



## **NIH Updates on Women in Science** **News for You to Use!**

Joslyn Yudenfreund Kravitz, Ph.D., Editor  
Office of Research on Women's Health  
Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health  
United States Department of Health and Human Services

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*NIH Updates on Women in Science is brought to you by the [NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers](#). We encourage you to forward this e-newsletter to colleagues who may find it of interest.*

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### ***NIH Will Hold Regional Meetings to Seek New Dimensions and Strategies for Women's Health Research Including Advancing Women's Biomedical Careers***

The NIH and Office of Research on Women's Health will be holding a series of regional meetings to revise the agenda for the NIH's research priorities in women's health. Each meeting will include several keynote speakers, panel discussions, and breakout sessions on a variety of topics including a working group on women's careers in science. Public testimony is being solicited on women's careers as well as women's health research. The first meeting will be held at Washington University in St. Louis on March 4 – 6, 2009. The deadline for hotel reservations at the government rate is February 4, 2009, 4:00 Central Time.

[Moving Into the Future – New Dimensions and Strategies for Women's Health Research for the National Institutes of Health](#)

### ***President Obama's First Law Helps Combat Pay Inequities***

On January 29, 2009 President Barack Obama signed the first law of his presidency – [The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009](#). This law reverses a 2007 Supreme Court decision which stated that claims of pay discrimination must be reported within 180 days of the "alleged unlawful employment practice." Under the new law, each paycheck is considered a new violation of the law. Critics of the law claim that it will lead to more and larger lawsuits against employers. After the signing, President Obama stated that, "Equal pay is by no means just a women's issue -- it's a family issue...And in this economy, when so many folks are already working harder for less and struggling to get by, the last thing they can afford is losing part of each month's paycheck to simple and plain discrimination."

[President Obama Signs the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009](#)

[The New York Times reports on the bill's passage](#)

## ***Expanding the Participation of Women in Science is Important for the Advancement of Women's Health Research and the Country's Economic Security***

Promoting the participation of women in the so called STEM fields – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – as well as biomedical research is important for everyone, not just women. An article in the *Journal of Women's Health* links the progress of women's health research to the progress of women's careers in medical research. Authors Molly Carnes, Claudia Morrissey, and Stacie Geller show that advances in one area lead to advances in the other since many of the researchers in women's health are women. They conclude that at this time, advances in both areas has stalled and make several recommendations for advancing women's health research including recognizing the impact of socialized gender differences, systematic changes to research institutions, making support for professional development and work/life balance an institutional priority, and reinforcing the link between women's health and women's leadership at NIH and other federal agencies.

In a recent article in the *Harvard International Review*, Sue Rosser and Mark Zachary Taylor explore the connection between the leaky pipeline for women in science careers and the decline in the US competitiveness in technology fields. While women make up just under sixty percent of undergraduate and master's degree students and have earned the majority of all bachelor's degrees in science and engineering since 2000, they receive only 46.3 percent of doctoral degree in the biological sciences and between eighteen and twenty-eight percent in mathematics, statistics, computer science, engineering, and the physical sciences. The authors estimate the economic cost of this attrition to be about \$15 billion per year. They suggest that the loss of a large segment of the highly trained workforce can and must be averted by changing the culture of academic science through new policies or expansion and enforcement of existing ones.

[Women's Health and Women's Leadership in Academic Medicine: Hitting the Same Glass Ceiling? \(PDF\)](#)

[Economic Security: Expanding Women's Participation in US Science](#)

## ***The American College of Cardiology Finds that While Women Have Made Great Strides, Discrimination is Still a Factor***

A survey published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* reports on the subspecialty choices made by American cardiologists. The authors compared their results to a similar survey carried out ten years prior. The survey asked respondents to identify their subspecialty, their primary activities, their practice type, and practice setting. Data

was also collected on several other topics including personal and family issues, career satisfaction, mentoring, and discrimination. The authors concluded that while progress has been made in some areas such as career satisfaction and mentoring, women still face discrimination and barriers to childrearing. The authors called for increased leadership by the American College of Cardiology to acknowledge these pervasive impediments and provide support for women throughout their careers.

[Survey Results: A Decade of Change in Professional Life in Cardiology: A 2008 Report of the ACC Women in Cardiology Council \(PDF\)](#)

[News article in the \*Washington Post\*](#)

## ***Women are Making Slow But Steady Gains as Chemistry and Sociology Faculty***

Recent articles in *Chemical and Engineering News* and *Footnotes*, which are publications of the American Chemical Society and the American Sociological Association, respectively, report on faculty surveys of their respective departments. In the fifty Chemistry Departments which spend the most money on research, the fraction of women holding tenure or tenure-track positions in 2008 rose to sixteen percent, compared to fifteen percent in the previous year. The study also attempted to address the hypothesis that once a critical mass of women in a department is achieved, women begin feeling empowered to demand policy changes relevant to their needs. However, only fourteen of the fifty departments had the proposed critical mass of twenty percent women and seven departments were less than ten percent women.

In Sociology Departments, women are making steady but slower than expected progress in the academic ranks. Between 2001 and 2007, the overall representation of women increased from thirty-eight percent to forty-six percent, however the fraction of full professors who are women has only increased from twenty-six percent to thirty-two percent while women make up sixty-four percent of lectures and instructors. This could indicate that women are facing barriers to progressing into full professor positions, or it could be a symptom of the increasingly common practice of replacing retiring faculty with adjunct professors.

[Women Now 16% Of Chemistry Faculty](#)

[Women Move up the Faculty Ladder Slowly](#)

## ***"Stop the Clock" Policies are Frequently Misinterpreted, Much to the Detriment of Those Who Use Them***

“Stop the clock” policies are generally seen as one of the most family friendly accommodations a department can make for its tenure track faculty. However, a recent report from the American Economic Association found that while these policies are perceived to be quite valuable, they are not widely utilized in Economics Departments due to the stigma attached to those who choose to stop the clock, particularly for men. In many cases, tenure committees are not instructed on how to properly evaluate the dossier of a candidate who has used the policy, which results in unfair expectations and disproportionately hinders women’s careers since women are more likely to utilize stop the clock options.

[The Implementation and Utilization of Stop the Tenure Clock Policies in Canadian and U.S. Economics Departments \(PDF\)](#)

[Ignorance About “Stop the Clock” Policies](#)

## ***University of California Study Finds that Graduate Students are Increasingly Looking Outside Academia for Work/life Balance***

In *Academe Online*, Mary Ann Mason, Marc Goulden, and Karie Frasch present the results of an unprecedented survey of more than nineteen thousand graduate students from nine of the ten University of California campuses. Respondents were asked about their intentions of pursuing an academic career with a focus on research versus other careers. More than half of the students stated that they intended to pursue a teaching career or a career entirely outside academia, citing poor work/life balance for researchers as the main reason. Many students who entered graduate school with the intention of pursuing a position as a professor at a Research I university reported that bad experiences in graduate school or observing their advisors life style had made them change their minds. The authors conclude that if there is to be a sufficient supply of top quality doctoral researchers to replace current faculty as they retire, academia will have to be reenvisioned to make it more palatable to a new generation of scientists.

[Why Graduate Students Reject the Fast Track](#)

[In 'Geek Chic' and Obama, New Hope for Lifting Women in Science](#)

[Grad Students Think Twice About Jobs in Academe](#)

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