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## Acclimating to the Professoriate: Perspectives from New Female Faculty Members

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# Acclimating to the Professoriate: Perspectives from New Female Faculty Members

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Julie Carlson & Janna Frayer

This qualitative focus group study examined the prevailing acclimatization concerns and strategies of 10 new female professors at a mid-sized state university. Emergent themes relative to challenges experienced were, in order of prevalence, *not enough time, teaching effectively, health, job expectations, institutional knowledge, and support*. Somewhat less solidified were similar themes for strategies, also in order of prevalence, in the areas of *using time wisely, teaching effectively, maintaining health, balancing job expectations, seeking support, and getting organized*. Implications for universities are: to recognize the obstacles that new faculty members experience and to implement practices that lessen the teaching, advising, and committee load for the first year.

## Background of the Problem

Persons new to the professoriate are faced with the abrupt challenge of balancing teaching loads, scholarship, professional growth, and service while simultaneously learning the physical and psycho-social milieu of their new surroundings (Schaefer Carroll, 2003). Schaeffer Carroll mused that, short of cloning oneself, new faculty are expected to be unofficially enrolled in introductory courses in philosophy, rhetoric, mathematics, technology, and social science in order to gain control over their new balancing act. Feeling alone and somewhat lost while navigating the maze of academe is not uncommon among new faculty members; being female tends to compound the isolation (Collins, Chrisler, & Quina, 1998). Christman (2003) concurred that “the new junior woman experiences a double bind” (§ 25). Being a new junior woman of minority status creates an additional challenge.

Benokraitis (1998) identified a common female phenomenon as the “Oprah effect” (p. 26) whereby females strive to emulate “highly visible women” (p. 26) by trying to achieve beyond what most people can, out serve others, and have all the answers to life’s problems as well. Whether

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internally or externally imposed, female faculty members regularly identify higher concerns than males over issues of culture and climate, isolation, acceptance of research agendas, mentoring, intradepartmental relationships, limited financial and research support, and child care (Christman, 2003). Additionally, (academe) disparities continue to exist between males and females in salary, tenure and promotion rates, teaching and advising loads, and expectations for service.

Considering all that new professors are learning while attempting to balance the demands of teaching with the expectations of the tenure and promotion process, questions arise as to what the main concerns and challenges of new professors actually are and what strategies are used in addressing them. Specifically, this study examined issues of acclimatization experienced by new female professors, isolated from any comparison to experiences of their male counterparts. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge on issues unique to the female professoriate. Dually seeking to discover the primary acclimatization challenges and strategies experienced by women new to the professoriate and to provide a discussion support group for them in hopes of lessening the quagmire, this study strived to accommodate both ideas. The study took place during the 2004-2005 academic year.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the prevailing acclimatization challenges and strategies of females new to the professoriate. The main research questions were, (a) What are the most prevalent challenges expressed by new female professors?, and (b) What strategies are used by new female professors in acclimating to the challenges of their new positions?

### **Role of the Researchers**

The primary researcher for this study was Julie Carlson, a probationary, tenure-track faculty member. Her experiences in balancing her own work and personal life, and the desire to help others in similar situations, were the main impetus in embarking on this study. Her roles in this study were as the designer of the study, facilitator of the focus group meetings, data collector, and co-analyzer for the study.

Approximately halfway through the data collection stage of the study, Frayer entered the research process as a graduate student and secondary researcher. Her interest in the study stemmed from a possible future pursuit of teaching in higher education and the opportunity for gaining insight into the experiences she might expect. She was the primary researcher for the review of the literature, and co-analyzer of the research data in terms of coding and identifying emergent themes therein. In order to maintain anonymity and to increase trustworthiness for data analysis, the identification of the participants was and remains unknown to Frayer.

### **Review of the Literature**

In this qualitative study, we examined the challenges experienced and strategies used by new female faculty members in fulfilling the responsibilities of their new profession. In a survey of 10 national systems of higher education, Bain and Cummings (2000) determined that less than 10% of professors at that time were women. Furthermore, the proportion of female professors was negatively related to attribution of institutional prestige. Conclusions drawn were that institutional barriers, or the “glass ceiling of academia” (p. 493), existed and resulted in shorter careers, increased tenure issues, and lower levels of academic productivity for women. The question arises as to why people, specifically women, desire such obstacle-strewn professorial positions in the first place.

Review of the literature revealed multitudes of studies contrasting experiences and institutional practices between male and female faculty members in higher education. Although this particular study was not a comparative inquiry against male faculty perspectives, these studies do shed light on specific aspects of the female professorial experience. Those aspects are particularly appropriate for discussion here. This review of the literature examined recent issues pertaining to tenure and promotion, work-life balance, balancing job responsibilities and research, and evaluations of professors by students.

### **Tenure and Promotion**

Originally conceived out of the need or demand for academic freedom in the early 20th century in higher education, tenure has since accrued associations with power and status (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). For many faculty members, tenure is viewed as the only currently viable assurance of job security (Premeaux & Mondy, 2002a) in the political institutional uncertainty of academe, although Tierney and Bensimon (1996) would argue that some institutions do not offer tenure and do protect academic freedom.

In their study of more than 200 faculty members at 12 colleges and universities, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) revealed a plethora of concerns expressed by new faculty members, especially females. Based on these results, they recommended that institutions engage in intentional socialization endeavors such as mentoring, collective and individual orientation forums for the purpose of increasing self and institutional knowledge, articulating the school's mission, becoming a self-reflective campus, and encouraging critical dialogue.

Extensive survey studies conducted by Premeaux and Mondy (1997, 2002a, 2002b; Mondy & Premeaux, 2001) have investigated discrepancies between views of tenured faculty, non-tenured faculty, and deans toward the tenure and promotion process. Across various surveys of faculty at Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International accredited schools, participants agreed that tenure is a necessary system, especially to ensure job security. However, there was substantial acknowledgement that there is a need for improvement in usual tenure processes. Pockets do exist where tenure is viewed as an obstacle to removing unproductive professors who teach obsolete subject matter (Premeaux & Mondy, 2002b).

One of the later studies was a survey 1306 professors at 48 schools in the United States and Canada. Findings confirmed discrepancies between men and women among questions of tenure and academic freedom, tenure modification, and university commitment (Premeaux & Mondy, 2002a). The data indicated that there were statistically significant higher ratings given by females than males on the necessity of tenure for personal faculty security and for ensured academic freedom. Females tended to feel that attaining tenure was a necessary security assurance. More male than female participants claimed that tenure was over applied, despite many women resorting to litigation to settle tenure disputes. The researchers suggested, "Possibly, men are closing ranks to protect the environment that they currently control by admitting few females" (p. 156).

### Work-Life Balance

For new female faculty members who also have significant family responsibilities, they often find themselves unwittingly entering into unattainable balancing acts between two fulltime jobs. Dale (1998) queried, "But aren't all working women attempting this sort of thing? No, I think there is a hidden agenda, an unspoken expectation that women will bring and apply their vaunted nurturing skills to campus –the university has replaced *in loco parentis* with *in loco matris*" (p. 130). Coiner (1998) commented that the

responsibility for children remains the last refuge of sexism, the Achilles heel of the women's movement. Even the women the movement has most helped to advance, its educated professionals, have with a sense of *déjà vu* felt that old shock of sudden recognition, that familiar 'click': equal opportunity vanishes around the issue of who will take care of the kids." (p. 237)

Fortunately, there are higher education institutions that recognize the pressures and stresses associated with balancing family with the demands of academic work. In 1996, a seminal work surveyed 95% of all U. S. two-year and four-year institutions of higher education. The study was co-sponsored by the Foundation of the College and University Personnel Association and the Families and Work Institute and resulted in the publication of the Index of Campus Work-Family Initiatives. The Index identified the best practices of colleges and universities in the United States in terms of their implementation of "family-friendly programs" (Friedman, Rimsky, & Johnson, 1996, p. 1). The institutions highlighted were designated as Leadership Campuses, and their practices were proposed as benchmarks for which other colleges and universities should strive to attain.

Other studies have centered on obstacles for women in balancing their work and family responsibilities. Armenti (2004) interviewed 19 female professors at one Canadian university. The study identified obstacles faced on both a personal and professional level as a result of combining childrearing with an academic career. The results revealed childrearing problems, research dilemmas, a willingness to leave the academy, and denial of tenure and promotion.

An earlier study by the University of Michigan (1999) surveyed 1167 tenured and tenure-track faculty at its own institution in terms of workload, work environment, personal-professional life balance, and career satisfaction. In regard to environment and workload issues, more women than men felt their departments were less friendly, less supportive, more competitive, and more elitist. Women reported higher instances of experiencing discrimination

than did men in the areas of heavier workloads, receiving lower pay, less respect from peers, negative reactions from peers toward childbearing, and having others take credit for their ideas. Women also reported higher instances of harassment than did men in the areas of being cursed at by students, being stalked by a student or colleague, being subjected to sexual comments, and being pressured to date colleagues of the opposite sex. Relative to personal-professional life balance, the results indicated that women were more likely than men to rear children prior to beginning their academic careers or to delay starting a family until after they received tenure.

Mason and Goulden (2004) utilized data from the extensive nationally-funded Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR) that has been tracking more than 160,000 doctoral recipients since 1979. The SDR is intended to continue until the participants are 76 years of age. The purpose of Mason and Goulden's study was to analyze the impact of life-course factors such as marriage and childrearing on academic careers. Predictably, the study found that tenured women were less likely to be married with children than tenured men and that women with families spend more time in general between professional work, housework, and care giving than men. Furthermore, twice as many women as men indicated that they had fewer children than they had wanted.

Although females comprised over one-third of fulltime faculty members in 2000-01, according to an annual survey by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), that figure is much lower in terms of full professorship. More than 57% of lower ranked positions such as instructor or lecturer were held by females (§ 3). When proportions of full professors at doctoral institutions were analyzed, only 19% were female.

Based on its survey findings, federal laws, and analysis of current practices, American Association of University Professors (2001) proposed a statement of principles to be adopted by universities in the areas of family responsibilities and academic work. The policies entail enhanced family care and disability leaves, active service with modified duties, alterations to the "tenure clock" (§ 19), and additional institutional support. Specifically, AAUP recommended paid pregnancy leave, paid family and medical leave, short-term emergency leave, and long-term leave for child rearing or extended care giving. AAUP also proposed the adoption of an "active service-modified duties" (§ 17) policy similar to that of the University of California. Such policies allow for temporary modification of duties that still retain a faculty member at full or modified salary. The AAUP also advocated options for stopping the tenure clock, such as flexing the usual timeframe for attaining tenure when caring for a newborn or newly adopted child is necessary. Other types of institutional support were recommended for

subsidized on-campus childcare, financial support for caring for elder parents or family members with special needs, flexibility in scheduling to accommodate unforeseen family needs, and coordination of scheduling with the local K-12 school systems.

### **Balancing Job Responsibilities/Research**

Although differences can be found between institutions of higher learning, generally, faculty members are expected to maintain involvement in teaching, scholarship, committee work, advising, professional development, and service. Bellas (1999) examined gender differences in academic responsibilities that require emotional labor in the areas of teaching, service, research and administration. Bellas determined that teaching and service in the area of advising required the most emotional labor, and that men and women experienced this emotional labor quite differently due to gender roles projected onto their work. In the areas of research and administration, the emotional labor involved was often unacknowledged. Men were found to spend more time in research and administrative activities than women.

Setting out to determine the percentage of research conducted by women, Blake, Bodle, and Adams (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 6535 refereed articles from 10 journalism and mass communication journals published between 1986 and 2000. The study found that, overall, women produced 28.6% of the articles with the percentage increasing to 39.5% for the years of 1996-2000. The researchers determined that female faculty in journalism and mass communication have been producing very near their per capita in journal scholarship. The findings from this study provide the impetus for similar studies in other disciplines.

### **Professor Evaluations/Student Perceptions**

Performance and evaluation anxiety have been identified as substantial challenges for female professors (Basow, 1998). In a questionnaire completed by 61 females and 47 males at a small liberal arts college, students were asked to describe their best and worst college professors (Basow, 2000). The data revealed that male students tended to value female professors less and female students tended to value female professors more. Although female faculty received higher ratings on interpersonal questions than did their male counterparts, the qualities cited by students describing characteristics of male and female professors differed depending on the students' genders.

Bauer and Baltes (2002) used the Women as Professors Scale and responses to construct vignettes to analyze undergraduate college students' ratings of male and female professor performances. Vignettes containing 20



incidents of teacher behaviors were given to participants to identify the gender of the described professor and rate their performance described therein. Students who held traditional gender stereotypes were found to rate women less accurately and more negatively than those who did not hold traditional stereotypes. The majority of those students were males. Bauer and Baltes concluded that women who are evaluated by people who hold traditional gender-based stereotypes “may receive less positive outcomes than their true performance dictates” (p. 473) such as fewer promotions, less recognition, and perhaps less pay.

When 292 students from two urban Canadian universities were surveyed and asked to choose their best university professor, only 33.9% of the chosen professors were female (Das & Das, 2001, p. 669). The study utilized the Bem’s Sex Role Inventory, the results of which indicated that male professors who were perceived as low in femininity, masculine, or undifferentiated were more often chosen by students as their best professors. Female professors who were perceived as gender neutral, androgynous, or undifferentiated were chosen as best professors. The results were especially consistent for older, more work-experienced respondents who were either male or female. For younger female students, a more feminine gender role in female professors was preferred. Das and Das suggested that female professors might adapt their teaching style to better meet the learning needs of particular groups of students. Although the researchers acknowledged limitations in their findings, they identified the concern and possibility that student perceptions of best professors may be linked to views of what constitutes good leaders. If so, they surmised “management is likely to remain a man’s world for a long time” (p. 674).

Miller and Chamberlin (2000) conducted a survey of sociology students from five classes at a large research university. Student perceptions were analyzed in terms of educational credentials of faculty members as a function of gender. Students were more likely to attribute status for earning a doctorate degree to male instructors than to female instructors, even when those females had attained full professor ranking. Furthermore, students “misattributed” (p. 283) or misguessed the correct educational credentials attained by male professors in an upward direction and in a correlating downward direction for female professors. Miller and Chamberlain determined a definite stereotypical gender bias revealed by the student participants that devalued or discounted female faculty members’ status and credentials. They mused the possibility that males are more likely to communicate their credentials and status to students, and may be more likely to use their own scholarly works as course materials.

## **Methodology**

### **Design of the Study**

In this qualitative study we examined the perspectives of new female faculty members in terms of acclimating to the responsibilities of their positions. This study used a focus group design, and open-ended questions were asked to identify the main challenges, concerns, and strategies being experienced and utilized by the participants. The sessions were semi-structured, providing a list of questions to which participants could respond and readdress in any order, or not respond if desired.

### **Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants for the study. A total of 25 letters of invitation were mailed to female faculty members in their first year of hire at a mid-sized university located in the central United States. There were 12 positive responses to the invitation, of which 10 subsequently became study participants. These 10 women were arranged into two focus groups, numbering five members each.

Four of the participants were in the process of conducting or completing their doctoral dissertations during at least part of the study period. Two of the participants were hired for fixed-term positions. One participant had worked previously for a few years at another university. One participant was hired into a non-teaching, coordinator position. The participants ranged generally from 30 to 50 years of age.

### **Data Collection**

Four interview sessions were facilitated for each of the two focus groups. These sessions took place during the months of October, December, February, and April of the 2004-2005 university academic year. The intention was to gather data soon after the beginning of each semester and just before the end of each semester, believing that these would be times when challenges, concerns, and strategies would be heavily experienced and therefore easily identified, yet also not intrude on time needed by the participants during the first and last two weeks of each semester for other job-related endeavors.

Each focus group session took approximately one hour to complete. Various open-ended questions were used for each session, but were always focused on identifying the main concerns and challenges being experienced at the time, and strategies used or attempted in meeting those challenges. Participants were provided with guidelines for maintaining confidentiality at the beginning of each session.

To increase trustworthiness and authenticity of the data, field notes of the participants' responses were taken during each session. The eight group sessions were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. Member checking was conducted whereby transcripts of the sessions were provided to each participant to clarify and verify individual narrative contributions.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was initiated after the October and December focus sessions had been transcribed. Coding of data as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was enlisted. Open coding (line-by-line analysis) of the transcripts was initially conducted by the two researchers separately, followed by check-coding with both researchers together which resulted in some adjustments to specific coding terminology. Subsequent axial or pattern coding (relating chunked data through categorical matrices) was conducted, followed by entering occurrences of data by participant into the correlating matrices. Analysis of the matrix data resulted in emergent patterns identified by the study participants of (a) challenges and concerns, (b) strategies, (c) feelings, and (d) positive aspects of the job.

After the February and April focus sessions were transcribed, open and axial coding sequences were again conducted. Constant comparative analysis was utilized with the previously and the newly coded data, and subsequently arranged into the matrices. Once it was apparent that the data categories were saturated, integration of the categories into an interpretive narrative text (selective coding) finalized the data analysis process.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to identify the prevailing acclimatization challenges and strategies of females new to the professoriate. Some of the items identified by the participants were more concerns than actual challenges; some were definite challenges experienced daily. A common concern expressed by participants was the need to address current duties while simultaneously feeling anxious about deadlines and upcoming needs for the near future. In other words, there were items that were concerns for the future that would become actual challenges once their need for completion loomed closer. The main themes relative to challenges and concerns that emerged were, in order of prevalence, *not enough time*, *teaching effectively*, *health*, *job expectations*, *institutional knowledge*, and *support*.

Somewhat less solidified were strategies the women used to attempt to lessen the challenges and concerns they were experiencing. Similar emergent

themes for strategies, also in order of prevalence, were in the areas of *using time wisely*, *teaching effectively*, *maintaining health*, *balancing job expectations*, *seeking support*, and *getting organized*.

A lack of institutional knowledge was identified as a challenge. However, no specific strategies were mentioned to increase that knowledge. *Getting organized* was identified by several of the participants as a specific strategy to help overall, without being directly correlated to addressing any particular challenge or concern. These patterns and themes are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### Challenges

**Not enough time.** By far, the most often identified challenges dealt with the lack of time the women felt they needed in order to do all that was expected of them. These were expressed in a variety of ways. It came as a surprise to some of the participants that they would spend as much time as they did in meetings and committee work. For some, their departments specifically advised them not to serve on any committees their first semester or year, or to serve only on committees that required little time or effort. Others received no such advice. A similar practice for some departments was to not assign any new advisees for new faculty during their first semester or year. For those participants who did serve on committees and were assigned advisees during their first semester, a lack of transition or “honeymoon” time was identified. A few of the women acknowledged that they had a hard time saying “no” to requests to accept time-consuming tasks.

Another prevalent challenge was the large amount of time needed to prepare for classes. In some cases, previous syllabi from other professors were provided, which helped in planning new courses. Regardless, time for reading course content, preparing handouts, technological presentations, and activities always seemed to be too sparse.

Providing students with what they needed was viewed as rewarding and desirable, yet still time-consuming in terms of answering student phone calls, emails, and meeting with them face-to-face. Non-student related phone calls and emails were also identified as time challenges. There were expectations for all of the participants to maintain scholarly and research activity. However, it was difficult for them to set aside or honor time for research and other job tasks that lay in waiting to be completed sometime in the future.

A few of the women were commuters who either lived in other cities or lived near campus during the week in temporary housing and traveled on weekends back to their permanent homes in other states to spend time with their families. A few women also had assignments involving courses or supervisory roles at extended campus or clinical sites, requiring traveling,

sometimes at great distances. The time needed for travel was identified as contributing to a strong sense of *not enough time*.

Expectedly, a result of *not enough time* was working long hours—coming in to the office early, staying late into the night, and working on weekends. Long hours and taking work home on nights and weekends interfered with quality family time for some. The subsequent need to balance and prioritize time was often stated.

- It's the prep time that just eats you alive.
- I've been putting in 12-13 hour days . . . It's a lot of preoccupation . . . workshops and meetings and grading.
- I'm just getting pulled into every committee . . . I find that I'm so scattered. I mean, my brain is just everywhere. I'm trying to help myself get to a focus.
- Being busy isn't necessarily bad, but I felt that I was always busy, even at times when I didn't perceive I should be . . . I always felt that there was so much to do and so much to try and learn.
- I thought if I worked harder, if I worked longer, if I keep engaged longer, I'm going to do better and it wasn't true. I was going to crash.

**Teaching effectively.** Teaching in a desirable, engaging, and active way was identified often as a challenge by the participants. At the particular campus where the women were employed, there existed a division specifically intended to help new and returning faculty implement active learning into their course designs. This likely increased the prevalence of this concern.

The need to master course content was tied to the challenge of teaching effectively. Feeling incompetent or being asked to teach outside of one's area of expertise was never mentioned, but rather the need to review content that was previously known and forgotten. Additionally, the desire to be able to answer student's questions was mentioned by some of the participants.

Several of the women experienced a period of adjustment in their expectations in terms of student capabilities. Some stated that their students' writing abilities were lower than they had anticipated. There were expressed concerns over grading of assignments, which sometimes arose over the disparity between student abilities. Concerns over teaching effectively were identified more often, as would be expected, toward the end of each semester in terms of student evaluations of their professors.

- It's a balancing act for me and I'm learning just as much or more than my students are learning right now.
- There is a huge conflict for me in that I too, am an active learning proponent and nothing that I was doing was in my mind appropriate or fit with adult learning methodology that I know to be effective.
- I may not have very big classes . . . but when you're doing a lot of intensive grading or a lot of comments, you're talking a weekend of grading. I like to do a week to get papers back, but even that is becoming difficult on top of everything else.
- I gave the first [student of professor] assessment that the university requires and when I got the comments back, I was just stunned because I thought I was working so hard to make the class understand well and using active learning strategies . . . [some] of the comments came back with 'lack of pedagogy' . . . 'not appropriate for graduate class' . . . I thought, 'Oh my God,' because I thought up to that point . . . I don't know . . . I hadn't perceived that . . . I asked, 'What did I do?'

**Health.** All of the participants recognized health as a real immediate challenge and a future concern, and expressed these in specific ways. Not surprisingly, trying to eat "right," getting enough sleep, and exercising were prominent challenges. Some were dismayed over their lack of quality time for themselves or with their families and felt their mental or physical health was impeded because of it. For a few, departmental issues at work affected their sense of well-being. Feelings of being stressed, exhausted, and drained were identified.

- When you're here all the time or you're at home prepping or you're driving, you can't get out and get your walk in or physical activity that you should have . . . you get up early in the morning and go to bed late at night.
- I've had a frustrating, entirely exhausting year.
- The exercise has just gone downhill and that is very frustrating because it is a great release . . . I think you need that for balance. It gives you more energy and keeps you well. Right now, I'm having trouble getting it in.
- I think that my life is out of order right now. I think that family needs to come ahead of jobs . . . and yet, I hear this refrain echo down the halls, everyone I talk to [says something] like, 'You have to put that on the back burner.' At my age, you don't get a back burner very long.

**Job expectations.** At the first focus group session, held soon after the first semester began, the study participants seemed to be well aware of their job expectations in terms of requirements for renewal or continuing employment. A few of the women acknowledged that they had high self-imposed levels of efficacy which led to increased levels of anxiety over meeting the expectations of their jobs.

Challenges related to job expectations were more scattered than in the previous two categories of not enough time and teaching effectively, which seemed to be related to their particular positions. These included three fixed-term assignments, several tenure-track positions, and one teaching doctoral fellowship. Three of the women began their first semester while still completing their doctoral dissertations, and great relief was expressed once the dissertations arrived at their completion stages. For those who were in fixed-term positions, there was an increased sense of pressure to prove oneself in order to be hired again the following year or to be marketable for hire at another institution. A professional development plan was still required for fixed-term hires, and the end of the year summary report was due earlier than those in tenure-track positions.

The job expectations of meeting student needs through advising, meetings, and developing positive relationships were identified often at the beginning of the first semester, yet not mentioned at all toward the end of the first semester. Research and publishing expectations, however, were mentioned heavily at the end of the first semester, as if the sense of time passing had suddenly brought that job expectation closer to the forefront. An additional challenge was keeping up with the different or changing laws and procedures in one's discipline. This was especially true for one participant who worked in Special Education, and was experiencing differences between the state where she obtained her credentials and the new state to which she had just relocated.

- Job expectations? I don't even know what they are.
- Students consume a lot of my time . . . but students have concerns and I need to meet with them. I have a student whose boyfriend committed suicide this semester . . . I need to set aside time for students like that on top of everything else I do.
- I'm seriously concerned that I might not be able to manage what is expected of me. I do have some things that I can contribute but right now there are too many opportunities that are coming my way or requests for my services. I'm concerned about being able to say 'No' and I know I need to do that.

- I probably did myself in this year because I am a fixed term with a known ending to that. I took on responsibilities that I might not have had to, but I did anyway. I'm glad I did because I learned from that.

**Institutional knowledge.** To a lesser degree than the previous three challenges discussed, learning about the institution was a challenge. Proper procedures to follow, who to ask for help, where to find answers, where places were located, and what resources were available were all mentioned. Although there were informational meetings held, digesting and understanding information pertaining to benefits, terms of employment, and union membership were also mentioned as challenging.

- I spend my time just reading and figuring out, 'Now who's that person? Where should I get that information?' An awful lot of time just connecting to the right people at the right time.
- The other part that also consumes time is finding out information because there's no one to go to in the department just to ask a question of because so many of us are new. I had a research question the other day about funding . . . I spent probably an hour trying to run down that kind of information.
- If I had a written guide. Just something . . . helping with something that I'm finding hard to do, helping me organize next semester, help to access my roster. Just a guide to look at on the wall and I could do it.

**Support.** The identified need for support was barely mentioned at the beginning of the first semester. Perhaps there was not yet a notion of what kinds of support were lacking, and, therefore, little recognition of what was needed. By the end of the first semester, however, there were specific areas that were identified as lacking. These included the lack of collegial support, of networking with colleagues within or outside of the department, of mentoring, and lack of written information for new faculty members. Three of the participants were discouraged over the lack of technological help with their computers. Either they did not have a computer to use, or they were experiencing problems with getting them fixed.



- There's no support structure. It seems overwhelming sometimes . . . It would be nice if someone would have come forward and said, 'You must really be frazzled this time of the year. Let me tell you what I've done in the past.'
- Going over there [to the instructional technology center] is the most frustrating, vexing process I've ever seen in my life. They treat you with a bit of scorn or at least that's my interpretation. I felt like I have to throw whatever prestige I have to get something done . . . It's trying to navigate all these institutional cultures let alone people's names and who to talk to and work the connections.

### **Strategies**

**Using time wisely.** The greatest challenges revolved around the need for more time to do one's work. One type of strategy used was to fill previously unfilled time with something useful or healthful. For example, a few people began listening to exercise or informational tapes during travel time and time spent walking from one place to another. Building routines was helpful for some of the women, such as a daily schedule for answering email, grading, reading, and class prep time. Some of the women intentionally began planning for longer-term future endeavors as well as for the present time. The most prominent strategy used was to specifically designate time for research, writing, reflection, and personal non-work time.

- What I'm doing differently is that I have a life outside of the classroom . . . I've decided that as long as I leave the television off . . . if I can just stay on track all of the time, I'm not stressed, and my work is getting done.
- I did learn this . . . There are a couple of people in the department that have online office hours . . . What does that mean? I watch my email [during designated office hours] and will reply to emails then . . . I don't have to be so accessible all the time.
- I have a colleague that I'm doing [research with] . . . and we're like 'OK, we're meeting at the coffee shop on Fridays.' And we have a certain amount of time, and that's what we work on during that time. You don't have to worry about it anymore . . . There's not that guilt that I have to be doing [research] all the time. It will get done.

**Teaching effectively.** The most often mentioned strategy for increasing teaching effectiveness was adjusting course designs and teaching strategies. Some of these adjustments were made fairly early in the first semester, but for some, the adjustments were made in the planning stages for

the second semester. Gaining confidence in the subject matter and in course management also steadily increased during the second semester.

Other strategies for teaching effectively included intentionally implementing active learning techniques, gathering input from students, altering self-imposed expectations of effectiveness, observing others teaching, relaxing more, and gaining more experience and confidence relative to course management and subject matter.

- I'm teaching a writing intensive class which is a lot of writing. And [I've tried] to come up with a way that would make it fulfill the requirements but not make me [have to] be grading papers every day, so I'm having them do a journal . . . But I'm making it reflective writing so it doesn't mean every time they turn it in I have to grade them on it. I just go through and make sure they're kind of on track.
- I put in a lot of experiential stuff that I couldn't put in before, because now I feel really comfortable with the content.
- I knew halfway through that I would never teach that class that way again, so I wasn't really very happy with the format and how I set it up, but at the same time, it was too late to change it midstream . . . The students gave some really good constructive feedback I'm going to take into consideration for what I'm teaching for class next fall.
- I asked for a mid-term evaluation because at the end of the semester, it's too late to make any changes. [I asked them], 'Just give me what you think so there are no surprises at the end of the year', and if anything, I have an opportunity to get better, to improve . . . I've been very satisfied with that approach to their assessments of me.

**Maintaining health.** In this category, very specific actions were taken by several of the women. A few ensured they ate healthier foods and ate more regularly. One wrote a reminder to eat in her daily calendar. Several began regular exercise routines or signed up for exercise classes. Maintaining mental health emerged as a more common theme than physical health, however. Strategies included "disengaging" in healthy ways (as opposed to eating when not hungry or watching "bad" television programs), changing work environments (writing, reading or meeting students at a coffee shop instead of at the office), and doing more things to take care of themselves.

- I do well when I journal and [follow] Covey with that weekly kind of thing . . . When I do that, I can stay on top of things . . . What did I do for myself physically? How did I maintain my exercise schedule or my diet or whatever it might be? How did you make sure you got

enough sleep? So if you put those kinds of things in there and you consciously do it . . . you can check them off and you feel so successful.

- Now I have an exercise class . . . It's part of my schedule. That's pretty sacred . . . Exercise is really helpful for my spirit and my mind and getting my YaYas out if it's been a bad day.
- I started to exercise and that's every day. And I read a stress book. And I got that tape [someone] recommended about 'full engagement' and realized my life was kind of out of balance because I was concentrating so much on wanting to do a good job and all the planning for classes and all that. I thought I better do something.

**Balancing job expectations.** Strategies identified as specifically employed for balancing job expectations included finding purpose, staying focused, engaging in less multi-tasking, altering attitudes and self-expectations, prioritizing tasks, and seeking input from others. For a few, these also involved learning how to say, "No."

- You kind of have to get to the place where, 'Oh well, another day. Oh another crisis. Ok, we can get through this.' Instead of a crisis mentality, [I] now have a solution mentality.
- It's still very busy but not that frantic hectic feeling like you're sinking all the time, like you want to come up for air. I still feel rushed sometimes or pressed for time . . . but overall I feel much more comfortable and confident than last semester.
- I have stopped feeling guilty about it. I realized pretty early last semester that it was very silly to bring home stuff in my briefcase and not look at it.
- I save weekends for my [self] but the week is sacred for teaching and students. As long as I have accepted that that's how it's going to be this semester, the stress has left me and I feel much more productive.

**Seeking support.** Gaining support by getting involved in campus events for the specific purpose of networking, increasing information, or meeting people were utilized by several of the women. To a lesser degree, support was gained by intentionally seeking it from spouses and partners, from mentors, and from colleagues.

- [I'm] kind of trouble shooting and thinking forward to how much additional support do I need?

- This is part of the balancing of it where you are in a group like this or talking with other people. Even though you feel like you can't make time for it, you need to. I feel pretty good about it, that I am balancing the challenges and expectations.
- I put my foot down and told my husband he had to help with commuting. I was doing all the commuting . . . I feel guilty because I'm the one making the commuting happen, but I had to say, 'This is an equal opportunity because you are going to retire and my income is going to help you retire.'
- There are times when it's important to just go grab a cup of coffee with a colleague or go talk to somebody . . . It's important to take some timeout and develop those relationships.

**Getting organized.** Attempts to get more organized were not in response to any particular emergent challenge or concern, but were expressed as actions that would help overall with the challenges, concerns and stresses. Most of the participants organized files and implemented some type of organizational system for handling records and course information. Some people relied heavily on day planners. One located maps to help with traveling obligations. Another used an idea notebook to organize her thoughts.

- I organized all of my intern files for next semester. I felt on top of the world. I felt good setting up files, putting stuff in there, and finding out where [the intern sites] are on a map so that I can plan my visits that are coming up . . . It works when you can have a sense that you've accomplished something.
- What I've done is taken a lot of different things and organized them in different books, kind of like a filing type of system . . . so when I'm stressed and in a hurry, I can find it right away rather than digging through everything.
- I do a course portfolio where I can be planning a class . . . It becomes a useful document for me to just keep that in one place rather than putting notes all over my desk which is what's going on with the stuff I haven't put in that form yet.

## Conclusions

### Implications

The findings of this research reveal that the most commonly identified challenges and concerns revolve around the lack of time to balance and

complete job expectations, especially in relation to preparing for and delivering instruction, and delivering that instruction in a way the participants felt good about. A natural first response to this challenge for most of the women was to work harder, which often translated into working longer. A secondary response for some was to find ways to work wiser, mostly by prioritizing and getting organized, but also, in some cases, to simply adjust expectations downward of themselves and their students. Maintaining health was also one of the most commonly expressed challenges. This also was tied into *not enough time* since meals were rushed or skipped altogether, sleep routines and exercise were deprived, and personal time was impinged upon.

It is clear that new faculty members need more time than seasoned faculty members to perform their jobs competently. Prepping for classes takes more time. Gaining institutional knowledge, finding one's way around campus, and adjusting to the new position physically and mentally takes more time. Discovering students' capabilities takes more time. Figuring out how to manage time takes time. Advising and committees take away from the extra time needed for these activities. Yet, at many universities, junior faculty carry the larger teaching and advising loads—the opposite of what would be best to offer a transition and learning period for new faculty. For the women in this study, those practices varied between departments. The women who had few or no assigned advisees their first year, or were advised to limit their committee involvement, were also women who described their departments as supportive.

An obvious implication here is that universities need to recognize the strong learning curve that new faculty members experience and should lessen the teaching and advising load accordingly for the first year. A colleague has posited an excellent idea that, in lieu of teaching one course load, new faculty should be enrolled in a learning community specifically for the purposes of sharing institutional knowledge, assistance in teaching strategies, stress and time management, and building shared support. However, if a campus truly is committed to retention of new faculty, the money will be located and adjustments subsequently built into the system. Adjuncts could be hired at much less money than it costs to lose new faculty members on a regular basis. Alternatively, the number of senior faculty receiving course releases for various reasons could be reduced to accommodate a new faculty member's lightened course load. For one of the researchers during her second year of hire, she was the only member of a six-member department teaching a full load, with all of the others on some type of a course release. This certainly appeared to be unsupportive of the trials of new faculty members.

### Recommendations for Further Research

Once data analysis began, it became evident that the participants in this study were experiencing a multitude of challenges and concerns, but to a much lesser extent, using specifically planned strategies to lessen those challenges. It is unknown if the strategies that were used were due to each participant's personality and ways of problem-solving, or if many of the women were not yet in a frame of mind to be able to plan strategies due to the tumult they were living.

One recommended area for further research is to extend the time frame of the study over a two or three-year period with the same participants. This would help to determine if, in time, most or all of the women would eventually plan specific strategies, and when during the first few years of hire the utilization of those strategies would most strongly emerge.

It is also not known if the participants in this study who expressed the fewest challenges and concerns were also involved in a formal mentor situation or other university programs intended to assist newer faculty members. An additional area for future inquiry would be to conduct this study at several universities across the United States in terms of challenges and concerns. Comparative analysis would reveal helpful insights to universities who are working on faculty climate and retention issues, especially if uncommon patterns emerge. An extension of this work would be to identify universities with low numbers of identified challenges, and what practices those campuses use to prevent or lessen their prevalence.

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