

On April 27, 2007 the Faculty Senate's Status of Women Council (SOWC) held the First Annual Family Friendly Forum entitled "Creating and Maintaining a Family Friendly Workplace at UMass Amherst.)

The event was sponsored by College of Engineering; Departments of Food Science, Labor Studies, and Natural Resources Conservation; Office of Family Resources; Early Childhood and Learning Laboratory; Every Woman's Center; Faculty Senate; MSP; PSU; AFSCME; USA.

Attending were 78 UMass community members comprised of faculty, librarians, staff and administrators. The four panelists presenting were: Nancy Folbre (Economics) Paula Chakravartty (Communication, presenting as a parent at UMass) Maureen Perry-Jenkins (Psychology), and John Zibel (Anthropology graduate student and single father at UMass).

Eve Weinbaum, co-chair of SOWC, offered opening remarks, which included facts about the current wage gap:

Women earn 75 cent to every \$1.00 earned by men

Women without children earn 10% less than men

Women with children earn 27% less

Single mothers earn up to 44% less

Being a mother with child care responsibilities has a range of challenges, such as entering the work force, procuring good jobs and advancing in a job. Men, on the other hand, are traditionally awarded for having children – called the "Daddy Bump" – are more likely to be rewarded when they have families

Various policies to address this gender/wage gap were offered:

More flexible work schedules

Ability to take time off when needed for family issues

Paid parental leave

Affordable child care

Afterschool programs, summer programs

Housing assistance so families can live close to work

Elder care – in communities and on campus

Advances have been made at UMass, varying from union to union (which represent faculty/librarians, grad students, and staff). Some family issues have been given high priority. There is now excellent high quality child care (but not for infants). Some groups have excellent parental leave. Professional staff is eligible for 12 weeks pay through the Sick Leave Bank. Tenure track faculty and librarians are eligible for one semester of paid parental leave (24 weeks).

Still needing improvement at UMass is the disparity between unions for parental leave. Non-tenure track faculty is not eligible for parental leave until after six years. Clerical /blue collar staff is granted no paid parental leave, other than ten days (as guaranteed by

the state). Child care is attainable only via long waiting lists, and with no infant care available. Child care fees are increasingly unaffordable, with no subsidies to match cost increases [new tenure-track faculty were subsequently offered some subsidy funds in Fall 2007].

The MSP faculty/librarian union has begun to work on child care issues and is encouraging the University to use parental leave as recruiting tool. These tools for recruitment and retention speak to the long term investment in employees. This approach is becoming a general trend in universities.

Nancy Folbre posited that understanding and supporting families is a form of public wealth. Along with the increase in women's participation in the labor force came policies based on women's responsibilities (e.g. care giving). Current issues, related to current challenges of feminism, are renegotiating day-to-day roles and time.

She offered the following actions to reconcile the issues of care and money in more sustainable way:

1. Research – Think more about conveying the amounts of time that we devote to the care of others. Conduct a time-use survey that shows amount of time that people spend working, at home (about half of work time is not paid), including housework, care of family members, etc. Only about 50% of work that we do takes place as part of market economy. Many women take time out of the labor market to care for family. We need to understand this “care sector” of economy more fully.
2. Build larger political awareness – Consider the distributional conflict over who should pay for care, how to get care, how the cost of care should be distributed, and how to be mindful that care is not only a gender issue. The economy is increasingly unequal with access to living wage, etc. often available only to highly educated individuals who are then better able to provide care (due to more flexibility, better benefits, more likely to form stable partnerships, more likely to breast feed). Increased income can be used to create more time and space for care. An example is the correlation between Welfare Reform in 1980's and the forced decline in breast feeding.
3. Commit to responsibilities for our own work place through action and policies.

Paula Chakravarty spoke about her experience choosing to have a child as non-tenure faculty (while at another university). She continued by reflecting on the faculty/librarian union at UMass and its support for families. However, she also sees a need to recognize that campuses have changed in terms of faculty make up (e.g. gender, race, and immigration) and how these changes affect issues across the board. The norm of a male with a female spouse who does the care giving has changed at UMass. Child care availability is not growing along with faculty needs, particularly with the University's plan to hire more faculty. Many junior faculty with young families will be create more need for child care.

Specific needs she identified are:

1. Address inequity between the various union groups; faculty has certain benefits that apply to other groups. These areas need to be addressed across union negotiations.
2. Offer automatic postponement for decision for tenure. This would put less of a burden on faculty members to get approval from their chairs.
3. Stop the tenure clock for care of someone in the immediate family
4. Offer the option to request unpaid leave
5. Offer subsidies for incoming new faculty [this was achieved in the following contract] and make sure these subsidies are equitably distributed. Make recommendations for ways to distribute.
6. Study the “Mommy Track” within UMass and consider the effect of gender and equity policies on this trend.
7. Form a Work/life Committee through the faculty/librarian union [this got underway in Fall 2007]
8. Create a clearly written handbook on UMass family policy
9. Educate chairs and dept heads on policies
10. Create a written policy on dual-career initiatives

Maureen Perry-Jenkins began by quoting from the most recent Census Bureau: Majority of working Americans do care giving – children, other family, elderly parents
75% of mothers of young children work outside of home
25-35% of workers provide care for aging parents (over 65 years of old) and rising
2 in 7 families report at least 1 member with disability for whom they care
Majority of families are providing care BUT the United States doesn't have basic protection or policies around work
Equitable right to work in the United States is good.
The United States offers overtime pay.
The United States seriously lags behind in policies for working families. Of the 173 countries surveyed:
168 offer guaranteed leave with pay for women having children
4 countries do not offer pay: US, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, and Lesotho
66 offer paid parental leave for fathers
107 offer breast feeding rights
145 offer paid sick days

What we DO have in the United States:

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 was groundbreaking legislation (12 weeks unpaid leave). However, this **unpaid** leave creates a classist system -- those with money can take the time, those without cannot. Additionally, the employee must be at the company for a minimum of 12 months and have worked at least 1250 hours that year. There must also be 50 or more employees with a 75-mile radius working at the company. In other words, only about 50% of workers are eligible.

However, FMLA only covers the birth of a newborn, adoption, or care for immediate family. What about caring for a friend or one self? Also, there are hidden inequities, such as who gets written up or who loses their job due to needing more sick time to care for family members.

Paid leave helps combat poverty and reduces infant mortality (US is #37 in infant mortality) and lowers the wage gap between men and women (women often lose status in the job market when they leave to have children). With 25% of families with young children living in poverty (moving in and out), early parental care would give children a healthy start. This would also facilitate the one year of recommended breastfeeding for infants and young children. Too many women stop breastfeeding early because they know they will have to curtail when they go back to work or that there won't be any place to pump and store their milk when they do return to their jobs. Good work is good – flexibility plus a supervisor who “gets it”, backed up with good policies.

John Zibel spoke as a PhD candidate and single father. He received custody of his 3-year old daughter while studying as an undergraduate at UMass. He checked out welfare and university systems and found sexism placed him on a pedestal for being a man. Also, as an undergrad he received a childcare voucher, health insurance, food stamps, and Section 8; his student loans were not counted as income. According to “welfare reform” he could receive these benefits two years but had to be off then for one year (up to five years total). When he became a graduate student his TA stipend did count as income; welfare was not an option anymore. This highlights the fact that there is no care for working class poor families. At that time there was no child care at UMass which was not friendly to families. There was (and continues to be) a long fight for flexible, subsidized childcare, GSS vouchers, funding for childcare, access to monetary resources and a network of student families.

Recommendations from speakers:

(Note: there is disparity across unions for many of these issues, something that also needs addressing)

- More flexible work schedules
- Time off for family issues
- Paid parental leave (including reduction of 6-year wait for non-tenure faculty)
- Affordable child care, including infant care
- Afterschool programs, summer programs
- Housing assistance so families can live close to work
- Elder care
- Understanding and supporting families as a form of public wealth
- Greater political awareness regarding the distributional conflict over who should pay for care, how to get care, how the cost of care should be distributed, and how to be mindful that care is not only a gender issue
- Research on the amounts of time devoted to the “care sector” of our economy.
- Commitment to taking responsibility for our work place through action and policies
- Automatic postponement for decision for tenure
- Stop the tenure clock due to caring for immediate family member(s)
- Option to request unpaid leave
- Subsidies for incoming new faculty [this was achieved in the following contract] with equitable distribution.

- “Mommy Track” study within UMass and consider the effect of gender and equity policies on this trend [this is being discussed in the MSP Work/Life Subcommittee]
- Clearly-written handbook on UMass family policy
- Department chairs and heads who are better educated regarding work/life policies
- Written policy on dual-career initiatives [this is being discussed in the MSP Work/Life Subcommittee]

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Feedback from attendees:

“Thank you for putting this event together. I thought it was great presentation and the speakers were excellent. The only feedback I have for you is that I would have liked the small group session. That however is only my personal preference because I sometimes have a hard time speaking up in front of a large group so a smaller group format works a bit better for me. I do know that there are time constraints so this isn't always possible. I can't wait to attend more of these events.”

-- Erin Doherty

“I thought the last forum was just right. Perhaps at the next forum some group work could be done to derive some steps that each unit can take to provide co-workers with information about services and initiatives and gain more membership/advocates support. As it seemed goals had already been articulated -- how do new people get involved, in what sub-groups, etc. Best wishes for success, as it is a worthwhile cause.”

-- Kathleen Chatwood

“Thought it was an excellent and very interesting event. Think a bigger forum on *how* we can utilize our family benefits would be useful for all of us. Also, some idea about how family friendly or unfriendly the university is by members would have been nice too. Are we all happy or feel let down by the university or departments we work in. Just an idea. Lunch was great....big enticement to go for everyone. Looking forward to another.”

--Dave Mac Court

“I thought the event was very good and would be glad to help co-sponsor next year. I thought the no-RSVP idea worked well....feed them and they will come. Even so, I was impressed with the turn-out. I thought the speakers were great. Maybe rather than trying the break-out groups there could be a sign-up for interest groups. It also might be a good time to recommend a specific action that the group could endorse and implement. For example, identify a specific piece of legislation and have postcards that participants can sign and send off. Or a proposal for the University that needs advocacy. Or have a focus group question and use the tables as mini-gatherings to generate thinking about specific issues. These are just some ideas that could capitalize on an already successful event!”

--Sandy Mandel, Everywoman's Center

“Thanks to you and the whole Family Forum Planning Committee for putting together the workshop on Creating and Maintaining a Family-Friendly Workplace at UMass Amherst. One of the things that worked best about the forum was the structure—moving from general presentations to break out groups. The forum was just the right length. I also appreciated the buffet lunch which helped me easily fit the event into my work day. For me, the most important thing I got out of the forum was a sense of motivation and excitement. It was helpful to see that I am not alone in my struggle to balance family and work life--other graduate students, staff and faculty on campus are struggling with employment expectations and policies as well. This workshop left me excited that people on campus were working toward making UMass Amherst an easier place for people with families to work. It also made me want to get involved with the Status of Women Council. As a graduate student, what is the best way for me to get involved?”

-- Jen

“I enjoyed the event, and made some great contacts to help me with my own unique situation here at UMass (an unwilling '03' receiving minimal benefits after 2 1/2 years). I thought there could have been more time allowed for Q&A. I did enjoy hearing about situations the speakers encountered, but maybe speakers could discuss specifics about policies/what's available; or maybe have someone from human resources available.”

--Judy Bennett