



**National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230**

NSF 12-065

Dear Colleague Letter: Career-Life Balance (CLB) Initiative

In order to maintain global leadership in science and engineering (S&E), as well as promote economic prosperity and national security, America must develop its own domestic scientific talent at a pace similar to other nations worldwide.

Although women continue to earn an increasing proportion of S&E doctoral degrees, their representation in full-time tenured faculty positions is not keeping pace. Women's share of full-time tenured or tenure-track S&E faculty positions reached only 29 percent in 2008, relative to their PhD production rate of 41 percent in 2009. For women of color, this relationship was 6 percent, relative to their PhD production rate of 17 percent in 2009. Data show that women continue to constitute a much lower percentage of S&E full professors than their share of S&E doctorates awarded.

Family characteristics-such as marital status and having children-are related to women's chances of earning tenure and for holding either an associate or full professor rank. Unmarried women and women without children made greater numerical gains in their share of full professorships from 1975 to 2006 than did married women and women with children.

In September 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama hosted a White House event to announce new "Workplace Flexibility Policies to Support America's Scientists and Their Families," at which NSF Director, Dr. Subra Suresh, announced the launch of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) new Career-Life Balance (CLB) Initiative (see <http://www.nsf.gov/career-life-balance/>).

NSF's Career-Life Balance (CLB) Initiative-an ambitious, ten-year initiative-will build on the best of family-friendly practices among individual NSF programs to expand them to activities NSF-wide. This agency-level approach will help attract, retain, and advance graduate students, postdoctoral students, and early-career researchers in STEM fields. This effort will help reduce the rate at which women depart from the STEM workforce. By the end of this ten-year initiative (2021), it is expected that women will represent 41 percent of newly tenured doctoral S&E faculty-the same percentage as the available pool of women S&E doctorate recipients in 2009; and that women of color will comprise 17 percent of newly tenured faculty, the same percentage of their PhD production rate in 2009.

CLB is an important step among NSF's efforts to establish a better balance between the responsibilities and demands of work lives and family lives. It offers benefits to men and women scientists developing their scientific careers.

The initiative's initial focus will be on CLB opportunities such as dependent-care issues (child birth/adoption and elder care). These issues initially will be addressed through NSF's Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) and postdoctoral programs, where career-life balance opportunities can help retain a significant fraction of early career STEM talent. The agency will further integrate CLB opportunities over time through other programs such as the Graduate Research Fellowship program and expand opportunities such as dual career-hiring through the Increasing the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE) program.

The initiative encourages career-life balance opportunities such as flexible start dates for NSF awards; no-cost extensions; virtual panel participation; recommendations for child care accommodations for panelists; and family-friendly program management (e.g., instructions for panelists regarding family-friendly issues).

In addition to the above opportunities, we invite the submission of supplemental funding requests to support additional personnel (e.g., research technicians or equivalent) to sustain research when Principal Investigators are on family leave. In FY 2012, up to 3 months of salary support may be requested (for a maximum of \$12,000 in salary compensation) through the CAREER program. For additional information regarding preparation and submission of such requests, please contact the appropriate Directorate or Divisional representative identified on the CAREER webpage at: <http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/career/contacts.jsp>.

Sincerely,

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