

## Integrating Work and Life: A Vision for a Changing Academy

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**Abstract:** The authors share principles developed from a Sloan Foundation-sponsored conference where participants considered professional development broadly, from learning from the scholarship of their colleagues to seeking support to attain personal equilibrium.

### **Essay:**

Imagine that you could gaze into a crystal ball and see 25 years into the future. What will the life of an effective and productive faculty member in your favorite academic department be like? How will he or she achieve a productive balance among the various elements of faculty work and life? The crystal ball seems awfully cloudy to us; the one thing that seems certain is that the life of a faculty member joining a department tomorrow will be quite different from the life lived by a faculty member retiring today.

These questions are pressing because the academic profession is nearing a moment of great change. The large cohort of faculty hired during the late 1960s and early 1970s will retire during the next decade, and a new generation is coming in. We urgently need policies and practices that affirm and ensure the dignity, humanity and intellectual excitement of academic careers for higher education to remain vital. Higher education's future depends on the creativity with which it can provide for the professional growth of all faculty and for flexibility in the shape and timing of their careers.

The challenges are urgent on two fronts.

Academic work will require a new and larger set of abilities and skills. Teaching a more diverse population of students requires deeper knowledge of pedagogy than before, and

advising now extends into new domains like service learning and undergraduate research. In most fields, scholarly work is becoming increasingly collaborative, interdisciplinary and practically relevant, at the same time that expectations for productivity are on the rise. Public service involves greater reciprocity between academic and community partners, while academic decision-making in today's complex educational, financial and legal environment takes more time and thought. And for many, the trio of teaching, research and service may be joined by business and economic enterprises. Integrating these work domains will be a particular challenge.

"Work - life balance" is the catchall phrase that encompasses a variety of needs for flexibility in the timing and pacing of faculty careers. The ever-increasing demands and pace of academic life are stretching many faculty members to the breaking point, placing further pressures on the boundaries between personal and professional domains. Workplace policies developed in the past no longer fit current realities. Women and men alike are trying to find new ways to handle family responsibilities for children and aging parents. Few policies address the needs of the growing proportion of part-time and non-tenure-track faculty members, nor of the growing ranks of retiring faculty members who are still vigorous and able to make meaningful contributions.

Surprisingly, these two conversations about the work and life of faculty are rarely connected. The first set of issues focuses on changing faculty roles and rewards in keeping with an expanded conception of scholarly work. The second set of issues focuses on the balance between faculty work and life at all of the stages of faculty careers.

In March of 2006, the Carnegie Foundation in partnership with the Sloan Foundation convened a group of distinguished participants active in each of these conversations, who created a vision of professional development to meet the challenges for the new academy (see the online [Professional Development for a Changing Academy Report](#)).

Six principles emerged from the discussions:

1. Begin professional development in college and intensify in graduate school.
2. Provide flexibility for work-and-life issues throughout the academic career.
3. Recognize, develop and reward multiple talents and contributions.
4. Foster long-term planning and preparation.
5. Cultivate leadership throughout faculty careers.
6. Strengthen networks that encourage learning.

These principles rest on an expansive view of professional development. On the one hand, policies and practices (family leave, retirement policies, tenure clock flexibility) must allow a diverse professoriate to maximize effectiveness. On the other hand, opportunities for learning throughout the career (engagement with the scholarship of teaching, interdisciplinary networks, civic engagement opportunities) should be widely available.

Traditional notions of professional development are broadened in three directions: when,

who and how. Professional development should not be reserved for assistant professors or for those who are somehow deemed ineffective; instead, it starts in graduate school and meets the needs of faculty members throughout their careers, including through retirement. Professional development should reach all faculty members, especially those with temporary appointments who often feel excluded from the college community. We must also recognize the important roles played by many academic staff members. Flexibility, a broadened view of what the work entails and how the work is done, should also undergird professional development efforts.

These principles are just the beginning of the conversation. We invite readers to dream with us. How can faculty life in the future balance and integrate various work roles and the personal and professional? In light of that answer, what professional development practices and policies will help ensure that that vision becomes reality?

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