work my damndest to get an outside offer, even before I was ready to leave.... It had nothing to do with leaving at the time. And I know there are some departments that actually encourage this...it's encouraged by the way the entire system is set up.*



# Climate Issues

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- *He created a work environment that was very uncomfortable. Ultimately when I started going to people, asking what to do, it was basically, 'Don't talk about it. Just suck it up and act like everything's fine.' And that was what my chair said, and mentoring committee and everyone just said, 'You know, we can't change this person. You just need to learn how to deal with environments that aren't always going to be great.'*



# Climate Issues

- *What worries me is, I don't think [the University] could have done much at that point to keep me. And, so I don't want to lie about it and suggest that these are the things that determined it. They were just things that made me feel a lot more sour about it... so many of my friends were leaving from my department...there was a good chance that they were going to go made the whole idea of my staying even less appealing. And it seems like the people who weren't likely to leave because they had great contracts, good salaries, good positions in my department were exactly the people I didn't necessarily want to stick around for. Whereas the people who I could see that were likely to go on the market in the next few years were the ones I really do like a lot. And I just thought, this department may become a very lonely place for me five years from now.*



# Climate Issues

- *And so we never went in thinking, 'okay well you know we're just going to do this part-time and we're not going to put in our full, our all in it.' I put my all in it. I guess the message is that the spousal support has to be there. If the spouse is also a faculty member that they have to have mentors also, even if they come from outside of the department, and there has to be some things that are in place for his success too. I think that would be the main thing, to just look at both sides because many times one side affects the other.*



# Balancing Professional and Personal Lives

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- *I wasn't really sure I wanted to be a tenured faculty member at UW-Madison or anywhere for that matter. Given what I had seen, given the department that I was in... I wasn't sure I wanted to be a tenured faculty member in that [school/college] in that [department].*



# Balancing Professional and Personal Lives

- *There were some frustrations with budget cuts and every time you write a grant they tax more and more of it to try and pay for every thing else. So those things start to add up as being frustrations. [My current job] offers a lot more money, and it was kind of like, hmm, 'I could work an 8 to 5 job, get paid a lot more and not have the, as much as I like doing research, not have the headache of waking up everyday and hoping I'm going to have the grants funded to pay for the people to work in my lab.'*



# Recommendations

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- **Provide Assistant Professors with an environment that encourages them and leads to their success**
- **Provide Associate and Full Professors with an environment that encourages their retention and success**
- **Address university and departmental climate issues**
- **Understand the need for balance in the professional and personal lives of faculty**





## Discussion: Implications for Policy and Practice

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**What can and should we do about faculty attrition?**



# Discussion: Implications for Policy and Practice

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- **Hiring practices**
  - Dual-career, start-up packages, research agenda
- **Mentoring**
  - Effective, evaluation, check-in, tenure-clock extensions
- **Support for research**
  - Vilas Life Cycle Professorships
- **Department Chair**
- **Divisional Committees**
- **Salary equity**



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