Balancing Careers and Motherhood: Experiences of Female Professors in Sport Management

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Opportunities for females in academics continue to expand. In the United States, 56% of undergraduate students are females (www.nsf.gov/statistics) and 46.8% of assistant professors are female (American Association of University Professors, 1999), yet females continue to lag behind males in terms of receiving promotion and tenure. In fact, the AAUP reports that only 18.7% of full professors are female. At Research 1 institutions, the percentage of women may be lower. Mason and Goulden (2002) reported that only 21.9% of all faculty at Berkeley are females. Why are so few females full professors? Researchers have investigated career paths for male and female Ph.D. students and faculty and examined topics such as “Do Babies Matter?” for promotion and tenure (Mason & Goulden, 2002). They found that child related issues often play a role in changing career decisions and tenure for women but much less so for men. Mason and Goulden revealed that having no children is the dominate success strategy for women and that women who had babies before they were tenured were much less likely than men who had babies at the same time to achieve tenure. This research suggests that women professors with children may have additional challenges to achieving tenure. Furthermore, researchers have indicated that nearly half of the sport management programs have only white male faculty members (Jones & Brooks, 2008). In this same study, faculty participants reported that the lack of female professors is a critical issue in the field (Jones & Brooks, 2008). Given that the Sport Management field is male dominated, these issues are especially important to discuss for female professors in Sport Management. The purpose of this roundtable is to a) inform faculty and students of challenges or obstacles experienced due to motherhood status, b) share perceptions of bias against motherhood and fears surrounding motherhood and the tenure process, c) offer suggestions to address these challenges, issues, and fears, d) provide insight as to how to balance work, life, and motherhood, e) offer advice or strategies to successfully achieve tenure, and f) provide support to other female faculty members who may or are going through similar experiences. The specific questions that the panel will address include: What challenges have been faced with being a tenure-track Sport Management professor and a mother? Even though colleagues may be outwardly supportive, is some bias perceived against motherhood? What were/are fears surrounding motherhood and the tenure process? What suggestions or strategies could address the challenges, issues, or fears that have been discussed? What strategies have been utilized to balance work, life, and motherhood? What advice could be offered to help achieve tenure in Sport Management while also being a mother? Seven female faculty members from a broad array of universities who have children will discuss these issues. These panel members will share firsthand experience of obstacles they have experienced and how they are balancing their academic career with family. The panel includes a variety of female professors from research and teaching institutions as well as women in heterosexual relationships, women in same sex relationships, single moms, and those with tenure and those who are still seeking tenure. The roundtable will begin with a brief introduction of panel members and move into a review of literature. Following this, each panel member will discuss their experiences balancing work and motherhood including the challenges or obstacles they faced. In the next portion of the roundtable, faculty will offer suggestions or advice to Sport Management students and faculty. The roundtable will close with an open question and answer session from the audience.