Results of the 2006-2007 Study of Faculty Attrition at UW-Madison

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April 17, 2008

**Report Prepared for the Provost's Office
at UW-Madison**

BACKGROUND

In the spring semester of 2007, Vice Provost Laurie Beth Clark approached the WISELI staff about conducting a research study of faculty attrition at UW-Madison. This request came on the heels of a report disseminated in 2006 about why female faculty in scientific and engineering fields leave campus.[i] Using similar methodology, the following describes a study of both female and male faculty members from across campus who left between the fall of 2006 and summer of 2007.

METHODOLOGY

The names of 48 faculty members who left UW-Madison between 9/1/06 and 8/31/07 were provided to me in the fall of 2007. From these names, 42 former faculty were eligible[ii] for participation in the study; contact information was found for 35 of them. An email invitation, which described the study and included a link to the Provost's memo about the study,[iii] was sent to 31 former faculty members; mailed invitations were sent to the other four faculty. From these invitations 16 individuals agreed to be interviewed for a participation rate of 46%.

Each participant was sent or emailed an Informed Consent[iv] form that they signed and returned. I conducted all interviews between November 19, 2007 and February 14, 2008 using a standardized interview protocol.[v] All participants agreed to be audiotaped. The taped interviews were transcribed, resulting in an electronic version of the text, which was inserted into ATLAS.ti—a software program used to organize, sort and code qualitative data. The interview data was then analyzed using traditional qualitative methods—portions of the text were coded, aggregated, and summarized into overarching themes. I also mapped out each individual's path at UW-Madison and noted the reasons why they left, weighting these reasons based on their relative importance to each interviewee (e.g., primary reason, secondary reason). This process of investigation allowed me to identify crucial themes and underlying areas of concern in faculty's decisions to leave.

<u>Population and Sample</u>
Approximately 3% of all UW-Madison faculty members resigned (excludes retirements) between September 1, 2006 and August 31, 2007. The characteristics of this group of "leavers" was broadly similar to those of the study participants (Table 1). Both the gender and ethnic/racial compositions and the mix of tenured and untenured faculty were quite similar in both groups. The group of study participants included more associate professors than the leaver group overall. Also the group of participants did not include any physical sciences faculty.

Both the leaver and participant groups differ somewhat from the UW-Madison faculty population overall. As depicted in Table 1,the group of faculty who left the UW-Madison during the 2006-2007 academic year included somewhat more women, ethnic/racial minorities, and junior faculty than the faculty population overall.

		Study Participants	All Who Resigned	All UW Faculty[vi]
Gender	**Male**	9 (56%)	31 (65%)	1603 (72%)
	Female	7 (44%)	17 (35%)	617 (28%)

Racial/Ethnic Distinctions	**Faculty of Color**	**4** (25%)	**11** (23%)	**335** (15%)
Tenured at UW-Madison	**Yes**	**9** (56%)	**23** (48%)	**1692** (76%)
	No	**7** (44%)	**25** (52%)	**528** (24%)
Rank	**Assistant Professor**	**7** (44%)	**25** (52%)	**528** (24%)
	Associate Professor	**6** (38%)	**11** (23%)	**357** (16%)
	Full Professor	**3** (19%)	**12** (25%)	**1335** (60%)
Division[vii]	**Biological**	**7** (44%)	**16** (33%)	**766** (35%)
	Physical	**0** (0%)	**5** (10%)	**460** (21%)
	Social	**8** (50%)	**23** (48%)	**590** (27%)
	Humanities	**1** (6%)	**4** (8%)	**370** (17%)

Table 1: Demographics of participants and all faculty who left the university (2006-2007) as compared to all UW-Madison faculty (2005-2006).

More detailed information on the career progression of the study participants and the group of "leavers" was also collected. Comparing the two groups, one should note that the study participants tended to include fewer advanced faculty (those with senior standing, those with very large amounts of grant resources) than the group of leavers overall (Table 2). Also, the group of study participants included more faculty who had left academe entirely than the group of leavers overall.

The data presented in Table 2 is also revealing of the career trajectories of faculty who left the UW-Madison. The vast majority of faculty who left the university in 2006-2007 had earned their doctoral or other terminal degree at major research universities, or UW-Madison "peers." Most then joined the faculty at UW-Madison shortly after completing their degree and went on to bring in substantial amounts of extramural support to fund their research activities. More often than not, faculty who left UW-Madison did so to take a tenured or tenure-track position at another major research university. Again, the universities faculty moved to were often considered to be peer institutions.

		Study Participants	All Who Resigned
Years at UW-Madison	**Mean** *Standard deviation*	**6.94** *0.89*	**8.34** *0.78*
Extramural support ($ per year)[viii]	**Mean** *Standard deviation*	**$44,504** *$58,940*	**$68,761**[ix] *$90,360*
Year terminal degree earned	**Mean** *Standard deviation*	**1996** *1.5*	**1995** *1.0*
Carnegie classification[x] of graduate institution	**Research U/ Very High**	**13** (81%)	**35** (73%)

	Research U/ High	1 (6%)	5 (10%)
	Specialty/Medical	2 (13%)	2 (4%)
	Not Classified[xi]	0 (0%)	6 (13%)
Remain on tenure track?	Yes	9 (56%)	28 (70%)
	No	7 (44%)	12 (30%)
Current title or position	Assistant Professor	2 (13%)	8 (17%)
	Associate Professor	3 (19%)	7 (15%)
	Full Professor	4 (25%)	13 (27%)
	Academic Staff	2 (13%)	2 (4%)
	Government	2 (13%)	2 (4%)
	Industry/ Private Practice	3 (19%)	5 (10%)
	Unknown	0 (0%)	8 (17%)
Carnegie classification of current institution[xii]	Research U/ Very High	9 (90%)	19 (83%)
	Doctoral Research University	0 (0%)	2 (9%)
	Specialty/Medical	1 (10%)	1 (4%)
	Baccalaureate/ Arts & Sciences	0 (0%)	1 (4%)

Table 2: Career progression of study participants and all faculty who left UW-Madison (2006-2007).

FINDINGS

It is impossible to capture all that was discussed in the approximately twelve hours spent with the faculty participants and the corresponding analyses of the data. Not surprisingly, each participant's situation was different, yet a number of themes emerged to provide a greater understanding of the factors that affect faculty members' decisions to leave UW-Madison. Once identified, the themes were categorized and weighted based on whether they were primary reasons or secondary factors for the participants. Underlying categories were used to explicate the overarching themes. From this process, the following emerged as critical areas of concern:

- ➢ **Issues with Research and Tenure,** *as reflected in*
  - o Research not Supported or Understood
  - o Positions Misaligned with Tenure Criteria
  - o Ineffective Mentoring

- ➢ **Economic Issues,** *as reflected in*
  - ○ The Financial Relationship between the State and the University
  - ○ Effects on Faculty, Staff and Students
  - ○ Lack of Raises and Salary Compression

- ➢ **University and Departmental Climate Issues,** *as reflected in*
  - ○ Experiencing Discrimination, Harassment and other Behaviors
  - ○ Lack of Recognition and Overall Morale

- ➢ **Balancing Professional and Personal Lives,** *as reflected in*
  - ○ Respecting the Needs of Family
  - ○ Consideration of the Faculty Lifestyle

Issues with Research and Tenure

Half of the participants identified issues with their research program and/or issues with tenure as primary reasons or secondary factors in their decisions to leave (five identified this as a primary factor; two as secondary). This theme, not surprisingly, dominated the discussions of a majority of the faculty who were assistant professors during their time at UW (two were immediately tenured when moving to their new institutions). On average, the assistant professors who left the university due to tenure issues were on campus for approximately six years.

Once again, each of the participant's stories is different. Paul[xiii] overheard his mentoring committee discuss him at a meeting during his first year, in which they said that he was not going to get tenure. A number of issues plagued him (as described below) and he indeed was not tenured. He chose to leave in his sixth year before going up for review. Both Erik and Cathy had heavy teaching loads and were directors of undergraduate programs, which affected the amount of research they were able to conduct in 6+ years. In the first meeting of Maria's mentoring committee, a member said that she would not get tenure with the research she conducted. She found this perplexing given that she had presented this research during the hiring process. She explained this meeting:

> *At my first mentoring committee meeting, I was told that my research is not valuable. And [this type of research] is not something that they would encourage me to do because it wouldn't lead to my tenure at the university.*
> Interviewer: So they hired you knowing …
> *That I did this type of research before I came [here]?! [laughing]*
> Interviewer: So you came here with the understanding that you would continue this research?
> *Yeah!*

Commonalities found between these stories and the ones described next, include research not being supported and often misunderstood, tenure criteria that were misaligned with position descriptions, and ineffective mentors and mentoring committees.

Paul, Carolyn and Luke described how their *research was generally not supported* during their years at the University, which for them, created feelings of professional isolation. Paul was one of two tenure-track faculty members in his department conducting "basic science" research amongst fifteen other departmental members who were mostly clinical faculty. Paul described his experience

I did get initial financial support from the department in terms of start-up funding, but after that, support was mostly limited to faculty that were in [practitioner research]… it didn't seem like they quite understood some of the challenges that researchers face, the types of support that I needed. Not necessarily the monetary support, although that's important. But there's a concern about lack of focus on the basic science aspect of the department. So, at times I felt isolated…I just didn't have the type of colleagues that I could relate to in terms of the type of work I was doing.

Carolyn felt that her research, which she described as "mainstream," was different enough to warrant seeking support outside of campus:

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.

Luke reported that his feelings of isolation grew when he recognized that his research methodology was beginning to look "different" as compared to others in the department:

I found the department getting less appealing…I was increasingly aware that there was no way that I would be hired in the department right now doing the type of work I do. If I were coming out of grad school, there's no way they would even look at my application just because I don't do the right type of work. And that sort of depressed me.

For faculty with heavy teaching loads, no teaching opportunities, or extensive outreach activities, they found that their *positions and standards for tenure were misaligned*. Erik explained his experience when his service to the State came in conflict with criteria used for tenure in his department:

At almost every other campus in the country where someone's doing this, that person is getting credit towards their extension duties. [The tenure process and criteria] are not rewarding the things that [the University and department] are actually wanting…They didn't even want to acknowledge that maybe they just have a different standard. They just insisted that this was the way the university was. I just kept saying, 'How is that possible?' People get tenure who do very different things, that don't do analytical research whatsoever and they're going to get tenure for scholarly contributions – the metrics are based upon what people say the metrics should be…it's defined by the people in that field. And at some point, the divisional committee wants to know that and be educated about that. They're not, they don't just want to say, we only believe in one model. They want to understand what it is that someone should be contributing in a program area and if they're doing that at a level of excellence then that should be rewarded.

He continued:

But I think there was this real big disconnect with the tenure system in general…The people that are sitting there on divisional committees now for example, got tenure with 2 or 3 journal articles in the same time they're expecting us in the same journals to have 12 or 13…And that's a pretty big disconnect. Because this isn't like inflation. It hasn't gotten necessarily any easier to make good contributions. I'm not saying we should have only had 2 or 3 papers. You know, technology changed our product. I get that, that's fine. But it was really kind of this you know, holier than thou attitude that was quite offensive…. This idea that you

have to do something that we couldn't necessarily do ourselves, because we couldn't even run the stats packages that you're running today.

Paul, who was discussed earlier, had ample time to conduct his research but was not offered teaching opportunities through his department. Yet, he was told that for tenure, he would be evaluated on his teaching.

In terms of the university, it would have been helpful to know how the teaching aspect works for people who are not part of an academic department, a basic science department. For those who are not 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.

For most of these cases, an *ineffective mentor or mentoring* committees was at the crux of the problem. Paul reflects back on how the negative statement he heard affected him:

These are the people that are supposed to mentor me to make tenure in 6 or 7 years. Well for one of them to make a comment that I wasn't going to make tenure… I took that into consideration but it wasn't a driving reason why I did not make tenure….But I thought that was pretty early for someone to start making such comments.
Interviewer: So from that point on, that was in the back of your mind?
Always been there… I mean I looked at my abilities and not to say that I am self-serving, but I'm a good scientist…I do things and make sure that what I do, I do it well.

Carolyn's committee quickly dissolved due to a faculty member who caused dissension among the group:

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.

Lack of effective mentoring also proved to be detrimental to junior faculty who were not receiving the kind of support they needed to be successful:
[Leaving] is very much a direct result of the lack of support. So I think it was really both what I perceived as personal grievances with me, which really kind of questioned if I would get a fair shake for tenure. And then mismanagement of junior faculty to the point of incompetence from the chair. To really set us all up for failure….[The department] would keep pushing us to see just how much we could bleed for the department and still get tenure. We all felt that way at various times. That they are going to keep pushing us and piling more on until we just what? Break?

Sam also described being "used up" and feeling tired all of the time with the amount of service work he was required to do. He noted that no one took any action to help him when he pointed this out.

For these faculty members, the natural "breaking point" to end the cycle was when they chose to leave.

Economic Issues

Almost half of the participants discussed the recent financial state of the University and the negative effects that this has had on them professionally and personally. Six cited one or more of the following categories as their primary reason for leaving; one cited this as a secondary factor.

The *financial relationship between the state and the University* was cited as a critical factor for almost half of the participants when making their decision to leave. Ben, described how the "constant budget crisis" had caused a decline in morale for both himself and his department. Cathy noted, "constant budget frustrations…and it seemed like the last probably 5 years [she] was there, it was more on the forefront." Mark concurs and described how his spouse was, "completely set against Madison and just constantly worrying about the financial crises" and how he just got, "really tired of it." Mark noted that he chose to leave for a privately funded institution intentionally to decrease this anxiety.

The faculty participants were acutely aware of the many ways in which scarcity of resources affected others at the University. For example, a few discussed how staff members, both classified and unclassified, were bearing a greater burden of departmental work. In various offices and departments, people were "let go," which meant that staff members had other responsibilities added to their positions. Similar to faculty, they too were not receiving raises.

A few of the participants discussed the inability to attract or retain graduate students as a critical issue. Mark noted:

> *That was one of my biggest complaints about the university. Was that I needed to build a graduate program because that's what the department does. But there was virtually no money to do so… I ended up with a strategy of trying to find diamonds in the rough.*

The faculty who found this to be a concern sought out positions where graduate students and others were supported at an appropriate level and for their full graduate careers.

Brad reflected on how the University has handled the lack of funding and delayed passage of the state budget. He described how these situations affect faculty, especially in regards to salaries:

> *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.*

Besides Brad, *lack of salary raises* and in particular, *salary compression* was identified as another concern for many other participants in this study. Salary compression "exists when employees with more organizational seniority and experience receive lower salaries relative to new hires.""[xiv] Several study participants described demoralizing effect of these compensation practices. Brad continues:

> *My starting salary at Wisconsin was $50 even. My salary the year before I was tenured was $54-something. The letter that I got after getting tenured put my salary at $60-something and that same year they made an offer to a new*

assistant professor without competing offers at I think $69 or maybe $70 right. I mean that's 15% less than what you're giving to somebody who's a new Associate. I understand the need to match other people's offers, but when you start giving offers like that to people who don't have competing offers, you're not going to create a particularly favorable attitude among those faculty members who feel like they would have options elsewhere.

Luke had a similar experience:

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.

Figure 1, which depicts the average salaries of study participants, all faculty "leavers," and UW-Madison faculty overall, suggests the perception of compression in associate professors' salaries is warranted.
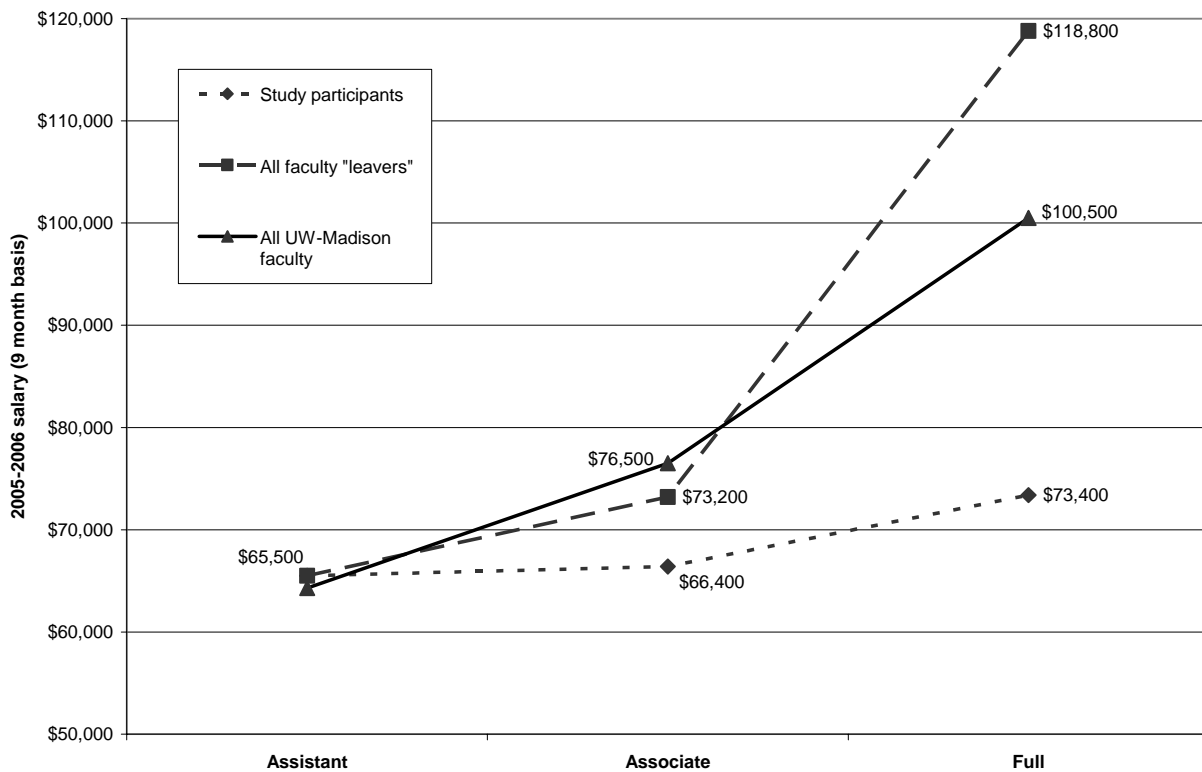

Figure 1: Salary compression among UW-Madison faculty.

Study participants discussed their efforts to address these salary disparities. They consistently reported that their department chair or "common knowledge" within the department informed them that seeking outside offers was *the* means to redress salary compression. Mark built his career at UW-Madison with this in mind:

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.

Interviewer: You knew that at some point you were going to do that but at that third year, you weren't interested in leaving?

No.

Interviewer: You were happy?

Yes, before I was truly interested in leaving…And that I was going to have to [seek outside offers] and of course once you do that, the risk of leaving increases even if you didn't think about it.

Brad felt like he was "dared" to apply for other positions:

I don't know what the solution is given Madison's resource problems….you essentially feel like you're dared to go out on the job market. And I think that that's a hard position to dare people to go out on the job market and then not expect them to be enamored of the places where they go interview.

Dawn approached her department after marrying another faculty member. She described what happened when asking for help:

He said there was nothing he could do for me. [My chair] actually told me to go on the market before they could make a retention package for me or a partner hire package for my husband.

Interviewer: He said to go out and get other offers and then he could help you?

Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: And you went and did that and then…

Then the other offers were much better!

She goes on to explain her thoughts when after applying for other positions:

Since I went to Madison, half of my friends left. They could not afford to stay, the lack of raises was awful. The fact that you knew to get a raise you'd have to go on the market meant that when you go on the market you're going to have to sell yourself, which means you're halfway imagining yourself somewhere else anyway. So, the fact there was no such thing as preemptive retention really hurts UW. I know many people would have stayed if they just could have gotten some money. Like, the cost of living's going up a certain amount and your salary is not going up at all…And that's when I got five outside offers. And that's when it was pretty clear I was going to leave.

One faculty member called the policy of seeking outside offers "perverse" and was appalled that it was an accepted practice at the University.

In general, salary issues appear to be of most concern to the associate or full professors who were interviewed, as opposed to the assistant faculty, whose concerns were more likely to be research and tenure-focused. The final two areas described next, *University and Departmental Climate Issues* and *Balancing Professional and Personal Lives*, cut across all faculty levels.

University and Departmental Climate Issues

Half of the participants identified climate issues as either their primary reason for leaving (n=2) or a secondary factor in their decision (n=6). When asked if they would recommend others to apply to their department, half said "No." Similar results were found when they were asked if they would recommend others to apply to UW-Madison—approximately half said, "No." When asked, "In your opinion, is there anything about you personally that may have been a factor in your experience at or decision to leave the UW?" Table 4 shows that for a few, personal attributes did influence their experience negatively.

	Yes
a. Age	3
b. Gender	3
c. Sexual orientation	-
d. Marital status	2
e. Family status/responsibilities	2
f. Race	2
g. Ethnicity	3
h. Disability: Health	1
i. Religion	-
j. Other:	-

Table 3: Number of responses in each category to question regarding personal attributes.

Experiencing discrimination, harassment, and other behaviors was identified by six of the participants as they described behaviors by departmental members or others that made them feel uncomfortable and in extreme cases, in "unsafe" and "stressful" environments. Two faculty listed this as the primary reason that they left the UW. The following quotations explain a number of ways in which negative climate can play a critical role in retention.

Erik, who was located in a primarily female department, described how he and his male colleagues heard male-bashing jokes. Erik also noted that his mentor said she, "did not know how to mentor a male." As seen in previous discussions, lack of quality mentoring did affect his chances for tenure. Once he was told to "get the hell out" of the department, he made his decision to leave. Other male colleagues followed. According to Erik, another faculty said, "that he didn't want to be the only man left."

Dawn provided her perceptions of how women of color feel on campus:

> *Madison is kind of known as a place where if you're a woman of color, you're not going to do well. And it's a terrible thing, but the way they put is that, 'Oh, you know, women of color leave a lot. You should look at some numbers, a lot of them leave.' And usually the department says, 'Oh they weren't happy here." What they mean is that Madison isn't a great town. People don't want to live here because it's so white. But that's not really true.*
> Interviewer: What is the truth?
> *I think some of the departments are very racist. So, take [department name] for example. A friend of mine wrote a really great book from a wonderful press and her department didn't give her tenure because they didn't like the book. And it was on race, ethnicity, and feminism…She went to [another institution] and got tenure there. This happened a lot. I mean a lot of people I know, women of color I knew didn't get tenure, had a hard time at Madison and went out and got jobs at better places.*

Two other faculty members felt that their ethnicity and race played a part in how people treated them. Both were born in other countries but had been in the United States for many years. They provided examples of how they perceived both racism and ageism due to their appearance. They did not file any legal suits but wondered if people treated them differently because of the way they looked and their accents.

Other examples of discrimination were cases of sexual harassment as observed and described by some of the participants. Besides experiencing this directly in the department, they explained how they were very disappointed in campus administration's handling of the situation. For them, both the departmental and the University climates were perceived as negative. When asked about the most favorable and least favorable aspects of her department, Maya responded:

> *Um, not so favorable…no women in positions of power. The men in positions of power would bad-mouth some of the women who were higher-up. Call them names in front of people…There was no support system for the women, young women. Good things? Hmm, this place sucked.*

She goes on to explain the effects of a person who had been harassing her and other women:

> *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.'*

Thomas, who was in a department where a harassment suit had been brought against one of his colleagues, spent a majority of the time explaining how he was disappointed in the Dean of his college/school and other UW administrators at how they handled the situation. He noted:

> *I would never have believed that they would convene a panel, not tell us who was interviewed, come up with factually incorrect information, not give us a chance to even look it over before the dean accepted it. And I would not have ever believed everybody would fall in line and say now we support this report without ever hearing the other side of the story. It was an unbelievable sequence of events... Ultimately a settlement was reached. Ultimately I left. Ultimately the other faculty member left. But it was the most bizarre sequence of events I've ever seen. I would never have believed that somebody accused of sexual harassment would be placed in charge of somebody they were accused of harassing.*

Ultimately he left, but not without feeling that the University was "schizophrenic" due to the contradiction in the values they espoused and in their practice. He admits he had an "idealistic" view of the University and reports that he will never return to academe because of his experience at UW-Madison.

As mentioned previously, climate issues were listed as a secondary factor for six of the respondents. For these participants, there was a critical incident, a series of events, or some other primary factor that caused them to think about leaving. This next section provides examples of some of the climate factors that intensified faculty member' desires to leave.

Elliott, a full professor who had been at the UW-Madison for over a decade, explained that being nationally known served to be a detriment for him in his department. Once he was established as an

"expert" in his field, he was sought out both in the country and internationally for his cutting edge research. Yet, he failed to receive any local recognition for the strides and contributions he had made in his field. His department chair, who was also senior, was unable to support him, nor did Elliot feel that he tried to. Elliot admits he did not consider leaving until he was offered with an endowed chair position and his salary was doubled.

For Luke, the "mass exodus" of his colleagues caused him to think about his department, and his place in it, in the future:

> *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.*

Luke not only chose to leave UW-Madison for this reason, but also wanted to be closer to family, as described in this next section.

Balancing Professional and Personal Lives
Half of the faculty participants talked about the need to balance their personal and professional lives, which caused them to make choices based on their family's needs or their own. Two participants cited this area as a primary reason for leaving; six considered family as a secondary factor when making their decisions.

Both Ben and Mark explained the importance of *respecting the needs of family* and in particular, their wives. Ben's wife felt isolated in Madison and wanted to be closer to her family. This, along with the financial state of the University, provided him with ample justification to seek another job. Mark's wife was also unhappy in Madison and was unable to find meaningful work. She was originally from another country and he noted that she never felt comfortable in Madison. He looked for a position on one of the coasts and he and his wife are extremely happy there.

Both Carolyn and Cathy looked for other positions due to employment needs of their spouses. Carolyn's husband had been looking for work in his field for a number of years. Approximately a year and a half before leaving, Carolyn approached her department chair and told him that she would look for another job if her husband was unable to find work in Madison. Our discussion of this follows:

> *I mean I really thought the University could have supported me more and they didn't…I realize there are difficulties with two faculty member families. But it wasn't a faculty job.*
> Interviewer: So can you tell me about how was it handled? About the negotiations, how did it come up?
> *So when I was interviewing for the job, I was told that there is no program to help spouses find jobs. After I got [to UW-Madison] I was told a different story. And then I was told it was too late because I was already there and he didn't qualify for these programs…I felt like the chair and the talks with the Dean or over at the [college/school] really didn't take me seriously because, a year and a half before I left I said, 'My husband*

can't find a job and I will leave if he cannot find a job.' I've really kept my chair very informed of this throughout the entire year and a half.
Interviewer: Um, hmm.
And then when I gave my notice, everybody acted surprised! They said, 'What can we do for you?' I said, 'I've been begging you. I've been in your office once a month begging for something to happen.' So I just felt like there was just no support there.

Cathy's husband had his own business for the majority of the time she was at UW-Madison, but when he received an offer somewhere else, she started looking. The job she chose was not a faculty position. After fifteen years, she decided that the *faculty lifestyle* is not what she wanted. Now in her current position, she appreciates the hours and the lack of stress in her life around financial issues and continuing her lab:

> *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.'*

Having her husband find work and not being in academe was an ideal situation for her.

Elizabeth, after being at the UW-Madison for six years, questioned:

> *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].*

For her, the ideal position did come along and she left before trying to obtain tenure.

Both Luke and Elizabeth thought that Madison is *family-friendly*, but not single friendly. Luke explains:

> *I was always aware that I wasn't alone in being a single person, a single faculty member who struggled to meet people in Madison. What amazed me about it is that the university never seems to notice this. And it's not that I wanted the university to set-up singles meetings or something that, but rather that I felt that the university's focus on family issues was so completely pervasive that it made a bad situation worse… The pressure – when they're trying to recruit you as a junior faculty member, one of the first things they tell you is, 'Oh it's a great place to raise a family.' And of course the sort of sub-text that no one says is, 'It's a crappy place to start one but if you've got one, you're in great shape.' But I just felt, as a single faculty member, not only did I feel isolated and alone, but I also felt that the university was basically once again reasserting domestic norms of the region that made me feel once again like a bit more of a freak.*

Elizabeth concurs:

> *And Madison, even though it doesn't seem like it should be a tough place, it is. And it's a very, it's a great town. It's a wonderful Midwestern town, but it's also a very family-oriented town. And that becomes very difficult for faculty who are still single. Because it's just tough...All of your colleagues are married and most of them have kids. So they've got their own thing going on. So there's really very little opportunity for you to*

interact with colleagues your own age outside of the office socially because they have families…I mean they have other responsibilities. That can be tough. And maybe that is something that really, that should be brought up as well. If the UW can do anything about that, I mean clearly. But for me, I think that that is a factor.

Although these previous sections highlight many negatives, the participants did cite many positive attributes about UW-Madison as an institution, and its faculty, staff and students in particular. Some noted that they miss the high quality research, phenomenal students, and the "intellectual playmates" they had there.

To triangulate the qualitative data, the responses to the question, "How satisfied were you with the following aspects of UW-Madison?" are found in Table 4.

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Doesn't Apply
Orientation to UW-Madison	4	11	2	-
Orientation to your department	8	6	2	-
Tenure & promotion mentoring committee	5	6	5	-
Evaluations from mentoring committee	7	1	5	3
Collegiality of others in department	10	5	1	-
Your department chair	6	7	3	-
Benefits	12	2	2	-
Salary	5	6	5	-
Treatment of you (fairly, equitably)	2	10	4	-
Support of your research interests/field	3	5	7	-
Informal mentoring and guidance	5	7	2	1
Resources to perform your job	5	9	2	-
Connectedness to others (isolated?)	4	7	4	1
Balance between work and home	5	6	4	-
Opportunities for spouse/partner	2	-	5	6

Table 4: Responses to question regarding satisfaction with various aspects of UW-Madison.

Indeed, a number of the highlighted themes came out as the areas in which the participants were the least satisfied.

DISCUSSION

Not every faculty member felt that 100% retention should be the goal of UW administration. Four of the sixteen participants (25%) described how the perfect combination of opportunity and dissatisfaction caused them to leave, and had no regrets about doing so. The other twelve cited a myriad of personal and professional circumstances that led to their attrition. Despite any individual differences seen among these faculty members, general suggestions from the participants themselves are essential for a dialogue about changing the traditions, practices and policies at the UW to retain a greater number of faculty members.

- ➢ **Provide Assistant Professors with an environment that encourages them and leads to their success.**
  - o Delineate the criteria by which Assistant Professors will be evaluated for tenure.
  - o Make sure that new faculty's job positions are aligned with the criteria that will be used to evaluate them, especially when given responsibilities outside the norm or when they have joint appointments/departments.
  - o Ensure that new faculty's research agenda at the time of hire will lead to tenure.
  - o Provide new faculty with mentors and committees that are going to enhance their progress, not impede it.
  - o Decrease their teaching and service responsibilities as a means to jumpstart and sustain their research progress at critical points in their pre-tenure years.
  - o Communicate with divisional committees about cutting-edge research, methodologies, and areas of study to inform members of changes and growth in disciplines.

- ➢ **Provide Associate and Full Professors with an environment that encourages their retention and success.**
  - o Develop and put into practice creative incentives to support faculty, such as: nominating faculty for awards, providing course buy-outs, providing extra TA or RA support during critical times, recognizing them publicly, allowing them a sabbatical leave, decreasing service or other departmental responsibilities.
  - o Provide raises to ensure salary equity within departments and as a preventive attrition measure.
  - o Treat faculty work equally, despite differences in research, teaching, service and outreach/extension responsibilities.
  - o Highlight the local, national, and international success of faculty.

- ➢ **Address University and Department Climate Issues**
  - o Ensure that sexual harassment and discrimination are handled appropriately and quickly. Provide a safe environment for the victims.
  - o Understand the essential role that department chairs play in creating successful environments for faculty. Ensure that department chairs are capable of performing this critical position and are effective once in the position.

- ➢ **Understand the Important Need for Balance in the Professional and Personal Lives of Faculty**
  - o Create and communicate dual-career programs that are available to new and continuing faculty.
  - o Identify conventions, practices and policies that privilege traditional family norms and values within the University or departments. Ensure that no faculty members are isolated or excluded due to these practices.

Fourteen of the participants in this study knew they were unhappy or were considering leaving for at least a year before doing so. On average, the length between consideration and leaving was 2.35 years with a range from one to four years. The individuals who agreed to participate hoped that their stories would initiate change and perhaps help faculty who are considering leaving. The

recommendations above could easily be implemented during any of those critical years for current or future faculty who are considering an exodus, which is what the participants hope for.

ENDNOTES

[i] O'Connell, K., Pribbenow, C.M., & Benting, D. (2006). *The climate at the University of Wisconsin – Madison: Begins sunny and warm, ends chilly.* Madison, WI: The Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute.

[ii] Six faculty were not contacted at the request of the Provost's office.

[iii] http://www.provost.wisc.edu/memos/exit.html

[iv] This study was approved by the Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, **SE-2007-0242.**

[v] Interview protocol found here: http://www.provost.wisc.edu/docs/fac_exit_attach.pdf

[vi] Unless otherwise noted, presented as headcounts; data from *2006-2007 Data Digest.*

[vii] Rounded FTE equivalents – not directly comparable to the headcounts of participants and faculty who left the UW; data from the *Final Report of ADVANCE Program for University of Wisconsin – Madison* (2006).

[viii] Total grant dollars awarded during each faculty member's employment at UW-Madison divided by the number of years each faculty member was employed by UW-Madison. Data from UW-Madison Research & Sponsored Programs historical grants database.

[ix] Total extramural funds obtained by the group of faculty who resigned between 9/1/06 and 8/31/07 is approximately $30 million.

[x] Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education and Carnegie Classification are registered trademarks of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

[xi] Each of the unclassified institutions can be described as a prestigious European university, most of which are in the UK.

[xii] Includes only faculty who remain on the tenure-track.

[xiii] Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' anonymity.

[xiv] Mooney, C.J. (1991). Eight professors at FIU file age-bias grievance to protest 'salary-compression' practice. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 37*(27), p. A17.