A Summary of STEM Faculty Reactions to the 2008-2010 Budget Cuts at Washington State University

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Background

- Due to the economic recession and resulting budgetary crisis, WSU has lost 30% of its state-allocated operating budget and is facing an additional $40M reduction.
- How have these budget cuts affected faculty (with particular emphasis on women in STEM fields)?

Study Methodology

- All faculty (including chairs, deans, and academic directors), staff, and AP employees were invited to participate in a survey study.
- Results today focus on responses from 647 tenure & non-tenure track faculty (~30% response rate)
- 197 in STEM fields [STEM Women (N = 52) & STEM Men (N= 145)]

Survey Measures

- Exposure to Budget Cuts
- Work-Family Conflict
- Family-Work Conflict
- Turnover Intentions
- Job Burnout
- Commitment to WSU
- Erosion in Relationship with WSU
- Job Satisfaction
- Importance of Grant Funding

RESULTS: STEM vs. Non-STEM Women

- STEM women had significantly lower turnover intentions than non-STEM women
- STEM women place greater importance on obtaining grant funding.
- STEM women reported less exposure to budget cuts and perceived being less affected by the cuts

However, STEM women have more negative reactions to such cuts than women in non-STEM fields
- Greater feeling of erosion, less commitment, more burnout, worsened professional networking opportunities, and less job satisfaction in response to the budget cuts

STEM Women vs. STEM Men

- Compared to STEM men, STEM women reported significantly higher levels of:
  - Work-family conflict
  - Burnout (exhaustion/cynicism)
  - Both of these effects remained significant even after accounting for faculty rank.
- Compared to STEM men, STEM women report significantly lower levels of:
  - Job security
  - Professional networking opportunities
  - Both of these effects became non-significant when faculty rank was accounted for.

Other Group Differences

- Women faculty report significantly more work-to-family conflict than men.
- Men report significantly more family-to-work conflict than women.
- Tenure track faculty (especially women) report the highest levels of work-to-family conflict compared to other employee groups; staff report the lowest.

Conclusion

- WSU has somewhat buffered STEM women faculty from the negative budgetary climate.
- However, women in STEM fields appear to react more negatively when exposed to the budget cuts.
- In addition, challenges remain in terms of work-family conflict and job burnout.

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