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**THE BALANCING ACT:  
WORK ENVIRONMENT ISSUES FOR  
WOMEN WITH CHILDREN IN STUDENT AFFAIRS**

**by**

**Mary Kimberly Braun Padulo**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Education**

**University of San Diego**

**2001**

**Dissertation Committee**

**Mary Scherr, Ph. D., Director  
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Johanna Hunsaker, Ph. D.**

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**MARY KIMBERLY BRAUN PADULO**

**THE BALANCING ACT:  
WORK ENVIRONMENT ISSUES FOR WOMEN WITH CHILDREN  
IN STUDENT AFFAIRS**

PADULO, MARY KIMBERLY BRAUN, Ed.D. University of San Diego,  
2001, 202 pp.

Director: Mary W. Scherr, Ph.D.

Increasingly in the past two decades, student affairs work at America's universities has been undertaken by women. This work with the co-curricular life of the students in higher education requires administrators at all levels to have a flexible schedule with the ability to commit evenings and weekends to their work. Challenges for academe and for women in the profession have emerged as more women enter the field. One of the most problematic areas is the retention of highly educated and experienced female administrators once they have children. Workplace environment, including work schedule, job demands and employer support, have been suggested as reasons why many working mothers leave the student affairs profession or are unable to advance to the highest levels of administration.

To explore these problems in more detail, this study collected data from 35 working mothers in student affairs careers at universities in California. A Delphi process enabled the study participants, through four rounds of questionnaires, to arrive at

consensus on the most important work environment issues affecting working mothers in both positive and negative ways. Strategies for both addressing work-family balance issues in the workplace and for seeking work environments which support work-family balance were identified.

The finds of the study revealed that working mothers in student affairs value a flexible work schedule with little or no weekend or evening obligations, a job description which includes manageable responsibilities with flexibility for where and when to accomplish the work, and a supportive supervisor. Recommendations were offered for working mothers in the profession and for managers and supervisors who would like to retain these committed, experienced and talented professionals.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my son, Francesco Edmund Padulo, who has been the inspiration for my personal work-family balance. His presence at the end of each day never has failed to put everything in perspective.

It is also dedicated to my husband, Lawrence Padulo, who works with me to make the complicated puzzle of our dual-earner family work well, and to my mother, Patricia A. Braun, who provided the model of a working mother for me at a time when such roles were unusual. I also dedicate this work to the memory of my father, whose work ethic has been an inspiration to me.

It is also dedicated to the many mothers at work in institutions of higher education throughout North America. Each day brings difficult choices for them as they measure their commitment to their own offspring against their commitment to the young men and women they educate through co-curricular experiences on our college campuses. Through their determination to model balance in their lives, my son, and the other children of America, can learn how to be good fathers and mothers *and* good workers.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This study would not have been possible without support from many individuals. I wish to thank my committee members, Dr. Sue Zgliczynski and Dr. Johanna Hunsaker, from the University of San Diego, who provided me with guidance, encouragement and enthusiasm for my project. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Mary Scherr, who served as my dissertation director and also as my advisor throughout my doctoral program. As a new doctoral student, I took my first course at University of San Diego from Dr. Scherr, and she has been a mentor throughout the many years it has taken me to finish. Throughout that time, many new phases of life have unfolded for me: motherhood, two job changes, presidency of a national higher education association and a major move for our family. Through all the milestones, Mary has helped me to integrate my experiences into my learning, and kept me focused on my goals.

Finally, my work has been enriched by the intellectual challenge and the emotional support of many fellow students and colleagues at the University of San Diego, San Diego State University and California State University, Long Beach. In particular, I am grateful to Dr. Susan Mitchell, Carol Lyman, Susan Payment, and Dr. Jeane Relleve Caveness.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE**

The profession of student affairs or student services includes those university and community college administrators who work with the co-curricular life of the students in higher education. These administrators direct housing and recreation programs, and advise a multitude of student organizations and student government. They sign the contracts, attend the events, handle the conflicts among students, administer the discipline, organize the traditional campus programs such as orientation and commencement and counsel students through the developmental tasks of their college years. Today as in the past, student affairs work requires administrators at all levels to have a flexible schedule with the ability to commit evenings and weekends to their work. Increasingly in the last two decades, this work has been undertaken by women, with females now comprising approximately 50% of student affairs professionals (Twale, 1995).

As more women have entered the field of student affairs and as their experience allowed them to advance to higher levels of administration, new challenges for the university and for the women in the profession have emerged. Universities have found it difficult to retain experienced women as employees in this field. Women who

would like to advance to chief student affairs officers have found their way blocked by a “glass ceiling.” Similar to corporate America, women in academe who choose to have children can be at a disadvantage in the workplace (Schwartz, 1989). This disadvantage is exacerbated in a profession which demands evening and weekend work.

In the few studies which have addressed these challenges to women in student affairs careers (Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Matzat, 1992) results seem to indicate that women who choose to have children often leave the profession. Those who do remain tend to modify their original career goals due to family obligations, settling for lower pay and less responsibility.

### **Background of the Study**

In the 1960's, women constituted less than 20% of the chief student affairs officers and Deans of Students on college campuses. The elimination of the Deans of Women positions in the early 1970's produced reorganizations which repositioned women at the mid-level management positions (Whitney, 1971). Many women, however, began to consider a career in student affairs, beginning in the 1970's, and the percentage of women in the field has grown steadily. Today, in California, there are 716 members of NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators). Fifty-seven percent of those members are female (NASPA website, April, 2000).

The percentage of women entering student affairs doctoral programs increased from 30% in 1972-73 to 50% in 1986-87 (McEwen, Engstrom & Williams, 1990). Female master's students have

increased from 46% to 65% in the same years. Both masters' level and doctoral programs experienced a decline in male applicants and registrants in the same years (Kuh, 1979). Masters degrees are generally required for entry-level full-time employment in the field, with terminal degrees required for Director and higher positions.

Despite their advances in gaining entry to the field, women remain clustered, disproportionately to men, at the directorship level. This staff position and those which report to the director, involve the most direct contact with students. Men tend to use these positions as the fast track to higher-level administration, while women fail to advance (Twale, 1995). Women may have difficulty with promotion beyond the director rank due to several factors. First, advancement in the profession of student affairs often requires an individual to change institutions and to relocate to other cities. This may be more difficult for women, who tend to fill caregiver roles in their families, than it is for men who do not have responsibility as primary caregivers to parents and children (Barr, 1990). Second, entry level positions offer relatively low pay and require more direct service to students, while providing benefits unacceptable to many male candidates (Twale, 1995). Women are apparently willing to stay longer or are forced to remain in these lower-paying and high contact positions, while men move through this phase of their career rather quickly. Third, women's success as directors may be more dependent than their male counterparts on specific factors such as areas of concentration, personal expectations, management skill and personal demeanor (Earwood-Smith, Jordan-Cox, Hudson, & Smith, 1990).

Those who are more successful are more likely to be promoted to positions where their work is more supervisory and involves less evening and weekend obligation. Fourth, women are considered better-qualified for the entry-level and lower-paying “nurturing” positions and those with a high level of daily student contact, which are considered “in the trenches” (Twale, 1995). Moreover, women in student affairs have also experienced relatively less status and recognition as compared to their male colleagues (Grant & Foy, 1972).

Women in general are less successful in advancing in the student services profession, but for women with children, the complications and obstacles are compounded. The conflicts in balancing work and family pose numerous difficulties for women. Nobbe & Manning (1997) identified specific challenges: the lack of role models and mentors in student affairs for women with children, the difficulty of planning maternity leave and developing strategies to balance work and family, the requirement for precise planning to accommodate the demands of work and family life, the need to give up or change career goals after having children and the feeling that their performance was under greater scrutiny than that of colleagues without children.

Similar conflicts have been discussed frequently in the popular literature with respect to working mothers in the corporate sector, but little consideration of these issues can be found in the student affairs literature (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). Marshall and Jones (1990) examined the childbearing sequence and career development of women administrators in higher education and found that salary, rank, and



title were unrelated to whether children came before, during or after careers were initiated. When asked whether having children had a positive or negative effect on their careers, however, most respondents believed that childbearing had hurt their careers. Matzat (1992) found that women who had left the field of student affairs were more likely to be married, to have had children, to have attained a higher level of education, and to have earned more than those who stayed in the field.

What environmental factors would allow women to remain in the profession of student affairs, to pursue a successful career path and to balance the demands of child-rearing and work? Few resources exist to guide women in student affairs who have children or those who are planning to raise a family. Research is needed to support these women and to help university leaders take advantage of the qualified pool of applicants and administrators they represent. Women in the profession of student affairs provide role models for female undergraduate and graduate students. Women with children model balanced lives and family values. The training and development which these professional women receive is lost to their university employers when they leave the field, and students do not receive the benefit of their expertise.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the environmental factors which detract from and those which enhance the success of

women with children who are working in student affairs. In order to set realistic boundaries for the project, this study focused on working mothers in California institutions of higher education.

Important environmental issues were isolated using a Delphi technique with a panel of working mothers in student affairs responding to a series of questionnaires. An anticipated outcome of the study was the creation of guidelines for senior student services professionals who would like to retain valuable female employees and a list of factors for women to consider as they seek new family-friendly employment situations in the field.

### **Research Questions**

As the expert panel of working mothers in student affairs were surveyed using the Delphi technique, the following research questions set the priorities and parameters for this study:

1. What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?
2. What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?
3. What do working mothers in student affairs feel are the most important factors in managing work and family for a woman in student affairs?

## **Explanation of Terms**

### **Student Affairs**

Student affairs as a profession encompasses the aspects of the campus administration pertaining to co-curricular life of students. This includes the general areas of residence life, student activities, orientation and retention, student government, counseling, student discipline, etc.

For the purposes of this study, I have excluded operational areas like residence hall or student union maintenance, as well as health services and records administration. Maintenance work tends to be on a predictable schedule, paid hourly, and is not subject to some of the stressful job requirements which characterize most professional positions in the field. Health services on a college campus have more in common with the private healthcare profession than they do with student affairs, but this department is sometimes included in a university division of student services. Records administration and accounting are professional positions which generally do not directly work with students and have predictable hours and repetitive tasks.

### **Environmental Factors**

As used in this study, environmental factors are those aspects of the working environment which affect the employee's ability to do her job. These may include, but are not limited to, the actual job responsibilities as presented in the position description, the physical

layout of the workplace, the informal expectations, attitudes and behaviors of supervisors and colleagues, and the expectations of the students with whom the subject works.

### **Delphi Study**

The Delphi process is a structured group process which was first used for forecasting in the defense industry. A panel of participants complete a series of questionnaires, with feedback provided to each participant by a moderator (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). This technique is intended to gain the advantages of group process and to reach consensus. Delphi studies are not subject to many of the disadvantages of face-to-face group process and the technique helps to focus participants' input on the subject matter at hand (Martino, 1983).

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

There are some important limitations of the Delphi technique when used for social research. Several limitations pertain to the use of panelists. First, there is no way to determine the plausibility of the participant's response (Uhl, 1983). This limits the extent to which the results of this study can be generalized to other working mothers, other campuses and other states. Second, the women selected for the panel were subject to individual limitations (Bunning, 1979). Their underlying values and beliefs, their ability to understand the implications of environmental factors on their own job performance, and even the amount of time required to thoughtfully complete the

questionnaires could have limited their personal contributions to the study. Third, although the panelists were not influenced by each other, since their responses were anonymous, they may have been influenced by their initial contact with the researcher to the extent that the researcher framed the problem for them. The researcher took care not to over-specify the structure of the Delphi in order to allow for the contribution of other perspectives relating to the problem (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Delbecq et al. (1975) outlined three necessary conditions for a successful Delphi study: 1) adequate time, 2) participant skill in written communication, and 3) high participant motivation. The time required to complete the study was reduced by the use of electronic mail as the communication medium, however, participants were required to commit to the project over the course of several months. Delphi procedures often result in a greater mortality rate than single-survey methodologies. In this case, the subjects seemed to find the questionnaires and subsequent findings of the research to inform their own efforts to balance work and family, and this may have helped to keep subjects motivated throughout the project.

There are some demographic limitations to electronic data collection, as populations are limited to those who have access to and some expertise with computers and online network communication (Kiesler & Sproull, 1986). For this study, this limitation was not a factor, since virtually all student affairs professionals have access to and regularly communicate via computers at their workplace.

Several assumptions provided a basis for this study. The researcher assumed that 25-to-30 panelists could be identified and would agree to participate for the duration of the project. Further, the assumption was made that they would give thoughtful consideration to their completion of each round of questionnaires. An overarching assumption was that there are environmental factors in the workplace which do impinge in positive and negative ways on the job performance of working mothers in the student affairs profession.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Literature relevant to the balance of work and family obligations for working mothers, particularly the environmental factors which seem to affect their negotiation of that balance has set the background for this research. This review of the literature summarizes perspectives from the fields of women's studies, higher education administration, business administration, human resources management, and family studies. The vast majority of the literature on this topic pertains to women working in private corporations. Also included is the literature on the profession of student affairs, particularly women's participation in the profession.

The review covers three main topics: 1) ways in which working mothers balance their many roles, 2) the experiences of women in student affairs careers, and 3) ways in which working mothers achieve work-family balance in student affairs. A summary of this review results in the clear conclusion that more research is needed on work climate for female student affairs professionals who have children.

#### **Working Mothers: Balancing their Many Roles**

Once work and family life were inseparable. For most of human history, most men, women and children lived together and toiled together for their subsistence. At the time of the American

Revolution, four-fifths of the nonslave population of the United States worked on family farms or were independent artisans or shopkeepers. The industrial revolution changed that pattern forever, taking workers out of the home and into separate workplaces. The breadwinner-homemaker pattern, which we now call traditional, gradually became the norm. This reorganization of the family unit brought relief for women and children, as well as for men, from the hard life of family farm or shop. Fewer and fewer families were independent economic units. Gradually the cities grew as industrial centers, so that during the nineteenth century, for the first time, the majority of men were working outside the home for wages. The husband and father was no longer dependent upon the wife and children as part of his economic unit, but the wife and children were much more dependent upon the wage-earning male (Glendon, 1998).

Glendon (1998) identified an additional fundamental shift in the way we work which took place in this country from the mid-1960's to the mid-1980's, with women (and mothers) entering the out-of-home workforce on an unprecedented scale. During this period, divorce rates began to skyrocket. Women found full-time motherhood to be risky as they could be left, following divorce, with children to support and no income. Wives hedged their bets by having fewer children and by maintaining a foothold in the labor force while the children were young. Worsening economic conditions in the 1980's pushed even more mothers into the workforce as baby-boomer parents found they needed dual-income to maintain their lifestyles.



As this change was taking place researchers began to study the effects on working mothers. The overall conclusion of early studies was that a mother's participation in the workforce enhanced her self-esteem, improved her mental health and increased her status and resources (Kessler & McRae, 1982). But as more mothers entered the workforce and work became a necessity rather than a luxury for many, more recent findings have suggested that working mothers can also be subject to stress, largely as a consequence of heavy responsibilities for household tasks and child care in combination with the demands of their paid employment (Ross & Mirowsky, 1992).

A national commission (Ferber & O'Farrell) conducted an in-depth review of policies regarding work and family in 1991. While the study focused on policies (such as work scheduling, benefit and leave policies), the committee's report sheds some historical light on the strain between working mothers' roles at home and at work. They found that the numbers of women in the national workforce with children at home has increased dramatically in recent decades. In 1960, 39 percent of women with children ages 6 to 17 were working, and only 18.6 percent of women with children under age 6 were in the workforce. Nearly three decades later, labor force statistics for those same groups were 72.5 percent and 57.1 percent respectively (pp. 26-27). In the mid-1980's, the U.S. Department of Labor released a report called "Workforce 2000." It predicted an increasingly diverse labor market comprised of women, minorities and aging workers. From this report, employers were astounded to learn that two thirds of mothers with school-age children were in the paid labor force and 54 percent of

mothers with infants were employed outside the home (Friedman, Rinsky & Johnson, 1996). In 1998, 74 percent of all married couples in America had both spouses working, and the percent of all children under age one who have a mother in the workforce remains 54 percent (Mackavey & Levin, 1998, p. 4). The Center for Policy Alternatives in Washington, D.C. estimates that 63 percent of mothers with children under age six are in the workforce, and 78 percent of mothers with school-age children work outside the home (Clarke, 1999).

While many more women have entered the workforce, the family pressures for women have increased, as men's participation in household chores has remained virtually unchanged (Ferber & O'Farrell, 1991, p.31). The absence of unpaid labor in the home is rapidly becoming a crisis situation. Even with falling birthrates, the Census Bureau projects that 84 percent of American women will bear at least one child (Bachu, 1993, p. 29). In the dual-earner family, the majority of one parent's income is often dedicated to dependent care and costs for domestic help. When one considers the impact of single-parent family structures (reality for more than half of America's children according to Glendon, 1998), it is easy to see how fragile the family-work balance has become.

In addition, the gender earnings gap has been closing, but very slowly. In 1970, women earned 62 cents to every man's dollar. In 1987, that had only increased to 70 cents (p. 36). In 1995, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that for young adults (ages twenty-seven to thirty-three) who have never had a child, women's earnings are nearly 98 percent of men's earnings. For all women, the same

report shows the ratio of women's weekly earnings to those of men at an all-time high of 76.4 percent (O'Neill, 1995, p. 8).

The 1999 Working Women's salary survey (Working Woman website, April 2000) indicates that women's pay still lags behind men's income, but the gap varies considerably by profession. In advertising, women make 90 percent of what their male colleagues bring home, and in higher education, female professors now earn 98% of their male counterparts' salaries, but in law women still earn 70 cents to each male dollar. Even in relatively new industries, there is a gap -- the computer industry shows a 15% differential between male and female salaries.

In many ways, family quality of life is affected by the income of mothers and fathers. Ferber and O'Farrell's (1991) national commission concluded that the economic well-being of most families is increasingly dependent on two wage earners while the women in those families bear most of the responsibility for children and elders. As a result, they found that working mothers experience considerably more stress than working fathers. As Levin (1998) wrote,

It is simply not possible to devote 100 percent of our time to work and another 100 percent to family. Work, family, or both always suffer. Parents feel that they are not doing everything they should at work, and many of them feel that they are not doing what they want to be doing with, and for their children. They are not as involved as they want to be in their children's

education and in their communities' religious and social institutions -- the very organizations that mediate between work and family by providing educational, spiritual, or community connections. (p. 188)

Glendon summed up the dilemma for working mothers as a daily "robbing Peter to pay Paul." She stated, ". . .everything is being shortchanged. Sometimes it is the marriage, sometimes the children, but at least as often it is the job -- not to mention civic, social, and cultural activities" (p. 14).

A 1994 U.S. Department of Labor survey of 250,000 women reported the most pressing problem for women on the job today is finding the flexibility to balance work and family (Swiss, 1998). In response to these concerns, research on the effects of work on families has become increasingly common in the past two decades. Initially, research focused primarily on the potential negative effects of women's employment on marriage and children. More recent studies have been broadened to encompass the complex interactions between work and family as the many dimensions of jobs, families and individuals are analyzed (Ferber & O'Farrell, 1991, p. 44). Factors which the national commission found important in job satisfaction for working mothers were schedule, job demands, and employer support.

Throughout the last decade, work-family initiatives, policies and programs have continued to grow in response to the changing demographics of the workplace. Passage of the Family and Medical

Leave Act by Congress in 1993 revealed problems throughout working America with methods of handling pregnancy, parenting, adoption and family illness. The U.S. Department of Labor has created a Work-family Clearing House for people looking for corporate success stories. Numerous state and city agencies have created work-family task forces or educational campaigns. And the Conference Board, a business think tank, has made work-family issues the subject of eight years of annual conferences. Countless other non-profit, government and trade associations have focused research and assessment on this topic (Friedman, Rinsky & Johnson, 1996). Slowly, as corporations have begun to survey their employees regarding work-family needs, changes in benefits, telecommuting, even family-friendly incentive trips have emerged to meet the demand (Kehan, 2000). The important work environment issues which were identified were similar to those listed by the Department of Labor survey (Swiss, 1994): flexibility of work schedules, job demands, and employer support.

### **Schedules**

Several studies have reported that long hours are associated with higher levels of self-reported employee strain and conflict (Burke et al., 1980; Staines & Pleck, 1983; Voydanoff & Kelly, 1984). How the time is arranged, however, and the flexibility of the schedule seem to be equally important as the actual amount of hours worked. Staines and Pleck (1983) found that the negative relationships between nonstandard work schedules and the quality of family life were the strongest when employees had the least control over their

schedules. Women in one study reported that hours and days off constantly changed with little advance notice, making it difficult to arrange care for dependents (Sexton, 1982). Nan Stone (1989) stated the quandary succinctly: "If a company's policies make it hard to respond when a child is sick or a daycare arrangement falls apart or a parent conference is scheduled at school, balance will seem and be an impossible goal" (p. 55).

Flexibility in schedule is key to working mothers' balance, as unpredictable events such as a child's illness demand the ability to take unplanned absence (Bui, 1999). At such times, the care by strangers does not suffice: A sick child needs a parent. One way that corporations can build in that flexibility is by using technology. A parent can put a sick child back to bed and use telephone, modem or fax to handle work for that one day (Swiss, 1998). Phased return to work after childbirth can also be handled in this manner. Holtzman and Glass (1999) found that women who could choose to work at home following the birth of a child were more likely to remain satisfied with their employment following their return to work.

Technology has made it possible to work from home in new and different ways in recent years. While this offers flexibility on one hand, when companies allow its use, it also carries a price. Pagers, e-mail, and home fax machines have brought work home into the hours previously reserved for family time. Technology keeps employees connected to other workers virtually around the clock. Some employers expect workers to screen voicemail during vacations and to file reports electronically from home before business hours begin. So,

while technology has the potential to bring flexibility to the working mother, it can also present the question of where to draw the line. (Mackavey, 1998)

Swiss (1998) wrote of the need for corporations to explore more thoroughly the concept of nontraditional schedules. Possibilities such as job-sharing or part-time schedules, four-day workweeks, earlier and later hours which allow parents to stagger their schedules, and other alternatives need to be explored. She cited fear on the part of employers that they would somehow lose control of employees as the greatest obstacle to companies' participation in such options.

Scheduling changes can be as simple as rethinking 7:30 a.m. staff meetings (a nightmare for parents whose children start school at 8:00 a.m.) or closing the doors for an in-service training over lunch rather than requiring all employees to stay after 5:00 p.m. Swiss (1998) suggested that employers involve staff members in problem-solving teams to develop nontraditional schedules which truly work for all involved and cross-training employees to allow them to cover effectively for one another over staggered schedules or when emergencies arise.

The discussion of flexibility in the workplace has occasioned a gradual implementation of creative ways of combining work with family responsibility. The course of change, however, has been fraught with controversy. With the move toward downsizing in the late 1980's, flexibility took on two meanings: some policies focused on assisting employees' balance of home and work life roles, while other policies were aimed at helping companies to reduce labor costs.

A widely-quoted article in the *Harvard Business Review* suggested that some working women are “career-primary,” while others are “family-primary,” and that there are discernible differences between the two. Following the publication of this article, the term “mommy track” was coined by the media to imply that women who flexed their time, worked part-time or didn’t work long hours would never be able to advance in their careers (Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson, 1996). Concluding her discussion of a study of 52 working mothers in the public relations field, Bui suggests that in attempting “to make women equal to men in the workplace, society has chosen to ignore the single most significant difference between them” (1999, p. 26) that being the ability to bear children, and difference in the role of a mother vs. a father. She goes on to state that creative solutions are needed, with many types of family-support, but primarily flexibility.

### **Job Demands**

Various jobs have various demands: Some require a great deal of travel, others require a fast pace and the ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously. Research on the demands of the job and their effects on family life have found that those effects are mitigated by factors such as family cohesiveness, spousal attitude, and coping strategies (Voydanoff, 1987). Moreover, it seems that the number of roles which an individual is filling -- as homemaker, breadwinner, worker, and caregiver -- may cause more problems than the actual work itself. Indicators of the quality and quantity of those roles have



been found to be associated with various mental and physical problems for women (Repetti et al., 1989).

Jennifer Warren and Phyllis Johnson (1995) studied 116 mothers who worked outside the home to investigate the relationship between multiple components of job demands and work-family role strain. Work-related resources available to working mothers were defined in this study as a combination of three components: organizational culture (an overarching philosophy of support for families), supervisor support and family oriented benefits (employer-sponsored daycare, flextime, etc.). They found that the more supportive the organizational culture of the work organization, the less conflict occurred between work and family roles. They also found that the practices of the supervisor in terms of creating the day-to-day working environment and setting expectations for subordinates was crucial in diminishing role strain for working mothers. Women who took advantage of family-oriented benefits also felt considerably less role conflict.

*Hurry sickness* can result as the rushing around to day-care centers, workplace, after-school programs and evening meetings place stress and fatigue on parents who search in vain for time to engage in the renewal of leisure time (Swiss, 1998). Levin (1998) stated that research has shown that working mothers devote more than ninety hours each week to a combination of child care, elder care, home chores, and paid labor. Most people, he says, are only awake about 100 hours each week, so that leaves ten hours or less for leisure time. He cites a study by the American Medical Association which says that

doctors are treating more stress-related illnesses such as headache, back pain, high blood pressure, and ulcers, than ever before. He also quotes statistics from a study, the New England Survey on Work/Life Stress, which asked working people how much stress they feel. Two-thirds of the women and one-half of the men surveyed reported feeling severe stress because of the need to juggle all of their responsibilities.

It appears that stress is greatest for working mothers when the demands are high at both work and home (Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner, & Was, 1991). Since working mothers typically feel that they have more control over their home environment than their work environment, they tend to make most attempts to alter conditions at home. Depending on their level of success in influencing either work or home environments, working mothers may feel more or less control over their lives, and more or less stress accordingly (Ross & Mirowsky, 1992). Overall, the combined level of demands between work and home were found to be stressful to working mothers to the extent to which they could not control those demands (Tingey, Kiger & Riley, 1996).

### **Employer Support**

Attitudes of co-workers and supervisors may play a part in the interplay between work and family life. Employer support may be interpreted as a part of workplace culture, the set of norms, values and informal mechanisms that shape day-to-day operations in an organization. Supportive cultures may be described as “family friendly” In such cultures, employees may feel free to discuss a family

problem with a co-worker and to use the phone in their workplace to contact children after school. Lack of support would be illustrated by “behavior making it clear that personal problems are to be handled away from work or prohibiting the use of leave time for family members” (Ferber & O’Farrell, p.53).

A series of studies have found both the professed (via mission statements) and the informal philosophy of a business organization to have a great deal of impact on the ability of employees to balance work and family demands. Employees who believe their workplace to be aware and understanding of their family responsibilities and work-family difficulties may be more likely to perceive their workplace as a source of assistance rather than a source of confounding demands (McCroskey, 1982; Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990; Hansen, 1991). Attitudes of co-workers are key in the informal communication of business culture. Supervisors, in particular, are primarily responsible for defining what the working experience of their employees will be, so supervisor sensitivity to employees’ family responsibilities and flexibility when family needs arise are crucial (Hughes & Galinsky, 1988). Greenberger et al. (1989) found that employed married mothers of preschoolers reported lower levels of role strain if they perceived their immediate supervisors as flexible regarding family responsibilities. Even willingness on the part of supervisors to discuss family-related problems and to consider flexibility in the case of family emergencies results in working mothers feeling less work-family conflict overall (Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990).

Swiss surveyed 325 working women at the mid-management level and found that 73 percent agreed with the statement, "Once a woman has a child, she is automatically perceived to be less committed to her career" (1998, p. 89). These women worked in corporations which proclaim their support for working mothers, yet there are subtle and underlying realities which do not support these workers. A *maternal wall* in such organizations is manifested in assignments which are taken away as soon as pregnancy becomes visible, mentors who distance themselves from women who choose to become mothers, and outright hostility to requests for parental leave which is now mandated by federal law. Job descriptions can change during maternity leave, with the working mother returning to find her major responsibilities decimated in her absence (Swiss, 1998).

One way that employer attitude is indicated is in the leave and benefits policies of an organization. Commonly, these are called *fringe* benefits, implying that they are a gift and can be taken away at the company's discretion. Mackavey & Levin (1998) stated that "in a time in which 54 percent of children under age one have a mother in the workforce and 74 percent of all married couples have both spouses working, making flexible work options available as a *fringe* benefit sorely tests our belief that raising children is an important aspect of our society" (p. 4). They go on to assert that the tension between family life and workplace responsibilities has been perceived as the employee's problem, where a more productive approach requires a societal commitment to the shared purposes of raising good citizens and retaining good workers. Parks Daloz (1998) stated that an

atmosphere of respect for society's shared work of raising the next generation is essential to developing children's trust in the wider world. One way a corporation shows that respect, he said, is to implement generous parental leave policies and to reward employees who give time to community youth activities and volunteer in their child's classroom regularly.

In the past two decades, employers in the private sector have increasingly offered family-friendly benefits, such as on-site or subsidized child care or the opportunity to arrange compressed work weeks or flextime. The extent to which employees access these benefits, according to several studies, is affected by the climate of the workplace and the support of immediate supervisors (Axel, 1985; Galinsky & Stein, 1990; McNeely & Fogarty, 1988). There is little research on the impact of using employer-sponsored benefits on employee work-family stress. Apparently such research is confounded by methodological problems such as variations in the dependent measures and their definitions and differences resulting from studying the effects of availability rather than the actual use of benefits (Christensen & Staines, 1990).

For many working mothers, an either/or proposition has been placed before them either officially or by unspoken attitudes of their superiors: Strive to be a model employee working the sixty-hour week or concentrate on parenting and endure the insecurity of potential economic instability. According to Swiss (1998), the effect on workers is steady and cumulative as they make this uneasy choice on a daily basis: loyalty on the job is eroded and a flood of guilt and worry

follow the individual from home to work and back again. Family-friendly policies are only as good as the managers who implement them on a daily basis. Research has shown that employees who are treated fairly and with humanity will give back to their enlightened organization with increased quality of work and loyalty to work-team members (Swiss, 1998). Quoted in *Black Enterprise*, Iris Goldfein, co-chair of Diversity and Work/Life Champions Group for Pricewaterhouse-Coopers in Chicago, claims that a truly family-friendly company can show at least three things: “family-related benefits and programs clearly described in the company handbook, employees actually using them and a culture that supports them” (Clarke, 1999, p. 72).

Coontz (1997) proposed that an imbalance exists in society between market or paid activities and nonmarket or unpaid activities (including family responsibilities and community activities). The key to correcting the imbalance, she suggested, is to reorganize work to make it more compatible with family life and to reorganize family life to “make sure that all members share in the work needed to sustain it” (p. 52).

Several authors (Stein, 1998; Swiss, 1998; Mackavey, 1998) felt that the separate spheres of home and work need to be merged in order for the working mother to have *one life*. The struggle for balance may be exacerbated by the struggle to keep the two lives separate. Both family and work would need to adjust to make people feel whole again. Such adjustment, they insist, requires social change and leadership in order to manage those deep cultural shifts in how we

think and interact. This approach contradicts the advice of some authors that working women keep the spheres of work and home separate (Clarke, 1999).

There are implications for corporations who would like to retain valuable working mothers as employees. Warren and Johnson (1995) call for employers to implement a comprehensive approach which combines family life education through training workshops for managers, fostering and rewarding supervisor flexibility in enacting formal and informal work-family policies, conducting needs assessments, making employees feel comfortable about using family-friendly benefits, providing education to working parents regarding the coping resources available to them, and formalizing a mission statement which includes a work-family support statement.

### **Women in Student Affairs**

Darla Twale (1995) studied the participation of women in the profession of student affairs, particularly those who belong to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, considered the pre-eminent professional organization in the field. Her study of six years of NASPA membership concluded that a much larger concentration of males exists at the senior levels of student affairs administration, while women are clustered most heavily in entry-level or middle-management positions. Her research revealed that women held 23 percent of all vice president positions and 35 percent of all Dean of Students positions in 1995.

The disparity in upper-level administration is found throughout academe, as reported by Warner and DeFleur (1993). In 1987, they tell us, approximately 22 percent of administrators at state and land-grant institutions were women, yet only 3 percent were presidents and 15 percent were chief academic officers or deans. Women made significant gains in the field during the late 1980's and early 1990's. At the time of their publication, Warner and DeFleur estimated that 11 percent of presidents were women at the 3,000 accredited higher education institutions. Their analysis of the literature in higher education administration concluded that women were more likely to enter a career path in the nonacademic areas of student affairs or other university services, and these career paths tended to be either dead end or to be ladders with low ceilings.

Writing for the *NASPA Journal* in 1990, Hamrick and Carlisle noted a similar phenomenon. Their article suggested the women were attracted in much larger proportions to the profession of student affairs, but they seemed not to persist in the field beyond entry-level positions. They hypothesized that women receive fewer opportunities for positions which would hone their skills for mid-to-upper-level management, and that the culture in institutions of higher education tends not to support the advancement of women.

Barriers to the advancement of women in higher education administration were enumerated by Deborah LeBlanc (1993). The stumbling blocks she identified were:



1. **Self-esteem.** Many women feel that they are not capable of the high level tasks of administration.
2. **Need for self-improvement.** Women need to set and pursue clear goals.
3. **Limited external interactions.** Women lack exposure to and interaction with varied social groups and economic levels.
4. **Motherhood/family/academe.** Some women are faced with the need to balance competing demands of an administrative career and motherhood.
5. **Issues of loneliness.** When the administrative pyramid narrows, women find it difficult to develop meaningful friendships.
6. **Limited political/business encounters.** Due to lack of experience, women think of themselves as incapable of joining the political fray.
7. **Academics vs. administration.** Women find that there is a different world when you do not work in the classroom.
8. **Need for critical career path.** Women may not actively plan their advancement.
9. **Need for mentoring.** Women may not have a sounding board and political guide in the administration.
10. **Need for internal/external support systems.** Women lack a network to support them on campus and off campus.
11. **Ability to see the big picture within the organization.** Women may be focused on localized matters and lack exposure to the broader concerns of the institution.

Of greatest interest to this study is barrier number four: motherhood/ family/academe. LeBlanc (1993) claimed that due to the difficulties with balancing dual roles as mothers and workers, many working women in higher education were foregoing motherhood altogether and selecting full-time careers, while others were choosing full-time motherhood and no career. Administrators, she said, "may find themselves working 50-60 hours per week, thereby leaving only a limited amount of time for personal and social activities" (p. 46). Strategies to overcome this barrier are difficult to imagine, since women are competing with men whose wives typically handle housekeeping and child care responsibilities, may not work outside the home and devote a considerable amount of time to supporting their spouses' careers (Ausejo, 1993). In contrast, LeBlanc (1993) claims that women administrators, if they are married at all, tend to have a spouse who is also working full-time. In order to overcome this barrier to their advancement, LeBlanc wrote, women need policies and laws which take into account their childbearing capability so that they have freedom of choice which equals their male counterparts.

### **Mothers in Student Affairs: Balancing Work and Family**

It is clear from the literature on this topic that women are still a minority at higher levels in higher education administration, and thus their concerns are less likely to be reflected in the culture of such institutions. Considering the multiple roles filled by women who work on campus, their concerns should be important to the institution. As Jones (1993) described it, "in addition to having

administrators, campuses are filled with spouses, parents, elderly caregivers, grandparents, friends, and community volunteers” (p. 55). As compared to those of men, women’s roles outside the institution can be more difficult to set aside. The roles of wife and mother usually entail far more household time than the roles of husband and father. As described by Jones, attitudes toward fathers’ roles may have changed in recent decades, but behaviors have not changed on the average. Professional women in egalitarian marriages (shared household and child care responsibilities) were found to be more likely to return to work after the birth of a child, but they still spent more time alone with their child than did the child’s father.

Yogev (1982) studied the amount of time 164 faculty women reported that they spent on their professions, their children and their housework. While this study focused on faculty rather than student affairs administrators, it is significant to note that women who had children reported a total work week on the average of 107 hours, compared to women without children who worked an average of 78 hours per week.

According to research, both academic and student affairs administrators are negatively affected in a number of ways by the stress of fulfilling many roles. Evans (1986) stated that “women employed in the same position perceive their lives differently depending upon the relational roles they play” (p. 19), and suggested that marital status and parental status were key variables influencing role stress for women administrators. In a study of women academic administrators, Murphy et al. (1988) concluded that role conflict and

ambiguity were significantly and negatively correlated with organizational commitment for women academic administrators. Ward (1995) studied a sample of student affairs professionals and found that role conflict and ambiguity were predictors of job dissatisfaction and propensity to leave the profession of student affairs. Although Ward's study did not examine gender difference, previous studies had suggested that women may be particularly affected by role conflict and role strain (Greenglass & Burke, 1988). On the basis of their research with 200 women administrators, Blackhurst, Brandt and Kalinowski (1998a, 1998b) found that high levels of role conflict in the work setting were associated with lower levels of commitment to the institution and lower life satisfaction overall.

Jones (1993) sums up the dilemma for working mothers in student life as follows:

Administrators have multiple sources telling them how to carry out their individual roles. If all of these sources are sending the same signals about how an individual should act, the individual should succeed. However, if these signals are different (e.g., supervisor wants female to work overtime, husband wants wife to work but be home when he is, mother says wife should stay home with child like she did), role conflict results. . . How college administrators perceive the role expectations placed on them by a supervisor, a spouse, a

parent, or a child impacts on the amount of conflict that occurs and the amount of strain that results. (p. 58)

Jones (1993) enumerated several tactics to reduce personal stress related to role conflict. One strategy she suggested was changing structures to alter the work environment by delegating more consistently and building in or negotiating flexibility. She also suggested ways in which various departments on campus might provide some form of assistance to faculty and staff fulfilling multiple roles. These surprisingly simple and common-sense services (ranging from childcare referrals to bulk-purchasing to after-school transportation to family centers) are rarely seen on college campuses. Jones claims that the women administrators' salaries are not at parity with men's, and that the entire benefits structure at universities is set up "from a male perspective." She calls for day care benefits to be provided as readily as health care in order for balance to be achieved between males and females in professional roles. She highlighted a need for more research on the multiple roles which women juggle in academia, and the individual reactions to the resultant stress.

Gelwick (1984) interviewed six women with various lifestyles, including two female student affairs professionals with children. These two women identified remarkably similar support structures, though one was an African-American woman who directed a student services department in Southern California, and the other, a Caucasian, chaired a counseling psychology program in Colorado.

Factors cited by both women as important to maintaining balance were (1) flexible spouses who were willing to assume non-traditional roles as fathers, and (2) personal ability to set boundaries and limits for students, colleagues, spouses and children. Neither woman spoke of any expectations of accommodation by supervisors or the general work environment. They both experienced accommodation on the family or personal side of the work vs. family equation.

Marshall and Jones (1990) surveyed a random sample of 500 members in the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors. This organization is made up of a wide variety of women at work in academe, from graduate students, to entry level to senior administrators. While the quantitative results of this study indicated that “women can begin their families when they wish to do so, without permanently falling behind other women administrators” (p. 536), the qualitative results showed that many women administrators with children appear to “pay a high personal price in maintaining their careers” (p. 536). The researchers concluded that research on women in business careers may not always generalize to other fields, particularly higher education. They recommended further research, specifically within the field, comparing the experiences of individual women.

Confirming the findings of a study conducted by Bender (1980) fifteen years earlier, Steward et al. (1995) studied women administrators in both academic and student services assignments and found that women were less satisfied than men with their jobs in higher education. They suggested that widespread sex discrimination

and women's own interpersonal style in the work environment may create this difference between women and their male counterparts.

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* surveyed institutions of higher education in 1995 (Wilson), and praised certain campuses as leaders in "family friendly" policies. These campuses provided flexible work hours including part-time schedules, on-campus child-care centers and special tenure policies for faculty. The article reports that many colleges have not developed family-related programs and policies for a variety of reasons ranging from budgetary constraints to philosophical unwillingness to think of themselves as employers. For whatever reason the article concluded, "higher education is clearly behind the corporate world in adopting family-friendly policies."

The College and University Personnel Association (CUPA) and the Families and Work Institute collaborated on a study released in 1996, which assessed levels of support for family-friendly programs in institutions of higher education throughout the United States, and summarized specific best practices of campuses which are leaders in this area. While the study did not focus specifically on the profession of student affairs within higher education, the findings are significant with regard to the culture of academe in general.

The survey designated 94 "Leadership Campuses" (from among the 375 respondents) who scored in the top 25 percent on the *Index of Campus Work-Family Initiatives*. The index evaluated both cultural conditions on campus and formal policies which were in place. The leadership campuses have, on average, 30 programs or policies designed to assist employees in balancing their family life with work

responsibilities. They are also more likely to have instituted training for managers and department chairs to increase their sensitivity to the needs of employees with families (Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson, 1996). Findings of this survey supported findings in the corporate world that culture is key to employees' balance of competing roles. The environmental issues of flexibility of work schedules, job demands, and employer support were major themes throughout the study.

Most of the campuses responding to the survey practiced some flexibility with regard to schedules. Among the leadership campuses, 97 percent have flextime arrangements available to employees. Four out of five respondents offered compressed work weeks and two-thirds allowed work-at-home or telecommuting on a regular basis (Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson, 1996, p. 39). Often, however, such options are only available to faculty and not to staff or student affairs administrators. Leadership campuses were much more likely to offer the same policies and programs to staff as well as faculty (p. 49).

Comfort level with using specific programs or policies is another matter. Respondents to the survey indicated that even when such options are available, employees who accept the opportunity to work part-time, to work-at-home or telecommute, or to take extended leave to care for a sick family member will be likely to pay a price in career penalties. By taking advantage of flexibility or leaves, it is felt the employee is perceived to not be sufficiently committed to the institution and therefore, less worthy of promotion. In cases where the policy is applicable to faculty and staff, respondents felt that staff



suffer greater career repercussions than faculty (Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson, 1996, p. 61).

The survey found that campuses which are committed to work-family initiatives are careful to assess and evaluate the demands they make on employees and the needs of their employees. Fifty-nine percent of the leadership campuses had taken formal steps to investigate the work-family needs on campus, while only 22 percent of other responding campuses had done so (Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson, 1996, p. 37). Consistently, best practices recommendations include assessment of work climate and employee needs on a regular basis.

The survey of college campuses found two predictors of high scores on the *Index of Campus Work-Family Initiatives*: Human resource managers familiar with the family demographics of employees and higher level administrators and campus presidents who publicly supported work-family initiatives. Such support tends to have a trickle-down effect in the organization, and fully 84 percent of the 94 leadership campuses indicated that supervisors and managers are supportive of work-family programs (Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson, 1996, p. 25). Seventy-two percent of the leadership campuses reported a sense of support in agreeing with the statement: "Organization believes employees should bring the whole person to work."

Designated staff on many leadership campuses monitored and coordinated campus efforts to support family-friendly policies, and some had a separate work-family office. According to Friedman, Rimsky & Johnson (1996) most of the leadership campuses had

implemented or were planning to implement supervisor training to help them become more sensitive to work-family issues and to be explicit about the institution's commitment to those issues in policy statements. Supervisors are key to employee comfort level with creative solutions such as flextime and telecommuting, but their attitudes were cited repeatedly as the major stumbling block to implementation of these policies. Since manager training was generally voluntary on college campuses, the managers who most need to learn about work-family initiatives were considered the least likely to attend such training.

June Nobbe and Susan Manning (1997) interviewed ten women who worked in student affairs to determine to what extent these women experienced limitations based on their parenting responsibilities, what attitudes and behaviors were exhibited by supervisors or subordinates which support or undermine working mothers, and how working mothers successfully manage career and family. Their research was designed to be exploratory and to serve as a basis for further study. They found that these working mothers in student affairs had to practice precise, thoughtful planning in balancing work and family issues (p. 104). The women interviewed reported that they felt "watched," as if their work was under greater scrutiny once they became mothers. The majority of the women interviewed reported sacrificing aspects of their career goals or graduate study pursuits when they added children to their lives. The researchers also found that there were few role models available in the field of student affairs for these women (p. 105). The study

participants indicated a wide disparity between individuals with regard to supportive behavior. Behaviors described as supportive included “flexibility with meetings, assignments and policy development” (p. 105), child-care services on campus, “flexibility in holding phone conferences from home and willingness to reshuffle evening and weekend commitments among all staff”(pp. 105-106). Emphasizing the need for further research on the work-related stress these mothers feel, Nobbe and Manning stated: “Despite their skills in managing family and work, the women with young children struggled with and felt a need to hide exhaustion, confusion, and failures” (p. 107). In the work environment, the majority of the women interviewed felt more support from supervisors than from subordinates. This may be due, they hypothesized, to equity concerns and the perception that women with children were receiving “special treatment” (p. 109). Citing the lack of literature available for women in student affairs who already have children or who are planning to raise a family, Nobbe and Manning suggested more research to articulate strategies for managing the issues raised in their study.

### **Conclusion**

Clearly there is a need for more study of the interplay between motherhood and career in the lives of women student affairs professionals. It is likely that some of the same environmental factors found by Ferber and O’Farrell’s commission (1991) will be important to the participants in this research. Ferber and O’Farrell identified flexibility of work schedules, job demands and employer

support as key factors in family-work balance. In the student affairs profession, when work times are often irregular and determined by the capriciousness of college students' free time, schedules are likely to be an important factor for working mothers. Student affairs workers typically fulfill many roles in the workplace on any given day: mentor, surrogate parent, disciplinarian, counselor, and role model to students; and supervisor, subordinate and colleague to co-workers. The extent to which role stress may affect working mothers in this field has not been thoroughly studied. Steward and associates (1995) highlighted the need for research which simultaneously addresses work environment and life away from work for female administrators in higher education. Blackhurst, Brandt and Kalinowski (1998b) urged researchers to further explore the relationship between work and nonwork life for women in student affairs.

Employers may not support working mothers in student affairs, possibly contributing to their stress. One mother in student affairs work reported that her boss told her "If you can do your job in eight hours, you're not doing enough" (Nobbe & Manning, p. 110). When supervisors or subordinates perpetuate a climate which conveys expectations of late hours and long weeks, questioning the loyalty or commitment of colleagues who lead more balanced lives, working mothers can be forced out of the profession. Leaders who wish to retain these talented professionals in their administrations need guidelines for equitable working arrangements and policies.

Further research can uncover potential positive factors in this career which enhance a woman's ability to be both an outstanding

professional and a good mother to her children. Stone (1989) suggested that perhaps women and men “can be better managers because they have children” (p. 56). She cited the many lessons of parenting: the importance of consistency, the limits of authority, tempering one’s own wants for the common good, and the benefits of a long term view. These are positive attributes for managers in any profession. They may be more important skills for the student affairs administrator who serves as a role model to many young women and men. The mothers in Nobbe and Manning’s study (1997) felt they were in unique positions to positively influence younger women and their perceptions of work and family issues. Stone concluded: “It is time to rethink the logic that equates long hours with superior performance and workaholism with commitment. In the past dozen years, we have heard a great deal about quality time with children. . . . Maybe now we should apply the concept at work and think less about how many hours we spend in our offices and more about what we do with those hours” (1989, p. 56). Mothers who are also student affairs professionals can be valuable role models for a balanced life in an environment where too few such models exist.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**Purpose of the Study**

Based on a review of the literature, which strongly suggests that many factors in the work environment impact working mothers in various ways, the purpose of this study was to isolate and analyze the environmental factors which detract from and those which enhance the success of women with children who are working in student affairs.

The following research questions were of primary importance to the purpose of this project:

1. What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?
2. What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?
3. What do working mothers in student affairs feel are the most important factors in managing work and family for a woman in student affairs?

Research was designed to be helpful to chief student affairs officers seeking to construct an environment which promotes the successful job performance of working mothers, and to those who

would like to recruit and retain female employees who have or are planning to have a family. The study also was intended to provide environmental components for women to assess in potential employment situations as they enter the profession or move up to higher levels of student affairs administration.

### **The Delphi Method**

As the United States approached the end of World War II, a study was conducted to identify priority research activities which would prevent the Air Force and Naval Air Corps from falling behind the military capabilities of other nations. Futures research was begun with the intent of providing technological forecasting as a tool for planning. The Delphi method was first used in this arena for futures research, and later for strategic planning. By the mid-1960's, such forecasting methods were being applied to the changing social environment as well technical and military applications (Enzer, 1983).

Social change is complex and messy, with a single present reality emerging from circumstances which are often filled with conflict and disagreement about what is changing and how organizations should manage or react to the change. Colleges and universities in America regularly engage in long-range strategic planning, and are called upon to utilize strategies promoting agreement among diverse and competing factions (Wagschall, 1983). Experts in strategic planning in the higher education environment emphasize the need to consider and react to alternative futures.

Strategic planning uses the present as its foundation for projecting alternative futures. Analysis of problems and situations in the present is always difficult because of the complexity of problems and the difficult task of isolating cause and effect. Important decisions must be made, at the organizational level and at the level of everyday life, in situations which are so complex that hard data or well-validated theories cannot be the basis of decisions. Dalkey (1972) advances the following examples of such decisions:

The situation is no different for corporate decisions, for local government, or for individuals. Whether to marry (or divorce) a given person, which career to enter, whether to turn on or drop out -- these are among the significant choices for which there is no simple decision formula. Surrounding such decisions there is a cloud of uncertainty, attended by mysterious things called 'intangibles,' which usually make it impossible to arrive at a firm choice. This means that ultimately, the decision must rest on the judgment of some individual or group (p. 3).

This research project focused on two particular and complex characteristics of the higher education co-curricular, namely the dominance of women in the field of student affairs, and the impact of their work environment on job performance for women who have children. Several research methodologies were reviewed in order to



identify a methodology which could both analyze the complex work environment in student affairs, and generate a variety of solutions for existing problems. Uhl (1983) and Dalkey (1972) noted that the Delphi technique has tremendous potential to determine solutions for existing problems and to analyze needs of target populations, but few published studies in higher education have used the procedure in this way. While survey methodology, trend analysis and other approaches may have addressed some purposes of this study, the Delphi method was selected due to its flexible approach to complex problem-solving, its ability to bring together diverse opinions and perspectives of individuals in a group, and its consensus-building process.

### **Development of the Delphi Method**

The Delphi technique is a multi-use group process which uses written responses rather than bringing individuals together face-to-face (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustavson, 1975). A research group headed by Normal Dalkey of the Rand Corporation and Olaf Helmer of the Institute for the Future first used the Delphi method in 1953 for obtaining expert consensus focusing on U.S. military capabilities. This initial study, conducted in secrecy for national security reasons, did not come to the attention of those outside the defense industry until the mid-1960's (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). While it was originally used to make technological predictions, the procedure became recognized during the 1970's for its applicability to social research (Dalkey, 1972; Uhl, 1983).

As the method gained popularity, researchers began to apply the process not only in the science and technology fields, but also in business, government, industry, medicine and regional planning. By the mid-1960's, the technique was initially being used in education as well. Because of the flexibility of the process, it has continued to receive broad application. In fact, Linstone and Turoff (1975) assert that there are "few areas of human endeavor which are not candidates for application of the Delphi" (p. 4).

The name of the procedure, relating to the most famous of Apollo's oracles, the Delphic Oracle, derives from its original use as a forecasting tool for technological developments. Like the oracle, research conducted in this manner was used to look into the future (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustavson, 1975). By the mid-1970's, the method had evolved into three types of Delphis: numeric, policy and historic (Strauss & Zeigler, 1975). The numeric Delphi is one of the earliest forms of the research, with the goal specifying a single or minimum range of numeric estimates or forecasts on a particular problem. When a range of answers or alternative solutions to current or future problems is sought, a policy Delphi is used. A variation of the policy Delphi was used in this research project. Historic Delphis focus on the range or issues which produced a particular decision or identify a range of possible alternatives which could have been considered in a particular decision made in the past. The process, which involves a series of questionnaires, has been effectively used to obtain predictions, identify needs or problems, set goals and priorities, clarify differences and identify problem solutions.

The Delphi Method is intended to gain the advantages of group decision-making while overcoming the disadvantages. Applying the old adage that “two heads are better than one “ (or more accurately, several heads are better than one), the Delphi pulls together the opinions of a group of knowledgeable individuals (Dalkey, 1972). There are three characteristics of the Delphi which distinguish it from in-person interactions: 1) anonymity of group members, 2) iteration with controlled feedback, and 3) statistical group response (Dalkey, 1972; Martino, 1983).

Delphi is essentially a series of questionnaires. It is a means for aggregating the opinions of a number of individuals in order to improve the quality of decision making. The panelists are not known to one another, and their responses are aggregated by a moderator who takes care to prevent the identification of any particular response with a specific panelist. Panelists may change their minds at any time without public admission. While the written word allows for some emotional content, the Delphi process does tend to minimize the feelings and information normally communicated in mannerisms such as a tone of voice, a hand gesture or a look of an eye. The opinions of panelists are considered on their own merits without being influenced by the degree of personal persuasive power an individual panelist may hold.

The series of questionnaires focuses the group responses with the goal of achieving consensus. The first questionnaire asks individuals to respond to a broad question concerning problems, objectives, solutions or forecasts. Each subsequent questionnaire is

built upon responses to the preceding questionnaire. The process is facilitated by the researcher, who is known as the moderator in this process, and who feeds back relevant information to the panelists after each round of the study. Each participant is informed of the group's collective opinion and the arguments for and against every point of view. The controlled feedback keeps the group focused on original goals and does not allow the group to sidetrack onto self-chosen goals. The process stops when consensus has been approached among the participants or when sufficient information exchange has been obtained (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

Typically, the facilitator provides panelists with statistical information which includes the opinions of the entire group and measures of agreement and/or value attributed to the opinions. Participants then use this information in completing the next round of questionnaires.

### **Characteristics and Applications of the Delphi Method**

Though the specific form of a Delphi is usually determined by the nature of the problem being investigated and constrained by the resources available (Delbecq, et al., 1975), the typical conventional Delphi process would proceed as follows (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Uhl, 1983):

1. Participants in the panel are asked to respond to a general question and to list their opinions.

2. The researcher compiles the range of responses and submits them to the panel. Participants are asked to evaluate the total list of opinions using specific criteria.
3. The researcher compiles responses and each participant receives a list of opinions and summary of evaluations of those responses. If participants are in the minority, they are asked to re-evaluate their opinions and either revise them or state their argument for remaining in the minority.
4. The researcher again prepares the compiled responses and participants receive a list with updated opinions, minority opinions and another chance to revise their responses.

Uhl (1983) advised that this methodology may be appropriate for studies when any or all of the following conditions exist:

1. the resolution of a problem can be facilitated by the collective judgments of one or more groups;
2. those groups providing judgments are unlikely to communicate adequately without an intervening process;
3. the solution is more likely to be accepted if more people are involved in its development than would be possible in a face-to-face meeting;
4. frequent group meetings are not practical because of time, distance, and so forth; and
5. one or more groups of participants are more dominant than another (p. 84).

Delbecq, Van de Ven and Gustafson (1975) state that the Delphi is appropriately used to achieve a number of objectives:

1. to determine or develop a range of possible program alternatives;
2. to explore or expose underlying assumptions or information leading to different judgments;
3. to seek out information which may generate a consensus on the part of the respondent group;
4. to correlate informed judgments on a topic spanning a wide range of disciplines; and
5. to educate the respondent group as to the diverse and interrelated aspects of the topic (pp. 10-11).

Higher education has used the Delphi to generate decisions in the areas of cost effectiveness, cost benefit analysis, educational goals and objectives, curriculum development, values and other evaluation elements, program development and long range planning (Hartman, 1981; Mitchell, 1994; Travis, 1976; Uhl, 1983).

The range of applicability of the Delphi method can be seen in the following examples of its use in higher education research. Vela (1989) used the method to identify the responsibilities and competencies of California community college counselors for the 1990's. Malley, Gallagher & Brown (1992) asked university counselors throughout the nation to identify the types and frequency of ethical problems with which they had experience and those which had proven most difficult for them to resolve. Mitchell used the method in 1994

to facilitate the identification of strategies campuses might use to create learning environments which are free from sexual harassment.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Delphi Method**

The Delphi method has been both lauded and criticized throughout its five decades of use. Supporters and practitioners of the method have praised its use for forecasting (Helmer, 1975), educational planning (Hartman, 1981) and other forms of problem solving (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Yet even Helmer (1975) admits that “Delphi still lacks a completely sound theoretical basis” (p. xix) and critics, such as Sackman (1975), condemn Delphi as “basically an unreliable and scientifically unvalidated technique in principle and probably in practice” (p. 3).

Since the method involves facilitation by a researcher and lacks the controls of scientific experimental methodologies, some feel that it is not credible. As one of the most vocal critics of Delphi, Sackman (1975) compared Delphi to the standards advanced by the American Psychological Association, and found it lacking. Others argued that the APA criteria are not appropriate for this methodology (Dodge & Clark, 1977). The difficulty arises from the forecasting nature of the Delphi’s mission in some studies. One cannot test the truth of the outcomes until the future actually comes to be. The Delphi identifies many alternative futures and assesses the likelihood of their occurrence.

This study applied the Delphi method to the here-and-now, however, using the process as a tool to identify current environmental

factors and tease out complex issues in the interaction of motherhood and profession. In this application, the Delphi was used to determine reality for the women who participated. Scheele (1975) defined reality as “a name we give our collections of tacit assumptions about what is” (p. 37) and he went on to propose that the group involved in the Delphi process is subtly arriving at agreements which “create intentionally a reality that will prompt the appropriate kinds of active interventions” (p. 37). Scheele advised researchers to attend to the ways in which the Delphi process provides rich context-specific data which is appropriate to a post-industrial society. His support of the methodology revolved around its ability to be sensitive to the social construct of reality.

Those more immersed in an industrial scientific paradigm have sought validation for Delphi. Dalkey, focusing on testing the method’s ability to predict the future with confidence, conducted two experiments to test the validity of the technique (Dalkey, 1972; Loye, 1978). In the first, he assembled eight groups of about twenty persons each and gave them short-range prediction questions. He discovered that “where answers can be checked against reality, it is found that the median response tends to move in the direction of the true answer” (Loye, p. 47). The control group, acting as individuals in this study, made accurate predictions in 50% of the cases, where the Delphi groups were correct 80% of the time.

Dalkey’s second experiment involved group scores on intelligence quotient exams. He found that a group of engineers with IQs in a range of 100 to 120 functioned in a Delphi survey with a



composite score of 150 IQ, or 30 points higher (Loye, p. 47). Given the emphasis on IQ testing during the 1960's and 1970's, this was considered impressive evidence to support group decision-making and the use of the Delphi technique.

Although critics have remained skeptical, there has been little further research on the validity of the Delphi method. It is difficult to verify the accuracy of predictions made by the process until many years have passed and the future is upon us (Helmer, 1983). The method also generally uses the opinions of expert panelists, so in order to validate the method, the experts would have to be used as scientific subjects. Most experts are busy with other endeavors and are unlikely to subject themselves in this manner (Helmer, 1983).

Despite the debate over scientific validity, the following advantages to this method, relevant to the current study, have been identified:

1. Delphi brings together individuals to take advantage of their collaborative thinking processes while also mitigating the disadvantages of group decision-making. The information available to the group as they consider the question before the Delphi panel is greater than any one panelist possesses. Furthermore the process is not hampered by dominance of an individual or by persuasive powers in its consideration of all options and opinions presented (Delbecq et al., 1975; Ezell & Rogers, 1978; Martino, 1983).

2. Delphi offers each participant the opportunity for full input because the method creates equality of participants (Delbecq et al., 1975; Ezell & Rogers, 1978; Hartman, 1981).
3. Anonymity in the Delphi process allows participants to overcome any psychological barriers to their communication, such as reluctance to state opinions, hesitation to voice unpopular views, embarrassment when modifying previous opinions, or reluctance to engage in disagreement with other participants (Ezell & Rogers, 1978; Martino, 1983).
4. The method is flexible in time schedule, allowing participants to respond to the questionnaires at their own convenience and increasing the likelihood that they will participate in the project over time rather than attend a meeting at a specific place and time (Delbecq et al., 1975).
5. Participants who are scattered geographically can engage in a group process without expensive travel to one location (Delbecq, et al., 1975; Sackman, 1975; Uhl, 1983).
6. Delphi studies are conducted in writing (in this case electronically transmitted) and thus documentation of both consensus and disagreement is maintained (Strauss & Zeigler, 1975).

7. The method can facilitate a group opinion when the diversity of individual views might previously have obscured common ground (Strauss & Zeigler, 1975).
8. This methodology is an educational tool in that it provides the opportunity for all participants to reflect upon the opinions of the others. This develops individual opinion and understanding and also serves to educate participants with regard to group process (Judd, 1972).
9. Participants have a sense of accomplishment and closure (Delbecq, et al., 1975).
10. Despite its simple format, the Delphi study produces high quality ideas for the development of alternative courses of action or solutions to problems (Dalkey, 1972; Malley, Gallagher, & Brown, 1992).
11. The Delphi method is helpful in constructing new realities and defining shared concepts of the present and the future (Scheele, 1975).
12. The methodology is versatile and can be adapted to fit the purpose of the study (Delbecq, et al., 1975).
13. Delphi provides feedback to the researcher and to panelists throughout the study, allowing all to make modifications as needed in their analysis, questions and opinions (Delbecq, et al., 1975).
14. Face-to-face communication includes much content which is not about the subject at hand, but is about the individual and group interests. Delphi focuses the

communication, effectively minimizing the “noise” which interferes with productive collaboration (Dalkey, 1972).

There are also limitations to the Delphi method, including the following:

1. The moderator can overspecify the structure of the Delphi and thus constrain participants' input by not allowing a full range of perspectives related to the problem (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).
2. Delphis are slower than some other methods of data collection and thus the study can take a long time to conduct (Strauss & Zeigler, 1975).
3. The moderator may not be skilled at summarizing and presenting the group response and ensuring common interpretations of the evaluation scales utilized to present results of questionnaires (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).
4. The method eliminates the effects of emotional gestures and tonal nuances in verbal communication, which are generally viewed as important aspects of communication. The loss of these clues can lead to misinterpretation of meaning among participants (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).
5. The capabilities and expertise of participants is difficult to ascertain (Bunning, 1979; Judd, 1972; Uhl, 1983).
6. A Delphi study generally asks for explanation only for dissenting opinions. There is little explanation for why the group moves toward consensus and why an individual

- selects a certain response (Bunning, 1979; Sackman, 1975).
7. Delphi studies often experience a greater mortality rate than single-survey methods (Delbecq, et al., 1975; Sackman, 1975).
  8. Consensus may not occur due to changes in opinion. Participants sometimes find it easier to agree with the modal opinion than to formulate an explanation for a divergent opinion (Sackman, 1975).
  9. The participants must be sufficiently motivated to provide thoughtful responses to the questionnaires (Delbecq, et al., 1975; Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Given these limitations, the Delphi designer must have the ability to evaluate the impact of each limitation on the study in question and attempt to mitigate that impact through design.

Linstone (1975) warned researchers that

The Delphi designer who understands the philosophy of his approach and resulting boundaries of validity is engaged in the practice of a potent communication process. The designer who applies the technique without this insight or without clarifying these boundaries for the clients or observers is engaged in the practice of mythology (p. 586).

Delphi was selected for this study because of the need to gather opinions of individuals who are at great distance from one another, because of the desire to draw together individual opinions and input to achieve a consensus and because of the need to protect participants with the anonymity of the process. The Delphi method is appropriate for this application in higher education where issues are often complex and fraught with significant controversy.

### **Participant Selection**

There are no established guidelines for sample size in using the Delphi procedure. Early studies by the Rand Corporation used as few as five and as many as thirty participants (Dalkey, 1972). Several authors have suggested that a sample of 15 to 30 well-selected panelists will provide a broad range of expertise and give the researcher adequate data with which to draw conclusions. A sample greater than 30 has not been found to produce a significant number of new ideas (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustavson, 1975; Bunning, 1979). Uhl (1983) found that when opinions were requested, no more than ten participants are necessary in a Delphi study.

Practitioners feel that sample size is less important to the success of a Delphi study than careful selection of the individuals who are part of the participant panel. Delbecq et al. (1975) stated that participants must (1) feel personally involved in the problem of concern to the decision makers, (2) have pertinent information to share, (3) be motivated to include the Delphi task in their schedule of competing tasks, and (4) feel that the aggregation of judgments of a

respondent panel will include information which they too value and to which they would not otherwise have access (pp. 87-88).

The participants utilized for this study were working mothers in the student affairs profession. These female participants have worked in student affairs for at least three years, and have at least one child under the age of 15, living at home. Those who work in operational areas like residence hall or student union maintenance, as well as health services and records administration were excluded from this study due to dissimilarity of work environment in those specialties. Maintenance work tends to be on a predictable schedule, paid hourly, and is not subject to some of the stressful job requirements which characterize most professional positions in the field. Health services on a college campus have more in common with the private healthcare profession than they do with student affairs, but this department is sometimes included in a university division of student services. Records administration and accounting are professional positions which generally do not directly work with students and have predictable hours and repetitive tasks.

Potential panelists were recruited and identified via the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Women's Network. NASPA is considered the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy and practice, with most universities in the United States claiming institutional membership (1,175 campus members). According to the NASPA website, as of August 1999, professional members of NASPA numbered 4,342, with approximately 50% female members. NASPA members register for "networks"

according to their interest in specific topical areas. The NASPA Women's Network focuses on issues pertaining to women working in student affairs. The NASPA Women's Network operates an e-mail listserv through which panelists were recruited.

Once a woman was nominated by a NASPA Women's Network colleague, she received an e-mail invitation to participate in the study and was invited to nominate other working mothers in the student services profession. Fifty-two nominations were received through a combination of the NASPA Women's Network listserv and the referrals of confirmed participants. The researcher selected women from the nominees who worked at a variety of four-year colleges and universities throughout the state of California.

These women met the criteria defined by Delbecq et al. (1975) as effective participants. They were personally involved in the problem of balancing work and family. They had pertinent information to share in their own perceptions of the workplace and their experiences as they have attempted this balance. There were many indications of the high motivation of the participants, including their enthusiastic agreement to participate, their recommendation of colleagues as participants and their prompt response to questionnaires. By the end of the study, participants indicated that they benefited from reading the outcomes of each round and several stated that they had already used the information and the strategies proposed by participants to create change in their working environments.

A potential Delphi sample population of fifty-two working mothers in student affairs was identified, with a minimum goal of



twenty-five agreeing to serve as respondents in the project. This sample of participants is commonly referred to as the “panel.” Panel participants were located throughout the State of California. In the selection of the panel, the type of institution (public or private), the size of the institution, the number and age of the woman’s children, and her current position in the administration was taken into account. The researcher attempted to balance the panel with regard to public and private universities, small to large campuses, mothers of various ages and numbers of children, and administrators at mid-management and management levels.

After securing their consent to participate via electronic mail, the researcher sent a letter of invitation, a demographic survey and a consent form to thirty-eight individuals on October 19, 2000. Enclosed with the letter was a bookmark featuring a quote about motherhood as a token of appreciation for their willingness to participate in this research project. The letter and consent form explained the research study and the expectations of participants. By November 1st, thirty-seven women had accepted the invitation to participate by returning their consent form and demographic survey in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Shortly after returning the consent form and demographic survey, two participants contacted the researcher to withdraw from the study. One individual had experienced a health care emergency in her family, and another had just accepted a new position which would be part-time and outside of student services. This brought the total number of confirmed participants to thirty-five.

### **Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects**

Evaluation of one's work environment can be politically sensitive for the subjects, so throughout the Delphi project, strict confidentiality of the participants and their universities was maintained. Prior to their completion of the first questionnaire, all subjects received information about the nature of the research and signed consent forms indicating that their participation was totally voluntary. Throughout the study, participants were allowed to ask questions about the research and they could withdraw from the research at any time.

The individual participants were working mothers in student affairs, and, hopefully, will benefit from this project as the clarifying procedures of the Delphi helped them focus on factors in their work environment and the ways in which those affect career success. After their completion of the final questionnaire, all participants received a complimentary summary of the results of the research for their use in pursuing optimal working conditions for themselves and others, for planning their own careers or in counseling other women.

The University of San Diego Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects approved this research design.

### **Data Collection**

The Delphi procedure involves questioning a panel of subjects with a series of questionnaires. Each administration of the questionnaire is one "round" of the process. The questionnaires

provided the panel with information about their responses to previous rounds (degree of consensus in responses as well as areas of difference) and asked questions. Through the group questionnaires, panelists worked together to identify factors in the work environment which support or confound the careers of working mothers in student affairs. The researcher in the Delphi technique, known as the moderator, collects participant responses and prepares each successive round of questionnaires.

All rounds of data collection were conducted by electronic mail. Several researchers have identified a number of advantages and disadvantages to electronic data collection.

### **Advantages of Electronic Mail**

Electronic distribution of questionnaires was less expensive than paying postage and printing costs for paper questionnaires. The faster transmission time - a matter of seconds - allowed participants to respond quickly to electronic mail questionnaires. The response time as well as the global nature of electronic mail allows for a greater magnitude of response. The resulting responses to the questionnaires were more easily edited and analyzed, since the moderator could "cut and paste" responses in the computer. The researcher could easily copy and sort data since it didn't need to be retyped (Thach, 1995).

Another advantage is the asynchronous nature of electronic communication, which allows the message to be read and replied to at the convenience of the user, thus allowing respondents to take their time to think about and revise their answers if necessary. Finally,

research shows that respondents to electronic surveys will answer more honestly than they will in interviews or on paper questionnaires (Kiesler & Sproull, 1986; Sproull, 1986; Syndinos & Brennan, 1988; and Walsh *et al.*, 1992).

### **Disadvantages of Electronic Mail**

The main disadvantage to electronic data collection is the potential for technical difficulties (Thach, 1995). Potential problems with hardware or software can result in lost responses or breakup of the document in electronic transit. In order to avoid these potential problems, a test message was sent each way -- to and from respondents -- before the first round questionnaire was distributed in this study. This enabled the moderator and panelist to work together to avoid any technical "bugs" in the process.

### **Round Zero: Pre-Delphi**

Before the panel completed the first round questionnaires, the moderator conducted a pretest of the first questionnaire, identified the panel of participants, clarified the purpose of the study for them, explained the methodology to participants, conducted a test of e-mail communication with each panelist, secured their informed consent to participate in the study and collected demographic information about each individual. This activity is not considered a formal part of the Delphi method, and is therefore termed "round Zero."

### **Pretest of Round One Questionnaire**

In a traditional Delphi study, the first questionnaire contains only open-ended questions in order to allow the participants to answer without undue guidance of their response from the project facilitator. There is disagreement in the literature about whether the first questionnaire should be completely unstructured. Martino (1983) felt that participants may be confused by the unstructured nature of the first questionnaire and thus uncomfortable with providing complete and thoughtful answers. On the other hand, participants have been selected for their expertise and if the opening questionnaire is too structured, their responses may be inhibited, leaving the researcher unaware of some important aspect of the issue. Delbecq et al. (1975) suggested using a limited number of open-ended questions to start the Delphi.

In this study, it was unclear whether open-ended questions would be understood clearly and consistently by all participants and whether they would yield answers which addressed the research questions. Given these considerations as well as those raised in the literature about this methodology, the first questionnaire was designed to provide limited structure which would limit moderator bias in the introduction of the questions but also minimize confusion among panelists.

In October of 2000, a pilot study was conducted using five working mothers in student affairs who did not participate in the actual study. Pilot study participants were asked to complete the consent form and demographic survey, and to complete the first round

questionnaire which consisted of five open-ended questions.

Following their completion of the questionnaire, they were asked to give the researcher feedback about the clarity of the questionnaire and about the electronic mail format.

The questions yielded answers which indicated the respondents understood the questions as they were intended. Two participants suggested that a definition of the term *work environment* be added to the introduction at the top of the questionnaire. Another suggested that more explanation of the Delphi process was in order, since participants would not necessarily know how consensus would be reached in this study. Both of these suggestions were utilized to make explanation more clear in the first round questionnaire instructions. No other suggestions were made regarding the instrument or the clarity of the questions.

There were no comments about electronic mail as the medium for data collection. All pilot participants were comfortable with this media for distribution of and response to questionnaires. Both questions and answers were delivered without any technical difficulties in the pilot study.

Pilot study respondents were sent a thank you letter and a bookmark for their participation. In April, 2001, after the completion of the project, they received an executive summary of the study.

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

Participants in this research study were sent a demographic questionnaire along with their consent form on October 19, 2000. All

thirty-seven demographic surveys and consent forms were returned. When the information from the demographic questionnaire had been compiled, participants were sent a brief paragraph, via electronic mail, summarizing the participant data. Five electronic mail responses to this summary were received, all indicating that the participants were happy to know more about their colleagues in the study and that they felt honored to participate in this group.

### **Data Collection for Rounds One, Two and Three**

#### **Data Collection for Round One**

In the first questionnaire, the moderator solicited the opinions of the panelists as to what factors in their work environment contribute to the success of working mothers, and which factors confound the ability to successfully balance career and family. The broad research questions were placed before the panel, and they generated items which they felt affect the career success of working mothers in student affairs. They were asked to not only examine their own working environment, but also to answer questions relative to supportive or confounding factors they have heard of in other departments or on other campuses.

Thirty-five questionnaires were sent, via electronic mail on November 17, 2000. Participants were asked to respond via electronic mail by December 1, 2000. Twenty-five participants responded by this deadline. As noted by Delbecq et al. (1975), not all respondents will send their responses on time, and some will need added

encouragement. The researcher sent a “dunning letter” via electronic mail to the remaining ten participants, with another copy of the questionnaire included. By December 12, 2000, all thirty-five responses had been received.

As their responses were received, each participant was sent an electronic mail message thanking them for their responses and indicating an estimated timeline for the progression of the research project to Round Two. The compiled data from the Round One questionnaires was mailed to the participants along with a cover letter on January 5, 2001.

### **Data Collection for Round Two**

The goal of the second round of questionnaires was to provide feedback to the panel and to ask them to consider their own responses in comparison with the responses of the others. The list of environmental factors supportive of women’s successful balance which had been generated in Round One was provided to the participants in order of frequency of response, and they were asked to select the five which were most important to them, then to rank them in order of importance. This established preliminary priorities among the items.

The list of work environment factors which were confounding to women’s successful balance of work and motherhood were also listed in order of frequency of response. Participants were asked to select the five most troublesome from the list and to rank those in order



from most to least troublesome. This established the major obstacles to balance as perceived by the participants.

In order to move toward generating strategies to overcome obstacles to a balanced life, the participants were asked to generate a list of strategies they use to address the five most troublesome factors they had listed in question two. In addition, the first questionnaire had yielded some answers which were clearly outside the workplace, but were environmental factors which exert influence on a woman's ability to balance her life. To enable the researcher to understand the importance of these external factors, participants were asked to specifically list them.

The first round questionnaire had yielded a number of answers which focused on the role of a working mother's supervisor and some specific qualities of that supervision. To further refine the researcher's understanding of that aspect of the work environment, participants were asked to describe supportive supervision in terms of behavior, policies and procedures. Finally, a question was placed on the second round questionnaire to solicit participants' advice for mothers and mothers-to-be who are involved in a job search in this profession.

On January 12, 2001, thirty-five round two questionnaires were sent to participants via electronic mail, with a request for response by January 24th. Shortly after the electronic mail distribution, one participant notified the researcher that a family medical crisis was going to preclude her participation in the remainder of the study. Seventeen of the participants had responded as of January 24th. A

reminder message was sent via electronic mail to the remaining 17 participants, with another copy of the questionnaire included. Eleven more participants responded by January 31st. A second reminder message solicited response from the remainder of the participants by February 6, 2000, for a total of thirty-four responses to the second round surveys.

As their responses were received, each participant was sent an electronic mail message thanking them for their responses and indicating an estimated timeline for round three. The compiled data from the Round Two questionnaires was mailed to the participants along with a cover letter on February 15, 2001.

### **Data Collection for Round Three**

In responding to Round Two, the panel had reached consensus on some factors which enhance and some which detract from a working mother's ability to balance work and family in a student affairs career. In the third round, the responses of the panelists were returned along with information showing the percent of concurrence values (Somers, Baker & Isbell, 1984). The goal of the Round Three questionnaire was to further refine their agreement on the relative importance of those factors and to ask any additional questions which would give richer meaning to the data.

The participants were asked to again consider the job-related factors which enhance a woman's ability to balance work and family. These were listed in order of frequency of response, and only those factors which a minimum of 25% of the participants had placed in

their top five were included. Participants were asked to select the four factors most important to them.

The second question listed the problematic work environment factors, again limited to those with at least 25% response in the Round Two questionnaire. Participants were asked to select the four which they felt were most troublesome.

The Round Two questionnaire had identified direct communication with one's supervisor as an important strategy for overcoming obstacles to balance in the workplace, so a question was included to assess the participants' actual use of this strategy.

A series of three questions asked about the maternity leave experience of those participants who had their first child after beginning their career in student affairs, asking for the duration of their maternity leave and whether they returned to work full-time at the conclusion of their leave.

Since re-evaluation of personal and career goals seemed to be a recurring theme in answers to both the Round One and Round Two questionnaires, a question about participants' plans to continue in this profession and a question about their willingness to work part-time were included in the Round Three questionnaire.

In the first two rounds, several participants had commented on the culture of student affairs divisions and of higher education in general. To obtain the advice of the participants for strategies to change the work culture in student services, a question was included in this instrument asking for suggested ways to obtain lasting and substantive change.

Round Three questionnaires were distributed via electronic mail to all participants on February 26, 2001, with a requested response deadline of March 5, 2001. By March 5th, twenty-eight of the participants had completed the questionnaires. A reminder letter with a copy of the questionnaire included was sent to the remaining participants. Five additional responses were received by March 12, 2001. Despite an additional electronic mail reminder and a phone call encouraging her response, one participant did not complete the Round Three questionnaire. The total number of questionnaires received was thirty-three (97.1%).

As their responses were received, each participant was sent an electronic mail message thanking them for their responses and indicating an estimated timeline for completion of the research project. The executive summary of the research results was mailed to the participants in April along with a letter of thanks and a book as a token of appreciation for their completion of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The nature of a Delphi study requires the researcher to compile and analyze the data for each round of questionnaires in order to construct the next instrument. Responses were tallied on a modified blank version of each questionnaire and then entered into the computer for use verbatim in reports to the participants. The summaries for each round were mailed to the participants prior to the electronic mail distribution of a new questionnaire.

The Delphi process is used to create consensus. For this study, the researcher determined that consensus was achieved when at least 50% of the respondents had chosen a particular response to an item. For the fundamental research questions in this study, analysis of consensus was performed.

The Delphi process also identifies divergent opinions, which is useful for questions which seek to uncover a wide variety of responses. In this study, questions were asked about strategies for overcoming obstacles to balance, and the many suggestions of participants provided a useful and varied list of suggestions. The reader is referred to Chapter IV for detailed data analysis results.

### **First Round Data Analysis**

For the first round of the Delphi process, the moderator synthesized all responses for each item into one list to be used for the next questionnaire. Broad categories were created, then specific responses were placed in the categories. According to Sommers, et al. (1984), it is especially important at this stage to be sure that no responses “slip through the cracks,” as the moderator’s credibility will be damaged if a participant does not see her response reflected in the second questionnaire.

### **Second Round Data Analysis**

For the third round questionnaire, feedback pertaining to each item on the second questionnaire was provided regarding the measure of central tendency. The overall group mode or median, are the most

frequently used statistics for this purpose (Uhl, 1983). Follow-up questions were analyzed for clarification of answers to round one questions. The round two questionnaire also included questions designed to generate a list of strategies for use both within and outside the workplace. These were simply listed and the frequency of response indicated in analysis. Since the goal of these questions was not consensus, no further analysis was necessary.

### **Third Round Data Analysis**

Final round analysis was conducted in the same manner as analysis of round two.

### **Development of Recommendations**

After the data were analyzed, the information was used to develop recommendations for use by working mothers in student affairs, and also for leaders in higher education who wish to attract and retain these professionals in their workforce. These recommendations are discussed in detail in Chapter V. A summary report was mailed to each pilot and main study participant.

### **Evaluation of the Delphi Method for this Study**

#### **Advantages of the Delphi Method**

As the Delphi method was used for this study, the researcher found that the advantages and disadvantages indicated in the literature emerged. The advantages of the methodology were

numerous. The participants felt free to indicate their opinions in the anonymity of the process. Responses which were critical of a supervisor or of an institution were offered without fear of reprisal. There was no one voice or group of voices which dominated the group. Because all responses were equal, the feedback of Vice Presidents of Student Services were on par with the responses of entry-level professionals. Each participant chose the extent of her participation in each questionnaire, choosing to offer comments which were salient to the topic and important to her. Participants did not have to travel distances to participate in the research, and they were able to select a time, night or day, to complete the survey and return it to the facilitator.

The advantages of the group were realized with the quick consensus and the sense of support the women communicated as a result of their participation. One participant remarked that she was so grateful to learn that there are others who are struggling with the same balance issues. Another woman stated that she had already used some of the strategies suggested by other participants in the Round Two survey. Over three-fourths (82%) of the panel indicated that they were thankful for the research on this topic. As Helmer (1966) and Judd (1972) stated, the methodology is an educational tool for participants and helps the panel members clarify their thoughts and opinions on the topic.

The researcher was able to add questions and modify the research design throughout this study. The flexibility of the methodology was a distinct advantage. As the result of a comment by

one participant that she was unable to conceptualize strategies for achieving balance which did not include the supportive role of her spouse, the researcher entered into a discussion with dissertation committee members about the effect of non-work factors on a woman's ability to address workplace issues. A question was added to the Round Two survey to assess the participants' use of strategies outside the workplace.

A large number of responses was generated each time an open-ended question was presented to the panel. This is a strength of the methodology, in that the wide range of responses is generated, and yet participants are able to focus, through subsequent instruments on a consensus of opinion.

The use of electronic mail for distribution and collection of the questionnaires was also an advantage in this research project as predicted by Thach (1995). Advantages cited in the literature, such as fast transmission time, the lack of expense, ease of editing through "cut and paste" technology and the convenience of the medium for participant replies were all apparent. Use of electronic mail may have contributed to the low mortality rate in this study due to the convenience of reply for participants.

The open-ended questions in all of the rounds yielded rich qualitative data which helped the researcher understand the balancing acts in which the participants are engaged day-to-day. If a solely quantitative methodology had been chosen, there would not have been the opportunity to fold in this rich data to the analysis,



nor would the researcher have had the flexibility to ask additional questions for clarification or exploration of comments.

### **Disadvantages of the Delphi Method**

Several disadvantages emerged as a result of using Delphi in this study. The participants were very motivated, and were prompt with their responses for the most part. However, there were a few stragglers to each round of the survey, and additional effort was expended by the researcher to obtain their responses. Since this took longer than expected, the researcher also worked hard to maintain the enthusiasm of the panelists who responded immediately. To the credit of the panel members, only three participants were lost once the first questionnaire was distributed, yielding an overall participation of 94.3% of the panel in all three surveys.

Another disadvantage, related to this first, was that the study took much longer to complete than initially expected. From the first steps of soliciting nominations for the panel, through panel selection, securing consent and the three rounds of questionnaires, nearly six months elapsed. Both the collection of responses and the analysis of responses took longer than expected. As a result, participants were engaged in the study for twice the time anticipated by the researcher.

After weighing advantages and disadvantages, the researcher concluded that the Delphi method had significantly more advantages in relation to this research project.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify those work environment factors which enhance a working mother's ability to balance a career in student affairs with her responsibilities as a mother. In addition, the research was designed to identify work environment factors which detract from that ability and to rank both detracting and supporting factors in order of importance to working mothers. The Delphi method was selected by the researcher for this study because of the need to obtain consensus from a group with varied initial opinions, and the suitability of the Delphi method as a research tool to generate solutions to complex problems (Mitchell, 1994; Uhl, 1981).

For this study, four rounds of questionnaires were distributed. In Round Zero, demographic information was solicited from participants via a mailed survey. All subsequent rounds of questionnaires were delivered, and responses collected, via electronic mail. Compiled responses to each round were mailed to participants via the U.S. Postal Service. Round One consisted of five open-ended questions which created a list of items as a basis for the future questionnaires. Round Two and Round Three provided the opportunity for participants to rank responses in order of importance.

further refining consensus around the research questions. Additional questions in both rounds collected information for clarification of earlier answers and for recommendations to readers of this study. Data collection concluded with the return of answers to the Round Three questionnaire.

## **Round Zero**

### **Demographic Analysis**

The demographic questionnaire was designed to collect information about each panelist. The demographic questionnaire was sent to thirty-eight individuals, thirty-seven of whom returned the questionnaire. The one potential participant who did not return the demographic questionnaire was dropped from the project after a reminder message by e-mail did not elicit a response. Shortly after returning the demographic questionnaire, two panelists contacted the researcher to withdraw from the study. The information about these two persons was removed from the initial analysis of the demographic data. The remaining thirty-five participants received a summary of the demographic questionnaire results via electronic mail. Thirty-five panelists participated in the study. All percentages have been rounded off to the nearest tenth. Please see Appendix B for the Demographic Questionnaire and Appendix C for compiled participant demographic information.

## Participant Data

### Institutional Information

Three questions on the demographic questionnaire concerned the college or university at which the participant was employed. Twenty (57%) of the participants worked at public universities, while fifteen (42.9%) were employed by private institutions.

See Table 1 as to the size of institutions represented by panelists and Table 2 for campuses participating in the study.

Table 1

#### Institutional Student Enrollment (FTE, N=35)

Institutional Enrollment	Percentage
Less than 1,000	2.9%
1,001-5,000	27.7%
5,001-10,000	17.1%
10,001-15,000	2.9%
15,001-20,000	17.1%
20,000+	34.3%

Table 2

#### Participant Institutions

Institution	N of Participants
California Institute of Technology	2
California Polytechnic State University, Pomona	1
California State University, Long Beach	5
California State University, Los Angeles	1
California State University, Northridge	1
California State University, San Marcos	2
Loyola Marymount University	2

Menlo College	1
San Diego State University	2
San Jose State University	1
Santa Clara University	2
University of California, Berkeley	1
University of California, Irvine	3
University of California, Los Angeles	1
University of California, Riverside	1
University of California, San Francisco	1
University of La Verne	1
University of San Diego	3
University of Southern California	3
University of the Pacific	1

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### **Classification of Campus Position**

The participants selected for this study all held full-time positions in the field of student affairs. Those who performed operational services, such as residence hall or student union building maintenance, were excluded from the study due to dissimilarity of work environment. Also excluded were employees who work with record-keeping services in financial aid, admission, registrar, and similar campus offices. These positions generally have predictable hours and repetitive tasks and have little in common with other areas of student services administration. Of the participants in this study, four (11.4%) were Senior Student Affairs Administrators, eleven (31.4%) were department directors, fourteen (40%) were middle managers, and six (17.1%) were entry-level professionals. The positions held by participants are broken down in detail in Table 3.

Table 3

Classification of Campus Position

Classification of Position	Participant Title
Senior Student Affairs Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dean of Student Affairs</li> <li>• Vice President for Student Affairs</li> <li>• Dir., Student &amp; Curricular Affairs</li> <li>• Executive Dir. of Associated Students</li> </ul>
Director (Dir.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dir. of Orientation</li> <li>• Dir. of Residence Life</li> <li>• Dir. of Leadership Programs</li> <li>• Dir. of Housing</li> <li>• Associate Dean of Students</li> <li>• Dir. of Student Activities</li> <li>• Associate Vice President of Student Affairs</li> <li>• Dir. of Testing and Evaluation Services</li> <li>• Dir. of Student Health Services</li> <li>• Assistant Dean</li> <li>• Dir., Center for Service &amp; Action</li> </ul>
Middle Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate Dir. of University Residential Education</li> <li>• Dir. of Mentoring Program</li> <li>• Manager of Student Judicial Affairs</li> <li>• Assistant Dean</li> <li>• Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs</li> <li>• Housing Services Assistant Director</li> <li>• Assistant Dir. of Student Activities</li> <li>• Student Activities Program Advisor</li> <li>• Assistant Dir. of Student Development</li> <li>• Associate Dir. of Residential Life</li> <li>• Associate Dir. of Residential and Greek Life</li> <li>• Associate Dir. of Career Center</li> <li>• Assistant Dir. of Student Life</li> <li>• Psychologist</li> </ul>
Entry Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Coordinator</li> <li>• Coordinator, Student Leadership</li> <li>• Camp Counselor</li> <li>• Recruiter</li> <li>• Counselor</li> <li>• Coordinator of Residence Life</li> </ul>

### **Campus Areas of Responsibility**

Fifteen specialties of the Student Affairs profession were represented by the participants in this study. Table 4 provides detailed information regarding the distribution of the participants in these specialties.

Table 4

#### **Campus Areas of Responsibility**

<b>Area of Student Affairs Administration</b>	<b>N of participants</b>
Housing and Residential Life	5
Outreach and Relations with Schools	1
Educational Equity Services	2
New Student Orientation	1
Academic College-based Co-curricular programs	3
Student Government Advising and Management	1
Community Service Learning	2
Counseling and Psychological Services	1
Career Services	1
Greek Life	3
Leadership Development	3
Testing and Evaluation	1
Health Services	1
Judicial Affairs	2
Multicultural Resource Center	1
Student Activities	3
Senior Administration	4

### **Professional Experience**

The participants in this study were asked to indicate the number of years they had been in their current position and the number of years they had been in the profession of student affairs in order to establish the level of experience with the profession and with

their current job duties. The participants ranged in their tenure in their current position from three months to eighteen years at the beginning of this research project. The mean of their length of time in their current position was 4.04 years.

Participants also differed a great deal in their length of time in the profession, ranging from two years to twenty-eight years. The average duration of their experience in the student affairs profession was 11.77 years.

Table 5 presents detailed information regarding the length of time participants had held their positions, while Table 6 breaks out their length of experience in the student affairs profession.

Table 5

Duration of tenure in current position (N=35; Mean = 4.04 years)

<u>Years in current position</u>	<u>% of participants</u>
0-3 years	45.7%
3.1-6 years	34.3%
6.1-9 years	8.6%
9.1-12 years	8.6%
12+ years	2.9%



Table 6

Duration of career in student affairs (N=35; Mean = 11.77 years)

<u>Years in profession</u>	<u>% of participants</u>
0-3 years	5.7%
3.1-6 years	20%
6.1-9 years	11.4%
9.1-12 years	17.1%
12.1-15 years	14.3%
15.1-18 years	14.3%
18.1-21 years	11.4%
21+ years	5.7%

**Supervision Responsibilities**

Most of the participants in this study (88.6%) supervised at least one staff member. The range in number of staff supervised was from zero to twenty-five. The mean number of staff supervised was 5.27.

**Children living with participants**

The participants in this study all had at least one child under the age of fifteen living with them. Most of the panelists (94.3%) had one or two children. One participant had three children and one reported four children. Three of the participants had stepchildren living outside their home for whom they occasionally had responsibility, however, for over ninety percent of the participants, all of their children were living in their home. Collectively, the participants were mothers to sixty-five children, ranging in age from three months old to fifteen years old, with the average age of 4.98

years. Nearly half (44.6%) of the participants' children were not old enough to attend school.

Table 7 shows the number of children living with participants in more detail, while Table 8 provides detailed information about the ages of the participants' children.

Table 7

Number of children (n=35, Mean = 1.72)

Number of children living at home	% of participants
One	37.1%
Two	57.1%
Three	2.9%
Four	2.9%

Table 8

Ages of children (n=65, Mean = 4.98 years)

Age of child	Number of participant's children
Less than or equal to one year old	13
Two years old	9
Three years old	2
Four years old	5
Five years old	5
Six years old	3
Seven years old	5
Eight years old	3
Nine years old	3
Ten years old	2
Eleven years old	0
Twelve years old	2
Thirteen years old	4
Fourteen years old	2
Fifteen years old	1
Older than fifteen years	0

### **Adults living in the home**

Four of the participants were single mothers, but twenty-eight of the panelists (80%) were living with their spouse. Two participants also shared their home with additional adults: one reported her husband and her brother at home, and one listed her mother and stepfather as well as husband sharing the household.

### **Participants' age**

While there was a range in participants' ages, 88.6% were between thirty and fifty years of age. Table 9 details the age demographics of the panel.

Table 9

#### **Participants' Ages (N=35)**

<u>Age</u>	<u>% of participants</u>
20-30 years old	8.6%
31-40 years old	45.7%
41-50 years old	42.9%
51-60 years old	2.9%
Over 60 years old	0.0%

### **Academic Degrees**

Bachelors Degrees were held by one hundred percent of the participants. 88.6% of the panelists also held a Master's Degree, while 28.6% held doctoral degrees (including one J.D. and one M.D.). Table 10 gives detailed information about participants' academic degrees.

Table 10

**Academic degrees held (n=35)**

<u>Degree</u>	<u>% of participants</u>
Bachelor's degree	100%
Master's degree	88.6%
Doctoral degree	28.6%

**Ethnicity of Participants**

The majority of the participants in this study (60%) were Caucasian, with five African-Americans, three Mexican-Americans, two Asian-Americans, one Filipino-American, and two multiethnic individuals completing the panel. Two participants declined to state their ethnicity on the demographic questionnaire. Table 11 details the ethnic breakdown of the panel for this research project.

Table 11

**Ethnicity of Participants (n=35)**

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>% of participants</u>
Caucasian	60%
African-American	14.3%
Mexican-American / Hispanic	8.6%
Asian-American	5.7%
Filipino-American	2.9%
Multi-ethnic	5.7%
Declined to state	5.7%

### **Panelist Profile**

The typical participant in this research project was a thirty-nine year old mother of two children under the age of six. She was Caucasian, and held a Master's degree. She had worked in her current position for four years, and had been in the student affairs profession for nearly twelve years. She was employed in the profession when she had her two children. At the end of each work day, the typical panelist would return to her home which she shared with her spouse and two children.

She worked at a public university with an enrollment of 20,000 undergraduates. Her job responsibilities likely included supervision of five staff members and a classification at the director or mid-management level where she has some control over her schedule and over the culture of her immediate work environment.

### **Delphi Analysis:**

#### **Rounds One Through Three**

#### **Round One Results**

The questionnaire for Round One of the study began with a paragraph stating that:

1. A review of the literature outside higher education has indicated that various factors in the workplace environment affect

working mothers' career success in both positive and negative ways.

2. Work environment issues are defined as aspects of the work environment which affect an employee's ability to do her job.
3. The purpose of the study is to discover what work environment factors support and detract from career success for working mothers in student affairs.
4. The Delphi methodology will begin with very broad questions and will focus the groups agreement on the research questions through a series of questionnaires.
5. Participants should consider all work environment factors which they felt were important, and not limit themselves to those which were given as clarifying examples.

The first round questionnaire was constructed according to recommendations in the literature (Delbecq et al., 1975; Linstone, 1978; Martino, 1983) to limit the structure of the initial questionnaire so as to prevent undue researcher bias. Five open-ended questions comprised the first questionnaire, which centered on the research questions central to the study.

The first round questionnaire was sent to thirty-five participants via electronic mail, and all thirty-five panelists returned their responses, again by electronic mail, for a response rate of 100% on the first questionnaire. The results of the Round One

questionnaire were compiled and mailed to all participants with a cover letter encouraging them to read and reflect on the results prior to completing the upcoming Round Two questionnaire via electronic mail.

In answering the Round One questions, the participants generated a list of items which served as a basis for the Round Two questionnaire. Please see Appendix F for specific items which were generated for all five questions in Round One.

### **Question One**

The first question on the Round One questionnaire asked participants to list work environment factors which detract from a woman's ability to balance a family and her work in student affairs. Participants generated thirty-five different responses to this question, which were organized into four groups: factors related to job responsibilities, factors related to climate and organizational psychology, factors related to job compensation and logistics of the workplace and other factors which did not fit into the first three categories. The list of items was organized in the four categories according to frequency of response and that information was provided to the participants.

There were seven items, spread among three categories, which were listed by at least twenty percent of the panelists, indicating a

relatively high level of agreement on those items for the first round. Since question one was one of the research questions for this study, the researcher decided to pursue further consensus on this question in the Round Two questionnaire. Items which had been listed by at least four participants were included on the Round Two questionnaire.

### **Question Two**

Question two of the Round One survey also was a research question in this study. Participants were asked to list the work environment factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs. The thirty-four items which were generated were grouped under the same four categories used with question one. Five items were listed by at least 20% of the panelists. Some of the items which they listed were not actually part of the work environment, but were included in the compiled results under the category of "other types of factors." Again, since question two was one of this project's research questions, the researcher decided to pursue consensus from the panelists on the item list. Items which had been listed by at least four participants were included on the Round Two questionnaire.



### **Question Three**

The third research question guiding this project calls for the research to determine the relative importance of various work environment factors to the success of the working mother. This research question formed the basis of the third question on the Round One questionnaire. Participants identified thirty-five factors, and these were grouped in the same categories as the responses to questions one and two. Responses were very similar to those in the first two questions, but there was less agreement, with only four of the items listed by 20% or more of the panelists. There were two items, however, on which there was a great deal of agreement. “Flexible schedule” and “co-workers and supervisors who sympathize with managing work and family” were listed by 86% and 66% of the participants respectively. The researcher determined that a voting and ranking process in the Round Two questionnaire could both narrow the consensus for questions one and two and produce a list in order of importance to the participants.

### **Question Four**

Another way of asking the question about relative importance of the various work environment factors was to ask the participants what factors they would seek when conducting a job search in student affairs. This was the fourth question in the Round One

questionnaire. Answers to this question were similar to the items listed in question three, and in fact three participants simply referenced their answers to question three and moved on.

There was great agreement on two items in this question. “Flexible schedule” was listed by 80% of the panelists as a factor they would look for in a new employment situation, while 54% listed a “pro-family supervisor” as important. While the flexibility of the work schedule would seem fairly easy to assess in a job search process, it might be more difficult to determine the level of support available from a potential supervisor. In order to generate recommendations in this regard, the researcher formulated a question regarding supervision for the Round Two questionnaire. Also, since there appeared to be a greater emphasis on a supervisor’s supportive behavior as opposed to the supportive behavior of peer co-workers, those two were separated as items in the first two questions of the Round Two survey, allowing for voting and ranking to tease out participants’ opinions regarding their relative importance.

### **Question Five**

Question five on the Round One survey asked participants to list ways in which they have altered their career aspirations and the way in which they do their work since they became mothers. Participants who had their first child prior to beginning a career in

student affairs were excluded from this question, which was answered by twenty-seven (77%) of the thirty-five participants. All seemed to feel that they had changed the way that they perform their work, and more than half (51.8%) of those responding to this question indicated that they are less ambitious in their career pursuits than they were prior to becoming mothers. Clearly these participants feel there is a difference in the way childless-women and mothers perform the work in student affairs. The participants felt that they were more efficient with the use of their time at work since becoming parents. The women also indicated that they think carefully before obligating themselves to projects or advising responsibilities which will involve evening or weekend work, whereas they had previously taken those assignments willingly.

### **Round One Summary**

In summary, the data analysis of the Round One questionnaire indicated that there is a different way of working for mothers employed in student affairs, and that there are work environment factors affecting their work in positive and negative ways. The first two questions in the Round One survey established an item bank which formed the basis for voting and ranking questions in Round Two. The items regarding supervisor support and co-worker support, which were originally grouped together in the compiled results of

Round One were separated for the voting and ranking process in Round Two. The answers to the fourth question in Round One generated follow-up questions concerning supervision and its role in working mothers' balancing act.

### **Round Two Results**

Thirty-five Round Two questionnaires were sent via electronic mail to the research study participants. Shortly after the questionnaires were distributed via electronic mail, one panelist contacted the researcher to say that she would be unable to continue in the study due to a family medical emergency. Thirty-four responses to the questionnaire were received via electronic mail, for a response rate of 97.1%.

One goal of the Round Two questionnaire was to narrow the consensus of the panel regarding those work environment factors which enhance and those which detract from a working mother's ability to balance student affairs work and family responsibilities. A second goal was to begin to establish priorities among those items in order to determine the most important work environment factors to working mothers in this profession. A third goal was to begin to collect strategies for working mothers to use in this profession to overcome obstacles to their success. Finally, there was a need to

clarify answers from the Round One questionnaire regarding supportive supervision.

The results of the Round Two questionnaire were compiled and mailed to all participants with a cover letter encouraging them to read and reflect on the results prior to completing the upcoming Round Three questionnaire via electronic mail. Please see Appendix I for a copy of the compiled data for the Round Two questionnaire.

### **Question One**

Question one of the Round Two questionnaire asked participants to select five most important work environment factors which enhance working mothers' balance in this profession from the list of twelve items listed by at least four participants in the Round One survey. All twelve items were placed in the top five by at least one participant.

There were three items which were placed in the top five by over half of the panelists, indicating their consensus on the importance of those factors. The three most frequently included items were:

1. Flexibility of work schedule (94%)
2. Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor (88%)
3. Manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job (51%)

The remaining nine items did not reach consensus (50%). Items which had been included in the top five by at least 25% of the participants were included in the Round Three questionnaire in order to focus the panelists on the work environment factors which they had determined to be most important to their success.

### **Question Two**

The second question in the Round Two questionnaire focused participants on the factors which present obstacles to a woman's ability to balance her responsibilities as a parent with her job. The thirty-six items generated in the Round One results were narrowed to the fourteen items which had been listed by at least four participants. Panelists were asked to select the five most troublesome factors and to rank them in order from most to least troublesome. All fourteen items received at least one placement in the top five.

Three of the items were placed in the top five by more than half of the participants, indicating consensus on those factors. Those three items were:

1. Weekend and evening work and long hours (79%)
2. Organizational culture rewards long hours and does not value balance (58%)
3. Lack of understanding and support from supervisor (50%)

Consensus (50%) was not achieved on the remaining twelve items. In order to further focus the participants on those work environment factors which they had identified as most troublesome to working mothers, the researcher eliminated the items which had not been placed in the top five by at least 25% of the panelists. Therefore, the Round Three questionnaire listed ten items.

### **Question Three**

Referencing their answers to question two, panelists were asked to list strategies they use or have observed in use, to overcome the five most troublesome factors they selected. Strategies were listed for all fourteen items in question two. Refer to the Appendix for the compiled list of strategies. Although there was consensus on the three most troublesome work environment strategies, there was little agreement on the successful strategies for overcoming those obstacles. This reinforces the difficulty these participants experience with work environment issues. If everyone agreed on a way to mitigate the difficulty, then it would become less difficult. Strategies suggested for each obstacle were simply listed, in some cases with clarifying quotes, and returned to the participants on the compiled results of Round Two. Three panelists remarked in Round Three that they appreciated receiving the strategy suggestions, indicating a need for this information.

#### **Question Four**

As stated above, several participants had listed non-work environment factors in support of their success as working mothers. Most often listed of these non-work factors was a supportive spouse. Although this research project is limited to the work environment to maintain adequate bounding to the research, one participant was particularly passionate about her need to list this factor. After consultation with her committee members, the researcher determined that support in the environment outside of work was a strong contributor to a working mother's peace-of-mind during her work hours and may, therefore reduce her stress. As a strategy for mitigating difficulties in the workplace, support of family and friends is significant. Therefore, question four in Round Two was formulated to evaluate the use of outside-of-work strategies for participants.

Responses to this open-ended question were organized into three categories: strategies for general family management, strategies regarding childcare, and strategies for personal and relationship renewal. Two strategies were listed by more than a third of the panelists, indicating that in the areas of managing family life and in childcare, the support of spouse and nearby family and friends are invaluable.



### **Question Five**

More than half of the participants had indicated on the Round One questionnaire that they would look for a supportive supervisor if they were seeking a new position in student affairs. Question five included two parts: the first part was designed to determine what a supportive supervisor would do to indicate support, and the second part solicited job search strategies to determine how supportive a potential supervisor might be.

In the first part of the question, more than one third of the participants (indicating a high level of agreement) listed the following traits of a supportive supervisor:

1. Trusts my judgment in how I need to flex my schedule in order to balance my work and my home (61%)
2. Creates and enforces policies which support balance (i.e. mission statement, leave policies, flexible schedule) (52%)
3. Shows interest in me and my family, cares about me and listens (49%)
4. Trusts that I will get the job done, grants autonomy (46%)
5. Knows, articulates and understands that family comes first (36%)

Themes in the answers centered around trusting the subordinate to get the job done, refraining from micro-managing the

subordinate, and showing clearly through word and action that support for family priorities is a value.

In the second part of the question, panelists offered thirty-seven suggestions for ways to determine the support of a potential supervisor during a job search. There were five participants who did not answer this part of the question. There were three strategies which garnered support from at least 30% of the participants who did answer.

1. Assess how many others within the office have children and how they feel about the office climate in that regard (49%)
2. Ask the Human Resources Office for information on policies (i.e. flextime, sick leave, telecommuting, family benefits, maternity leave) (30%)
3. Utilize the network you have in the profession to ask colleagues for feedback about your potential supervisor (30%)

There was some disagreement in the answers to this question among the twenty-nine panelists who answered it, with sixteen of the participants advocating asking honestly about the potential supervisor's feelings concerning family priorities in the interview, or at least stating one's personal priorities honestly in the interview with the supervisor. Participants who advocated this approach tended to

be those who held middle management and entry level positions, and whose time in the profession was fewer years (Mean = 11.3 years).

Thirteen panelists felt that a mother who was this forthright in the interview would be eliminated from consideration for the position because she would be perceived as not committed to the work. Participants on this side of this debate advocated more subtle approaches and the use of one's personal network of colleagues to solicit feedback. Panelists who advocated this approach tended to be directors and senior student affairs officers. Table 12 details the responses of panelists to this question according to their years in the profession and their professional classification level.

Table 12

Ask up front vs. use your network (n= 29)

Strategy	Classification	Years in profession
Ask up front	Senior student affairs officer - 0 Director - 4 Middle management - 9 Entry level - 3	Mean = 11.3 years
Don't ask, use your network	Senior student affairs officer - 3 Director - 7 Middle management - 2 Entry level - 1	Mean = 14.5 years

## **Round Two Summary**

In summary, the data analysis of the Round Two questionnaire found consensus on three work environment factors which affect working mothers in student affairs in positive ways, and three factors which have negative effects on their ability to balance motherhood and their career demands. The voting and ranking of the items in the first two questions in Round Two established priorities which were tested by further voting on a shorter list of items in the Round Three questionnaire.

The responses to the Round Two questionnaire established lists of strategies for all of the work environment factors perceived as obstacles to balance by the participants. In addition, question four generated information about the use of non-work environment support as a strategy to address balance issues.

Finally, the two parts of question five clarified panelists' definition of a family-friendly supervisor and recommended strategies to assist women who are involved in a job search with identifying a supportive potential supervisor. There was disagreement among the panelists with regard to the strategy of directly asking about supervisor attitudes toward working parents in the interview.

### **Round Three Results**

Thirty-four Round Three questionnaires were sent via electronic mail to the research study participants. Despite several reminder messages and a reminder phone call, one participant did not complete the questionnaire. Thirty-three responses to the questionnaire were received via electronic mail, for a response rate of 97.1%.

One goal of the Round Three questionnaire was to further narrow the consensus of the panel regarding those work environment factors which enhance and those which detract from a working mother's ability to balance student affairs work and family responsibilities. A second goal was to refine priorities among those items in order to determine the most important work environment factors to working mothers in this profession. A third goal was to explore the strategy of direct communication with one's supervisor which was mentioned repeatedly throughout the answers to question three in Round Two. The fourth goal of this questionnaire was to collect some opinions on three previously unexplored areas: maternity leave experiences, willingness to work part-time and future career plans. The researcher also collected opinions in this round concerning ways in which the culture in the student affairs profession could be positively influenced to provide more support for working mothers. A final question asked participants to contribute any

thoughts they had on the study, serving as an opportunity to comment outside the structure of the rest of the instrument.

The results of the Round Three questionnaire were compiled and mailed to all participants with a thank you letter and a book as a token of appreciation for their participation in the study. See the Appendix for a copy of the compiled data for the Round Three questionnaire.

### **Question One**

Question one was designed to further narrow the consensus of the panelists regarding what job-related factors enhance their ability to balance work in student affairs with their responsibilities as a mother. Based on the responses to question one in Round Two, four possible responses which had not been selected in the top five by at least 25% of the participants were eliminated from the list. Panelists were instructed to choose the four most important factors from the resulting list of eight. While the consensus was strengthened for one of the three items on which there was consensus in Round Two, it declined slightly for the other two top-ranked items. No additional items reached consensus (50%). Table 13 illustrates the results and the final ranking of the items, including all twelve items which appeared in the Round Two questionnaire.

Table 13

Work environment factors which enhance a woman's ability to  
balance work and family responsibilities

N=12 for Round Two    N = 8 for Round Three    NI= Not included

Final Rank	Round 2 %	Round 3 %	Item
1	94%	93.9%	Flexibility of work schedule
2	88%	87.9%	Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor
3	51%	75.8%	Manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job
4	46%	33.3%	Affordable, quality childcare right in the workplace or nearby
5	39%	33.3%	Working for an institution which values family, wellness and a balanced lifestyle
6	36%	33.3%	Ability to live on campus or close to campus/short or no commute
7	46%	21.2%	Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive co-workers
8	27%	21.2%	Family-friendly compensation/benefit structures
9	20%	NI	Option to telecommute some days
10	15%	NI	I can bring my family to events, they are viewed as part of the community
11	12%	NI	An institution rich in resources; exposure to higher education for my child
12	9%	NI	Networking with other colleagues who are parents

### **Question Two**

Question two of Round Three was designed to strengthen consensus on those factors which detract from a woman's ability to balance student affairs work and family, and to provide a rank for those items from most to least troublesome. Based on the responses to question two in Round Two, four possible responses which had not been selected in the top five by at least 25% of the participants were eliminated from the list. Panelists were instructed to choose the four most troublesome factors from the resulting list of ten. While the consensus was retained for two of the three items on which there was consensus in Round Two, it declined enough for the other top-ranked item so as to drop it below the consensus measure (50%) and to drop it in ranking to 5th. One additional item reached consensus with this round. Table 14 illustrates the results and the final ranking of the items, including all fourteen items which appeared in the Round Two questionnaire.



Table 14

Work environment factors which detract from a woman's ability to balance work and family responsibilities

N=14 for Round Two    N = 10 for Round Three    NI= Not included

Final Rank	Round 2 %	Round 3 %	Item
1	79%	66.7%	Weekend and evening work/long hours
2	58%	63.6%	Organizational culture rewards long hours and does not value balance
3	42%	51.5%	Student Affairs jobs are poorly compensated
4	27%	42.7%	Job responsibilities do not give flexibility about when and where to do the job
5	50%	36.4%	Lack of support from supervisor
6	36%	36.4%	Guilt
7	30%	33.3%	Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work
8	27%	33.3%	Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than one day
9	33%	27.2%	Long stressful commute

10	30%	15.2%	Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs
11	24%	NI	Lack of understanding/support from co-workers
12	18%	NI	On-call requirement for campus emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
13	18%	NI	The "helping nature" of the job -- need to put students first
14	15%	NI	No option to telecommute

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### **Question Three**

Question three was designed to further clarify participants' communication with supervisors. Two of the participants had specifically recommended a direct conversation with one's supervisor as a strategy for overcoming lack of support from that sector. Open and direct communication seemed to be a trend among the answers to several questions in Round Two. So question three in Round Three tested participants' actual use of that strategy in their own workplace. The two part question asked if participants had used the strategy and asked them to comment on their use if they had.

Twenty-seven (81.8%) of the participants answered this question, with 81.5% of those answering indicating that they had used this strategy. The comments in the second part of the question

indicated that those who had used the strategy had been successful with it, except in two cases. Two participants indicated in their comments that their supervisor regularly initiates this communication, which allows them to feel even more supported than if they had to broach the subject themselves. Five of the participants commented that they felt the need to demonstrate and to articulate their commitment to getting the work done as they were having these conversations. One panelist suggested framing requests in terms of “contributions to the workplace rather than to focus on potential limitations.” Two participants described negotiations they had made with their supervisors as they began their present positions, clearly stating their priorities and expectations regarding flexibility. Two participants described bargains they had struck with their supervisors, framing their conversations in terms of what they offered in return for flexibility.

There were five participants (18.5% of those answering) who had not spoken directly to their supervisors about their priorities as a mother. They cited differing reasons for this in their comments. One felt that sharing the challenges she faced with balance would have negative repercussions. Two panelists felt that their supervisors lacked a frame of reference to even understand the issues they would raise. One felt that asking for special treatment was unfair to other workers in the eyes of their supervisor. One woman felt that there

would be accommodations made, but was waiting to clarify her situation with a new baby at home, before approaching her supervisor.

#### **Question Four**

Question four of Round Three raised a new question for participants: maternity leave. Since several panelists had mentioned generous maternity leave as a policy which could support working mothers in student affairs, this question asked participants about their own experience with maternity leave. The three part question first asked if participants had their first child after they began their careers in student affairs. If they answered yes, then two more parts of this question asked about the duration of that leave and whether they returned to work full-time at the conclusion of their leave.

The first part of the question was answered by all participants, with 81.8% indicating that they had their first child after beginning their careers. For those twenty-seven women in that category, maternity leave ranged from two weeks to seven months, with most of the participants indicating that they took either two months (eight weeks) of leave or three months (12 weeks). Table 14 illustrates the length of maternity leave in more detail. Twenty four of the women (88.9% of those answering this question) indicated that they returned to work full-time at the conclusion of their maternity leave. Five of those individuals reported that they had a “transition time” during

which they worked part-time. Among those who had this transition time, the most common duration was one week before resuming their full-time duties.

Table 15

Length of maternity leave (n=27)

<u>Duration of leave</u>	<u>Participant %</u>
Two weeks	3.7%
Six weeks	7.4%
Two months (8 weeks)	29.6%
Three months (12 weeks)	37.0%
Four months (16 weeks)	14.8%
Five months (20 weeks)	0.0%
Six months	3.7%
Seven months	3.7%

**Question Five**

In Round One, several participants had commented on how their professional aspirations have changed since they became parents. As a follow-up to question five of Round One, question five of Round Three asked participants to comment on whether they plan to stay in the student affairs profession for the next five years or plan to leave the profession. Just over half (57.6%) of the participants plan to stay in the field. Just more than one fourth of the panelists (27.3%) stated that they plan to or hope to leave the profession, either to stop working altogether or to seek employment in a more family-friendly arena. An additional 15.2% of the participants are unsure of their plans in the near future.

**Question Six**

One participant had commented in a narrative answer to the Round One survey that she would prefer to work part-time, but that part-time professional positions were unavailable in student affairs. Question six in the Round Three questionnaire asked participants about their desire to work part-time in an effort to determine whether her desire was shared by other panelists. The question asked if a part-time position were available at their current classification, would the respondent prefer to work part-time. Over half of the participants (51.5%) said they would prefer a part-time position. An additional 30.3% would prefer to work part-time but feel that they cannot afford the cut in pay. Only four participants (12.1%) would not like to work part-time. Two panelists (6.1%) stated that they were not sure.

**Question Seven**

In both the first and second rounds of this research study, panelists had commented on the organizational culture in student affairs, which, in their opinion, rewards long hours and seemingly promotes an unhealthy life balance for employees. Question seven in Round Three was designed to test the consensus of the participants on the existence of such a culture, and to solicit the opinions of panelists as to how it might be changed. Only one panelist stated

that the culture did not exist throughout student affairs, but commented that “micro-climates” existed in certain departments due to the attitudes of the leaders in those departments. Thus, she suggested, on the same campus there might be supportive departments and departments which are “nightmarish” for working mothers. One participant stated that the climate on her campus could not be changed. All other panelists offered opinions as to strategies which might be used to create climates more supportive for working mothers.

The suggestions offered by the panel fell into eight categories. Table 15 provides detailed information as to the percentage of participants advocating each approach. While none of the responses exceeded 50%, there was a great deal of agreement that leadership in support of change must come from the highest levels of student affairs administration. Over twenty percent (24.2%) of participants also called for more working mothers at the higher levels of student affairs. One panelist, however, commented that this objective would be difficult to attain, since it is currently hard to advance in the field if you value balance. Seven of the participants (21.1%) called on working mothers in the profession to set an example and to assert their priorities to initiate change in their workplace. Other suggestions included more education for managers, hiring more staff to lighten the load for all, enforcing policies which encourage a

balanced life, modifying expectations of student affairs as a profession, and focusing media attention on higher education's shortcomings in this area. See the summary of Round Three responses in the Appendix K for specific recommendations within these categories.

Table 16

**Suggested strategies for changing culture in student affairs**

N=33

Suggested strategy	% of participants suggesting
Supporting behavior and role modeling must come from supervisors and from those at high levels of authority in the university	42.4%
More working mothers at higher levels in student affairs	24.2%
Working mothers need to assert their needs	21.2%
More education is needed for managers at all levels	15.2%
More staff and more resources can lighten the load for everyone	15.2%
Policies to encourage a balanced life must be created and enforced	15.2%
Modify the expectations of student affairs as a profession	12.1%
Focus media attention of higher education's shortcomings in this area	3.0%

**Questions Eight and Nine**

Questions eight and nine in the Round Three survey were designed to provide information for the researcher's follow-up projects



following this study. Question eight asked the willingness of the participants to be contacted for case study interviews in anticipation of future research on this topic. All but one panelist consented to be contacted, further indicating that even after several months and four rounds of questioning, the participants remained enthusiastic about the research topic. Question nine asked about the willingness of the participants to serve on a panel for a presentation at the NASPA Regional Conference in Fall 2001. Twenty-seven of the panelists expressed a willingness to participate. Four of the six who did not consent wrote that they would be unable to obtain travel funds for the conference from their university. Two did not state a reason for declining.

### **Question Ten**

The last question of the Round Three survey asked participants to contribute any final thoughts they had about the research topic, about the study or about the results they read. Panelists made specific comments about the Delphi methodology, with one participant commenting that the electronic mail format for the questionnaires made it “easy to participate,” and another (who is a Director of Testing and Assessment) praising the study for the rich information in the findings of each round.

Some participants made suggestions for additional research. One panelist suggested that the responses to each question should be broken down by the type of work each panelist did (residence life, student activities, judicial affairs, etc.) since some jobs on campus call for more after-hours or on-call responsibilities. Considering that such a breakdown had not been done in this case, however, she commented that she was surprised at the amount of agreement in the answers provided to the questions in the first two rounds.

Another participant suggested that responses to the questions should be broken down and compared with an eye to the ages of their children. She wondered if the issues change as children (and their mothers) grow older.

Two respondents commented on the usefulness of the information to them as supervisors of other employees with families. As one Director commented, "I found myself having to re-live some of the most difficult times in my life, when I had my first child and was in an entry-level professional position. The incredible stress of juggling family and career and the strains of a lower income were almost unbearable at times. This really helps me to be a better supervisor and more understanding to my staff members who are just starting families."

Over three fourths of the participants (81.2%) stated that they enjoyed participating in the study. Many thanked the researcher for

undertaking the project and stated that the compiled information from the first two rounds was very interesting to them. One panelist stated that she was expecting to provide a copy of the Executive Summary to her university's Human Resources department when she received it.

All but three participants stated that it had been very empowering to find out that other women in their profession were experiencing similar stresses and obstacles. This was the most common comment in response to question ten. As one participant stated, "It was extremely helpful to hear that I am not alone out there! [It helps] to know that there are others like me with the same values, struggling with the same issues."

### **Summary of the Results of the Delphi Study**

An analysis of the data led the researcher to draw the following conclusions which are organized according to the three research questions which formed the basis of this study. The most significant conclusions were:

1. What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?

The panelists identified thirty-four initial items as answers to this question in Round One. By Round Three, consensus had been reached on three of the items: 1) flexibility

of work schedule in student affairs, 2) an educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor and, 3) manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job. The women in this study had, by and large, established their careers and then become mothers. Several commented throughout the study on ways they have used the flexibility of the job to their advantage, on how fortunate they are to have found a supportive supervisor, and on the ways they negotiated with supervisors and colleagues to make their complex jobs more manageable once the parenting role was added to their lives.

Since supervisor support was mentioned so frequently by participants throughout the three rounds of questionnaires, the researcher asked additional questions in order to understand how such support is offered, how it can be recognized in potential supervisors and how relationships with supervisors can be shaped to provide greater support for working mothers. The panel reached consensus on two traits of supportive supervisors, out of a list of thirty items they generated: 1) they trust subordinates' judgment in decisions they make regarding balance of work and home responsibilities, and 2) they create and enforce policies which support healthy life balance. Participants were very specific about their expectation that

supervisors should not question their commitment to their profession when they choose to honor responsibilities to their children first.

The participants offered thirty-seven strategies for evaluation of potential supervisors' support during the process of a job search. There was controversy between younger professionals who advocated direct questioning of potential supervisors and more experienced professionals who advocated a more nuanced approach in the interview coupled with thorough research using a network of professional contacts.

Direct communication with one's supervisor was the most favored strategy for addressing many of the changes the panelists felt were needed in the organizational culture of student affairs. Two out of every three participants had initiated frank conversations with their supervisors about the conflicted priorities they felt, with successful outcomes in nearly every case.

2. What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?

The participants generated thirty-five items in response to this question, and by the third round of the Delphi process, they had reached consensus on three: 1) the long hours and

the amount of weekend and evening work, 2) an organizational culture in student affairs which rewards long hours and does not value balance, and 3) jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated. An additional item, “lack of support and understanding from a supervisor,” reached consensus in Round Two, but fell out of consensus in Round Three. One participant’s comment was notable in combining all of these four obstacles into one exemplary anecdote:

In my particular case, the University has been led by [people] who have no family responsibilities. . . I’m sure it doesn’t even dawn on them that if I work from 9 to 5, there isn’t much time to grocery shop, let alone cook! My VP of Students Affairs asked me why I wasn’t getting a live-in nanny to take care of my daughter. I told her it was because I wasn’t paid enough to afford a live-in nanny. The other part of my answer that I kept to myself was, “I had a daughter so I can spend time with her!”

While there was not consensus, there was a great deal of agreement (42.4%) among participants about the need for more role models in their work environment, with nearly one fourth (24.2%) of panelists asserting that role modeling of balance must come from working mothers who advance to top administrative positions. The amount of appreciation expressed

by participants for the opportunity to know that there are others facing similar obstacles reinforces their perceived need to connect with other working mothers in the field. One panelist described her feeling of isolation as follows:

Part of the culture at my university is that there is a preponderance of mid-20 year old to mid-30 year old women. Most are either unmarried or recently married. So for them, it's fun to be at activities at night or on the weekend and they just take time off during the week (or not). The other group that is represented in student affairs are gay men without children. This group also doesn't have trouble working on nights or weekends. In the Division of Student Affairs which must have at least 200 employees, there are five staff members that I know of who have school age or younger kids. One member of that group is a woman psychologist who works 30 hours a week. Another is a secretary. Besides myself, the other two are married dads. One other woman is just now pregnant. Pretty unbelievable.

3. What do working mothers in student affairs feel are the most important factors in managing work and family for a woman in student affairs?

A review of the literature (see Chapter Two) indicated that prior research had established three important factors for working mothers' life balance: flexibility of work schedule, manageable job demands, and employer support. The panelists in this study shared those priorities. They very clearly placed the most importance on a supportive environment, particularly a supportive supervisor, and on the ability to have flexibility in where and when to get their jobs done so as to meet their responsibilities as a parent. Rounding out their top five work environment factors were the availability of affordable, quality childcare in or near the workplace and a University which promotes wellness and balance as a core value. The passion of their responses indicates that the work/family balance is difficult to achieve, but on a daily basis they rely on understanding colleagues as they face tough choices. One participant summed up her thoughts on the study as follows:

I think my final thought is that successfully balancing work and family requires some difficult personal choices. The setting in which we do our work is very dynamic and takes energetic and resourceful people to keep it running. Although I do believe that the expectations for student affairs professionals are geared toward single or at least



childless professionals, I think we can mold the culture somewhat to make it doable for working parents.

However, this is where the choices come in. In order to be useful to the community we cannot continue to act as if we can meet all the demands that we may have met before children. We must select positions that are flexible enough to meet our needs. . .

As they make their choices on a daily basis, participants would like to have their professional commitment recognized and respected. A theme throughout their responses to all three questionnaires was that a supportive climate trusts working mothers to get the job done. As one participant stated in her answers to the Round One questionnaire:

When administrators and supervisors equate hours spent on the job with dedication to the field, I feel proper balance of family and career advancement is impossible. Most supervisors want someone to put in extremely long hours and weekends which can get in the way of balancing, effectively, family and work. Just because I keep a tight schedule does not mean I am not committed or that I cannot get the job done efficiently!

Despite the obvious dedication to their profession which was felt by the women, it was interesting to find that over half

would gladly work part-time if they could find such a position at their classification, and that nearly one third are planning to leave the student affairs profession in the next five years.

An overall review of the data confirms that working mothers in student affairs grapple with similar issues to those found in the literature for working mothers in other professions. The organizational culture of student affairs and of higher education may exacerbate those difficulties, particularly when the employee's immediate supervisor is not supportive of a healthy life balance. Panelists were hopeful that this and future research can provide catalyst for change to enable mothers to work successfully in the field without sacrificing the needs of their families. In the opinion of the panelists, retention of working mothers and all of the wisdom, experience and commitment they represent to the profession should be a priority in student affairs. One participant stated:

I think that the leadership of the profession -- on campus and in national associations -- can help to reinforce that a woman's career in student affairs does not mean sacrificing one's personal life for the sake of success. . . it is important for young professionals to see that women can be successful in student affairs at many levels and that for most of us, there are times in our careers when we hold back for the sake of other priorities.

In essence, change can be inspired by strong, visible role models who speak about life balance as a personal and professional value -- and asset.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary of the Study**

##### **Work Environment Issues for Working Mothers**

As more and more women have entered the higher education student affairs profession (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990; Twale, 1995) and have come to comprise a majority in entry-level and middle-management of the profession (Twale, 1995; Warner & DeFleur, 1993), it follows that many of these women will have children at some point in their careers. The climate in the workplace affects a woman's ability to balance work and family life, and may be one factor which confounds the advancement of women in the profession (LeBlanc, 1993). With few women in upper-level university administrative positions, and fewer still who are working mothers, women's concerns are less likely to be reflected in the culture and policies of these institutions.

Research on higher education institutions during the last two decades indicates that higher education is stalled in terms of meeting the needs of employees with children (Gelwick, 1984; Jones, 1993; Marshall & Jones, 1990; Nobbe & Manning, 1998; Wilson, 1995). According to researchers, the key strategies in developing a supportive

culture in higher education are: 1) flexible work schedules, 2) manageable job descriptions, 3) education of managers in specific behaviors which will support employees' balance of competing life roles, 4) regular assessment of work climate and employee needs, and 5) higher level administrators and campus presidents who publicly support work-family initiatives (Friedman, Rinsky & Johnson, 1996).

For working mothers in student affairs, who supervise the out-of-classroom life of students, unusual and long work hours, a climate which questions their professional commitment when they assert a need for work-family balance, and lack of support from supervisors and colleagues are all factors which contribute to tremendous role strain in their lives (Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Stone, 1989).

Researchers have called for studies which explore the relationship between work and nonwork life for women in student affairs with an eye to retaining and advancing women in a profession which is dominated by men at the highest levels (Blackhurst, Brandt & Kalinowski, 1998b; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Steward et al., 1995).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on a review of the literature, which strongly suggests that many factors in the work environment impact working mothers in various ways, the purpose of this study was to isolate and analyze the environmental factors which detract from and those which enhance

the success of women with children who are working in student affairs.

The following research questions were of primary importance to the purpose of this project:

1. What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?
2. What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?
3. What do working mothers in student affairs feel are the most important factors in managing work and family for a woman in student affairs?

In essence, this research study was designed to identify the factors in the student affairs workplace which affect the work-family balance for mothers, to prioritize those and to identify some strategies which could be used by universities to recruit and retain female employees who have or are planning to have a family. The study was also intended to provide environmental components for women to assess in potential employment situations as well as strategies for them to use to affect change in their work environment if work-family balance is difficult for them.

### **Methodology**

This study required gathering opinions from individuals who were at great distance from one another, drawing together those opinions to arrive at consensus, and protecting the participants with anonymity in the process of the research. The Delphi method was selected for its consensus-building approach, its ability to efficiently draw out group opinions on complex and controversial topics and its practicality in studies where the participants cannot be brought together in the same place.

The Delphi method has the advantage of tapping group opinion without the disadvantages of face-to-face conversation. The main advantages of the Delphi method are: 1) anonymity, 2) repetition of questions with controlled feedback, 3) statistical group response, and 4) flexibility of research design as the project progresses (Martino, 1983; Mitchell, 1994).

Participants in a Delphi project can be free to express their opinions with the protection of anonymity. No one person or subgroup of participants can dominate the group "conversation." All responses to the questions come to the group weighted equally, without regard to position or other personal attributes. The use of electronic mail enhanced the ease of data collection in this study, making participation very convenient for panelists. Following each round of questions, panelists were provided with feedback indicating

central tendency in participants' answers. The effect of this controlled feedback was to keep the participants focused, discouraging digression from the chosen topic.

Participants were nominated by colleagues or self-nominated in response to an e-mail request sent to the NASPA Women's Network listserv. In addition, nominees suggested other colleagues who have children. Fifty-two individuals were nominated for participation in the study. After checking for balance in the potential participants, the researcher invited thirty-seven individuals to participate. Thirty-five panelists from throughout California formed the panel as the study commenced. Round Zero, conducted in October and November of 2000, provided demographic information on the participants. Rounds One, Two and Three, conducted during December through February of 2001, were used to collect data for the study with the response rates of 100%, 97.1% and 97.1% respectively.

After the data were analyzed, a summary report was sent to each participant and to the Chair of the N.A.S.P.A. Women's Network.

## **Findings of the Study**

### **Participant Profile**

The typical participant in this study was a thirty-nine year old mother of two children, both under six years of age. She was likely to



be Caucasian and to share her home with her children and her spouse.

While she had been in the student affairs profession for nearly twelve years, she held her current position for four years, thus she was employed in the profession when she had both of her children. She most likely held a Master's degree, and worked at a public university with an enrollment of 20,000 undergraduates. Her job responsibilities likely included supervision of five staff members and a classification at the director or mid-management level where she had some control over her schedule and over the culture of her immediate work environment.

### **Research Question Results**

An analysis of the data collected in this project yielded the following information; which is presented in response to the study's three research questions:

1. What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?

The panelists identified thirty-four work environment factors which support a woman's successful work-family balance, and by Round Three, had reached consensus on three of those: 1) flexibility of work schedule, 2) an educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor, and 3)

manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job.

2. What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?

The participants generated a list of thirty-five work environment factors which detract from a woman's successful work-family balance, and they reached consensus on three of those items: 1) the long hours and the amount of evening and weekend work, 2) an organizational culture in student affairs which rewards long hours and does not value balance, and 3) jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated. An additional factor reached consensus in Round Two, but dropped out of consensus in Round Three: lack of support and understanding from a supervisor.

3. What do working mothers in student affairs feel are the most important factors in managing work and family for a woman in student affairs?

Through the Round Two and Round Three questionnaires, panelists participated in a voting and ranking process for the work environment factors they had identified as positive and negative influences on successful work-family balance. The most important factors which emerged were: 1) flexibility of

their work schedule, 2) supportive supervision, 3) manageable job description, 4) few weekend and evening work obligations, 5) a supportive organizational culture, and 6) adequate compensation and benefits.

### **Conclusions**

The review of the literature and the data generated by this study suggest that work environment factors do influence working mothers in student affairs in both positive and negative ways. Factors which are most important are very similar to those identified in the literature, and problematic factors appear to be compounded by the workaholic culture which is pervasive in student affairs.

The U.S. Department of Labor surveyed working women in 1994 and found that the most pressing problem facing women on the job was finding the flexibility to balance work and family (Swiss, 1998). The most important work environment factors identified in the Department of Labor study were work schedule, job demands and employer support. These parallel the three most important factors identified in this research, which were flexible work schedule, supportive supervision, and manageable job demands.

### **Flexible work schedule**

Working mothers need to feel that they have the flexibility in the workplace to respond to emergencies involving their children. Often student affairs professionals are working in environments where shortage of staff and resources do not offer the redundancy of workers who are interchangeable. If a crisis comes up in a residence hall, there is no one who can substitute for the Director of Residence Life. If a student activities advisor works with a student group in planning a major evening program, then her child comes down with chicken pox, she feels there is a difficult choice to be made. Naturally her child needs her, so she would like to stay home, but there is no back-up advisor who can attend the student event and supervise inexperienced student programmers through the activity.

Sometimes it is the patchwork of childcare and school which breaks down: a childcare provider is ill or late, a grandparent is unable to pick up the child and transport him to an afterschool activity, or the child's school calls and expects the parent to pick up his/her child immediately. The flexibility to respond to these unforeseen circumstances requires a workplace which has cross-trained professionals so that reasonably seamless transitions can take place.

In addition to impromptu flexibility, the work schedule needs to be flexible enough to handle planned changes in work days or hours.

For example, one participant in this study indicated that she negotiated a reduced work week and corresponding pay cut when she returned to work after maternity leave. "I am not supposed to work Fridays," she stated, "but in reality, things keep coming up that no one else can handle. That means I need to come to the office on Friday two or three times each month. I feel like I am working forty hours per week or more, but the university is now paying me less."

Flexibility in work schedule can also mean that working mothers can change their work hours from one day to the next or from one week to the next in order to accommodate busy times at work or at home. This flexibility was cited as a positive aspect of working in student affairs, especially in departments where supervisors trusted subordinates to flex their schedule without a structured approval process. The trust of the supervisor that an employee will get the job done was important to study participants.

At times, policies which seem to support flexibility are actually problematic for working mothers. For example, public universities in California have the policy that any adjustment in work schedule for salaried employees must take place within the same week as the extra hours worked. If a fraternity and sorority advisor, for example, puts in twenty hours during a weekend working with students on the recruitment process, she is expected to project that extra time and ask in advance for adjusted time off during the week prior to

recruitment or the week after. One Greek life advisor in this study finds herself caught in a bind by this policy. "In reality," she stated, "this policy does not work well, because the week prior to recruitment is planning time with students and the week following is the first week of classes. I'm on to the next crisis or program. I can't take the time off that week, in fact I am lucky if I get to catch up on my sleep." If the policy offered the flexibility to save that time off for summer or winter break, however, when the office is less busy, this working mother would be able to use the time to be with her family.

### **Supportive supervision**

The data generated in this study indicated the five most important traits shared by supportive supervisors: 1) trusts subordinates to set their own schedules, 2) creates and enforces policies which support balance, 3) takes an interest in subordinates and their families, 4) grants autonomy, and 5) articulates and models a "family-first" priority. This is consistent with the review of the literature which suggested that the perception of the supervisor as flexible and supportive was key to lessening work-family role strain (Greenberger et al., 1989; Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990). The existence of policies regarding leave, benefits and flextime and actual enforcement of those policies was considered an indicator of a family-

friendly work environment (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Daloz, 1998; Mackavey & Levin, 1998).

One finding in this study, however, highlighted the importance of trust in working relationships between research study participants and their supervisors. Participants felt that their supervisors often did not trust them to get the job done despite the flexing of their work schedules. As one woman wrote, "I know I serve students as effectively as I did before I had children, but I get tired of having to justify my time."

Those participants in this study who feel they have their supervisor's support, obtained that support through a combination of selecting a job with a supportive supervisor and engaging in regular direct communication with their supervisor about their family priorities.

### **Job Demands**

Participants in this study felt that a manageable job description which gives flexibility about when and where to do the job was the third most important work environment factor for working mothers' successful life balance. The continuous pressure to do more with less time is consistent for all employees, but the extra pressure to meet the demands of an ever-increasing list of duties seems to weigh more

heavily on working mothers. One participant described this as follows:

There has to be recognition that each staff person can only accomplish so many things. It seems that we often add more and more to each job description without taking anything away. This system leads to a lack of balance among professionals because the "to do" list seems never ending and always expanding.

### **Recommendations**

Working mothers in student affairs represent a very talented group of professionals who have a deep commitment to the profession. The organizational culture in student affairs, according to this study, tends to reward long hours and unhealthy balance. The data from this study which indicate that one third of the study participants are considering withdrawing from the profession support the notion that role stress is a contributing factor in the attrition of women professionals in student affairs as they approach upper management levels. What can be done to retain this experienced and educated cadre of professionals? How can working mothers in this profession create change in their working environment to get the support they need to be successful? When seeking a position in student affairs, how can a mother (or mother-to-be) identify working environments



which will be supportive to their successful life balance? The data from this project and information from the review of the literature suggest strategies to address all three of these questions.

### **Recommendations for Leaders in Higher Education**

When asked how the culture in student affairs might be changed, two out of every five participants looked to the leadership in the profession to set an example and to initiate change. “I imagine that it would take power and influence,” stated one panelist, “because this is a philosophy that is communicated from the top down.” The statements of panelists were consistent with the findings of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* survey (Wilson, 1995), which determined that colleges which were rated family-friendly had campus presidents and high-level administrators who were publicly supportive of work-family initiatives. The findings of this study highlight a number of strategies for impacting the culture of the profession by changing attitudes and practices at the top. The researcher has the following suggestions for leaders in higher education who would like to recruit, retain and advance working mothers in student affairs:

1. Through N.A.S.P.A., sponsor a meeting of senior student affairs officers to hear research and testimony about this issue, and to challenge them to set a leadership agenda for balance.

2. Focus media attention on higher education's shortcomings in promoting family-friendly policies and work climate in order to pressure presidents and trustees to take action.
3. Ask university human resources departments to provide educational programs for senior administrators to convince them of the value of family-friendly policies and programs in terms of employee morale and productivity.
4. Assess staff needs in terms of work-family balance on a regular basis.
5. Initiate conversations about work-family balance with all staff, both one-on-one and in meetings of staff.
6. Model appropriate work-family balance and show by your actions that you value family-first priorities.
7. Establish a climate of trust. Convey your trust of employees' ability to get the work done while honoring a family-first priority.
8. Advocate for a campus-wide commitment to educating students concerning healthy life balance. An important part of that education should be support of individuals modeling balance in all parts of the campus community.
9. Implement policies which support balance including generous parental leave policies, creation of staggered work schedules, providing recognition for parents who regularly volunteer at

their child's school or with youth activities in the community, allowing transition time when employees return from parental leave so they can gradually increase their hours and workload and providing subsidies for daycare,

10. Provide affordable and high quality daycare for children of staff on or near campus. Provide childcare referrals in the community close to campus.
11. Educate supervisors with regard to family-friendly policies and benefits, and reward supervisors who make their subordinates feel comfortable about accessing those benefits.
12. Provide after-school transportation for employees' children to on-campus after-school supervised activity centers.
13. Bring professional development opportunities to campus for groups of staff as opposed to sending large numbers of staff to overnight conferences.
14. Establish a policy, both formal and informal, of welcoming staff families to evening and weekend activities on campus.
15. Hold staff retreats on campus or nearby so that staff can return home in the evening.
16. Provide part-time positions and job-sharing opportunities at all levels of administration.
17. Cross-train staff so that there is redundancy to cover responsibilities during unforeseen absences.

18. Recognize and publicly articulate the special talents which parents bring to their work in the profession.

### **Recommendations for Working Mothers in Student Affairs**

“What I am struck by,” states one participant, “is how we as student affairs practitioners have the solutions within our grasp. We can identify the problems, but we do not have to be subject to them if we apply the same professional skills as we apply on a daily basis in working with students. Perhaps we simply need to be empowered.” Her opinion is echoed by one out of every five panelists in this study who feel that the working mothers in student affairs need to find a voice to express what is important to them and to search for allies and role models to carry their message to all stakeholders in the campus community. The guilt which one third of the participants admitted feeling may come, this study suggests, as much from the expectations working mothers place upon themselves as from the demands of others in the workplace. “As mothers,” said one panelist, “we need to be real with ourselves, put our families first, and not be afraid to ask for help.”

The researcher makes the following recommendations to working mothers in student affairs who would like to positively impact their work environment:

1. Publish the results of this study widely on your campus.

2. Conduct an educational session at major student affairs professional association meetings with other working mothers.
3. Form a campus support group for working mothers and meet regularly to exchange ideas and strategies.
4. Initiate conversations about work family balance with your supervisor.
5. Approach the campus Human Resources Department to conduct educational programs for working parents so that all are fully advised of their rights.
6. Include your family in campus activities on weekends or in the evening; bring along your family to professional conferences out of town.
7. State your personal family-first priorities often to students, parents, and colleagues.
8. Negotiate a regular schedule to telecommute.
9. Place the question of work-family balance before your staff group and together brainstorm creative solutions which would honor family priorities but still get the job done (staggered schedules, short shifts at major campus events, cross-training, etc.)
10. Model a balanced life so that younger professionals and students have the benefit of seeing family-first priorities in action.

11. Make sure that your children know the staff in your department so that they have a relationship with them.

### **Recommendations for Finding Supportive Work Environments**

As women search for a position in student affairs, they may be thinking more about the job responsibilities than about life balance, but the results of this study indicate that job candidates should be clear about their priorities relative to work-family issues. Participants in this study had the following suggestions for women looking for supportive work environments:

1. Look closely at the demands of the job and ask questions about how those responsibilities are carried out.
2. Assess how many other employees in the department have children and how they feel about their ability to balance work and family.
3. Ask the Human Resources Department on the campus for specific information regarding work-family benefits.
4. If you think you may be having or adopting a child during your employment at the position, be sure to ask about maternity leave policies.
5. Utilize the network in student affairs to find out about the campus and department climates with regard to balancing work and family.

6. Ask a potential supervisor about their policy regarding including families of staff in campus activities.
7. Research the campus childcare services.
8. When you have been offered a job, negotiate telecommuting and flexible schedule options in your contract.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The complex problem of work-family balance has been examined carefully in corporate American over the last several decades (Swiss, 1998). Higher education is clearly behind the curve of reform with regard to creative strategies to reduce work-family stress for employees and thus few universities are able to realize the benefits of recruiting, retaining and advancing working mothers (Wilson, 1995). The little research which has been done on work environment for working mothers in student affairs has focused on small samples or case studies. While these studies have merit in introducing the issues, further research is needed to determine just how many parents are working in the profession and what their needs might be. Individual campuses need to assess the needs of working parents in their divisions of student affairs, and the profession as a whole needs to find a way to determine the career paths of working parents in their midst.

More studies are needed to discover best practices in encouraging work-family balance on campuses throughout the world. More studies which identify clear strategies for campuses to change the work climate would be helpful to practitioners.

Several possible future projects specifically emerged from this study. Participants in this study suggested that there may be differences in work-family balance between specialty areas of student affairs work, and studies which explore those campus micro-climates would be helpful. This study focused on working mothers specifically, and replication of this research with working fathers could yield interesting comparative information. Since participants and the literature strongly suggest that campus climate is influenced heavily by the work-family attitudes of high-level administrators, a study of campus Presidents' or Vice Presidents' attitudes toward work-family balance would be helpful.

There were comments made by participants in this study which supported findings in the literature that working mothers have been made to feel that balance problems mean they are not good workers or not good mothers. Studies on the self-perception of working mothers in student affairs would reveal the extent to which they experience role stress related to their own perceived failure to meet an image they hold of themselves as *superwomen*.

The study revealed the need for wide dissemination of research,



strategies and policy information to working parents in the student affairs profession. There is also clearly a need for individual campuses to assess the needs of their workers. Campus focus groups could identify ways to impact campus climate and would provide specific feedback for local administrators.

In terms of the strategies recommended in this report, it would be interesting to explore which were most effective for leaders in the profession and for working mothers. It might be helpful to examine campuses which have been particularly successful in promulgating a family-friendly work atmosphere, and to perform case studies of those campus climates.

As future research is conducted, higher education must acknowledge a role in shaping the expectations of tomorrow's leaders. While working mothers in student affairs struggle to meet the needs of their employers and of their families, college students are learning important lessons by watching the struggle. A final suggestion for future research is a study of the perceptions students have of the importance of family to faculty, staff and administration on their campuses.

### **Concluding Remarks**

There are many subtle factors which affect a woman's ability to balance the demands of her work with those of her family. Her self-

image, her professional goals, her interpersonal relationships, and her support network are all factors. As leaders manage higher education organizations which include working mothers, they must be attuned to these factors which affect the participation of those women in the life of their campuses.

One perceptive participant stated that microclimates are present on most campuses where working mothers feel supported and nurtured as professionals and as people. Until those microclimates become the norm for higher education student affairs, the field will continue to be dominated at the highest levels by those who put career before family. Future generations of women, entering the field from masters' programs in ever increasing numbers, will either find that the profession embraces the *whole* person or will begin to look outside academe for their next career move. The need to blaze a trail for future mothers in our profession was clear in some of the statements of participants in this study. This is, however, just one more need which clamors for the attention of already harried and exhausted women. One participant said:

I can't tell you how many times people have called me superwoman. I don't know whether to laugh or cry. Some people have asked me how I keep everything together and I always respond with the fact that I have a supportive husband, I pray a lot, and I always wonder whether I am doing the right

thing. Luckily I have the majority of my weekends with the family – they are at such a precious age. I just don't want to have any regrets. There is a part of me that wants to give it a try [staying home with children]. Then I think about all the time and energy I have put into my career. I love what I do, but, at what cost?

It is significant that two of the original participants in this study withdrew because of family medical crises: one to care for a critically ill child and one to care for an elderly parent. Through another colleague, the researcher found that another participant in this study has had to take a medical leave of absence since she completed the Round Three questionnaire because she has developed a rare virus which was exacerbated by overwork and stress. It is no accident that mothers who work in student affairs are suffering from the stress of caring for the many people who need their help. The challenge this study places before leaders in the profession is finding ways to support these dedicated professionals through the establishment of healthy balance in working environments.

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## **Appendix A Round Zero**

### **Consent Form for Participants in a Delphi study on The Balancing Act: Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs by Kim Braun Padulo**

#### **Purpose of the research, research methodology, and duration of project**

I understand that the purpose of this research project is to identify environmental factors which support and those which detract from the career success of women with children who work in student affairs.

I also understand that the project will be conducted using the Delphi technique. Delphi methodology consists of a series of three or four questionnaires which are completed individually by a panel of participants and submitted to the researcher via electronic mail. I understand that the researcher will summarize and feedback the responses of the panelists to all participants and this will serve as an anonymous group communication process between myself and other mothers working in student affairs.

I agree to participate in the project by completing three to four rounds of surveys in the Delphi study via electronic mail and an additional initial demographic survey which will provide background information to the researcher. I understand that it will take approximately 30 minutes to complete each survey and that my participation in the project will be over a period of approximately three months commencing August 2000.

#### **Risk and benefits to participants**

I understand that the use of electronic mail as the conduit for my answers to the survey may pose the risk of third party interception of my answers. (If you are concerned about your employer monitoring your e-mail communication, you may want to use your home e-mail address for purposes of this project)

I understand that the researcher anticipates very minimal associated risks to me through this project and that by participating in this project that I will receive a written summary of the research results six to eight weeks after filling out the last round of the Delphi study.

#### **Participant confidentiality**

I understand that the researcher will know my name and identity, however that information will not be made available at any time to other participants in this study. I am assured by the researcher that neither my name, the name of my institution, nor my responses will be identified at any time during or after the project is completed.

#### **Voluntary participation**

I agree that my participation in this research is completely voluntary and understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

#### **Participant questions and agreements**

I understand that before I sign this consent form and agree to participate in this project, that I may clarify any aspect of the project with the researcher. I also agree that there is no agreement, written or verbal, beyond that expressed on the consent form.

I, the undersigned, understand the above expectations and, on that basis, I give consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B Round Zero

### Demographic Questionnaire

A Delphi Study on  
**The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student  
Affairs**

by Kim Braun Padulo

Your responses to the following items are requested for the development of an overall profile of the respondents and institutions participating in this Delphi study. Your specific responses will be kept anonymous in the development of the general profile.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. College or University: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Student enrollment at your college or university (full time equivalent):  
Circle one:
 

Less than 1,000	1,001 - 5,000	5,001-10,000
10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,000 +
4. Type of institution:  
Circle one:
 

Public	Private
--------	---------
5. Your job title: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Brief description of major job-related responsibilities:
  
7. Number of years in current position: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of years in the student affairs profession: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you supervise other staff members? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Number of children living with you at home: \_\_\_\_\_
11. List ages of all children living with you at home: \_\_\_\_\_



12. Do you have any children or stepchildren not living with you? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, please list ages of these children or stepchildren: \_\_\_\_\_  
 How frequently do you have responsibility for these children? Please explain briefly.
13. How many adults, including yourself, live in your home? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please briefly explain your relationship to each of these adults:
14. Your telephone number: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_
15. Your fax number: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_
16. Your e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please note: Some employers may monitor e-mail communication. If you are concerned that such is the case at your institution, you may want to use a home e-mail address for this study.*
17. Your age: (circle one)  
 20 - 30          31- 40          41- 50          51- 60          61 +
18. Academic degree(s) you have earned. Please circle all that apply:  
 Bachelor's Degree          Master's Degree          Doctoral Degree
19. Your race/ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your responses. Please return this demographic questionnaire in the enclosed envelope by (date) to:**

Kim Braun Padulo  
 Research Project Coordinator  
 11621 Montecito Road  
 Los Alamitos, CA 90720  
 kpadulo@earthlink.net  
 (562)594-9617 (home)  
 (562)985-8659 (work)  
 FAX(562)985-5683

## Appendix C Round Zero

### Demographic Questionnaire Results

A Delphi Study on  
**The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student  
Affairs**

by Kim Braun Padulo

Your responses to the following items are requested for the development of an overall profile of the respondents and institutions participating in this Delphi study. Your specific responses will be kept anonymous in the development of the general profile.

1. Name:
2. College or University:
3. Student enrollment at your college or university (full time equivalent):
 

1	2.9%	Less than 1,000
9	27.7%	1,001 - 5,000
6	17.1%	5,001-10,000
1	2.9%	10,001-15,000
6	17.1%	15,001-20,000
12	34.3%	20,000 +
4. Type of institution:
 

20	57.1%	Public
15	42.9%	Private
5. Your job title:
6. Brief description of major job-related responsibilities:
7. Number of years in current position:
 

16	45.7%	0 – 3 years
12	34.3%	3.1 – 6 years
3	8.6%	6.1 – 9 years
3	8.6%	9.1 – 12 years
1	2.9%	More than 12 years

8. Number of years in the student affairs profession:
- |   |       |                    |
|---|-------|--------------------|
| 2 | 5.7%  | 0 – 3 years        |
| 7 | 20%   | 3.1 – 6 years      |
| 4 | 11.4% | 6.1 – 9 years      |
| 6 | 17.1% | 9.1 – 12 years     |
| 5 | 14.3% | 12.1 – 15 years    |
| 5 | 14.3% | 15.1 – 18 years    |
| 4 | 11.4% | 18.1 – 21 years    |
| 2 | 5.7%  | More than 21 years |
9. Do you supervise other staff members?  
If yes, how many?
- |   |       |          |
|---|-------|----------|
| 4 | 11.4% | Zero     |
| 2 | 5.7%  | One      |
| 3 | 8.6%  | Two      |
| 5 | 14.3% | Three    |
| 6 | 17.1% | Four     |
| 1 | 2.9%  | Five     |
| 5 | 14.3% | Six      |
| 2 | 5.7%  | Seven    |
| 2 | 5.7%  | Eight    |
| 0 | 0.0%  | Nine     |
| 2 | 5.7%  | Ten      |
| 0 | 0.0%  | Eleven   |
| 0 | 0.0%  | Twelve   |
| 0 | 0.0%  | Thirteen |
| 0 | 0.0%  | Fourteen |
| 1 | 2.9%  | Fifteen  |
10. Number of children living with you at home:
- |    |       |       |
|----|-------|-------|
| 13 | 37.1% | One   |
| 20 | 57.1% | Two   |
| 1  | 2.9%  | Three |
| 1  | 2.9%  | Four  |
11. List ages of all children living with you at home:
- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| <u>13</u> | <u>≥ 1</u>  |
| <u>9</u>  | <u>= 2</u>  |
| <u>2</u>  | <u>= 3</u>  |
| <u>5</u>  | <u>= 4</u>  |
| <u>5</u>  | <u>= 5</u>  |
| <u>3</u>  | <u>= 6</u>  |
| <u>5</u>  | <u>= 7</u>  |
| <u>3</u>  | <u>= 8</u>  |
| <u>3</u>  | <u>= 9</u>  |
| <u>2</u>  | <u>= 10</u> |
| <u>0</u>  | <u>= 11</u> |
| <u>2</u>  | <u>= 12</u> |
| <u>4</u>  | <u>= 13</u> |
| <u>2</u>  | <u>= 14</u> |
| <u>1</u>  | <u>= 15</u> |
| <u>0</u>  | <u>≥ 15</u> |

12. Do you have any children or stepchildren not living with you? Yes 3 No 32  
 If yes, please list ages of these children or stepchildren: 26, 11, 22  
 How frequently do you have responsibility for these children? Please explain briefly.
13. How many adults, including yourself, live in your home?  
 Please briefly explain your relationship to each of these adults:
- |    |       |  |
|----|-------|--|
| 4  | 11.4% | Self only  |
| 28 | 80%   | Self and husband   |
| 2  | 5.7%  | Three (self, mother, stepfather; self, husband, brother) |
| 1  | 2.9%  | Four (self, husband, mother, stepfather)                 |
14. Your telephone number:
15. Your fax number:
16. Your e-mail address:  
*Please note: Some employers may monitor e-mail communication. If you are concerned that such is the case at your institution, you may want to use a home e-mail address for this study.*
17. Your age: (circle one)
- |    |       |         |
|----|-------|---------|
| 3  | 8.6%  | 20 - 30 |
| 16 | 45.7% | 31- 40  |
| 15 | 42.9% | 41- 50  |
| 1  | 2.9%  | 51- 60  |
| 0  | 0.0%  | 61 +    |
18. Academic degree(s) you have earned:
- |    |       |                   |
|----|-------|-------------------|
| 35 | 100%  | Bachelor's Degree |
| 21 | 60%   | Master's Degree   |
| 10 | 28.6% | Doctoral Degree   |
19. Your race/ethnicity:
- |    |       |                           |
|----|-------|---------------------------|
| 21 | 60%   | Caucasian                 |
| 3  | 8.6%  | Mexican-American          |
| 5  | 14.3% | African-American          |
| 2  | 5.7%  | Asian-American            |
| 1  | 2.9%  | Caucasian/Native-American |
| 1  | 2.9%  | Mexican-American/Irish    |
| 1  | 2.9%  | Filipino-American         |
| 2  | 5.7%  | Declined to state         |

## **Appendix D**

### **Round One Questionnaire**

A Delphi Study on  
The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs  
by Kim Braun Padulo  
*Administered via electronic mail.*

The literature in professions other than higher education indicates that various factors in the workplace environment affect working mothers' career success in both positive and negative ways. Work environment factors are those aspects of the working environment which affect the employee's ability to do her job. These may include (but are not limited to) actual job responsibilities, the physical layout of the workplace, the informal and formal expectations of supervisors, subordinates and co-workers, work schedules, and the availability of workplace services such as childcare. This study is focused on discovering what work environment factors support and detract from career success for working mothers in student affairs.

The methodology used in this research will be a Delphi process. The literature recommends that the researcher pose initial questions in the broadest terms, so that participants are not limited in their responses. Research study participants will be provided with feedback (in compiled format only) regarding the responses of all participants and measures of central tendency as the study progresses. Subsequent rounds of questionnaires will help to refine the meaning of participant responses and develop agreement and consensus among participants.

In answering this questionnaire, please consider all of the factors in your environment at work, including the above, but also any other factors which you feel are important in shaping your work environment. To make sure that your e-mail program returns your answers in the appropriate format, please copy the five questions below, and paste them into a new message with your answers written between the questions.

**QUESTION #1:**

What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?

**QUESTION #2:**

What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?

**QUESTION #3:**

As a working mother, what do you feel are the most important job-related factors in managing work and family?

**QUESTION #4:**

As a mother, what are the factors you would look for if you were seeking a new position in student affairs? (Please focus on those factors relative to your management of work and family responsibilities)

**QUESTION #5:**

(Only answer if you had your first child after beginning your career in student affairs)  
How (if at all) has motherhood changed the way you do your job and your career aspirations?

**Thank you for your responses. Please return this Round #1 Delphi questionnaire via e-mail by December 1 to: kpadulo@csulb.edu**

**Appendix E**  
**Round One Letter of Transmittal**

**Kim Braun Padulo**  
Research Project Coordinator  
11621 Montecito Road  
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

January 5, 2001

Dear Research Project Participant:

Enclosed are the compiled results of the first round of the Delphi Questionnaire conducted last month via e-mail. I thought it would be easier for you to digest the information from the compiled results in hard copy, plus you can keep it before you as you answer the next round questionnaire. I included some quotes which were representative of viewpoints on several questions. Despite the vast diversity of the women on our panel, the differences between campuses and the varied job responsibilities, your answers were remarkably similar.

During this coming week, I will e-mail the second round questionnaire, which will narrow our consensus on the pros and cons of balancing family with work in student affairs. We will also shift our focus slightly to potential solutions to the balancing problems we have identified so that the outcomes of this study can be useful to current and future professionals in our field. You will have two weeks to complete the questionnaire and return it via e-mail.

Thank you for working with me on this project. I appreciate your time and your attention to the topic. I look forward to your responses to the Round Two questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Kim Braun Padulo

## Appendix F Round One Compiled Responses

A Delphi Study on  
The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs  
*by Kim Braun Padulo*

### QUESTION #1:

**What are the environmental factors which detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?**

#	%	Job Responsibilities Factors
23	66%	Weekend and evening work/long hours
11	31%	Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs
7	20%	On-call requirement for campus emergencies 24-7
5	14%	Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than 1 day
3	9%	Quantity of work expected
2	6%	Hectic times of the year for student affairs are also most hectic for parents
2	6%	Constant pressure at work to do more with less resources
1	3%	Overabundance of meetings which limits flexibility in schedule
1	3%	Unclear job responsibilities
1	3%	Lack of adequate clerical support
1	3%	Having to bring work home
1	3%	Requirement to live on campus
#	%	Climate/Relational/Psychological Factors
18	51%	Lack of understanding/support among co-workers or with supervisor
9	26%	Organizational culture rewards long hours & does not value balance
6	17%	The "helping nature" of the job - need to put students first
4	11%	Guilt
4	11%	Family expectations and obligations at home (not work environment)
2	6%	Job-related stress
1	3%	To be politically correct, you can't mention family issues at staff meetings
1	3%	Have few role models of working mothers of young children in student affairs
1	3%	Negative stereotypes of expectant mothers and working mothers
1	3%	Need to role model sacrifice
#	%	Job Compensation/Logistics Factors
15	43%	Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work
7	20%	Long, stressful commute
6	17%	Jobs in student affairs are often poorly compensated
2	6%	Part-time or job-sharing options are not available and not feasible
2	6%	Poor/expensive benefits (medical, etc.) which do not extend to family
1	3%	Lack of supportive policies from the university
1	3%	Availability of affordable housing in the area
1	3%	Insufficient funds to provide r & r when not working
1	3%	University summer programs that are not affordable for employees
1	3%	Privacy/office space at work
1	3%	Quick access to facilities such as restroom, food courts
#	%	Other Types of Factors
1	3%	Achieving balance requires standing still in your career
1	3%	Unresponsive businesses/ customer service (businesses who will only do business from 9-5 or require multiple contacts for resolution of any issues)

## QUOTES FROM QUESTION #1

*“. . .the oft times pervasive opinion within Student Affairs that we should always be available for students as well as our own internalized expectations that we should always be available. . . we should go on staff overnight and weekend retreats, attend programs/activities at night and on the weekends, work 12 hour days to handle the latest student crisis, etc. Not being available to do all of these things can translate into being seen as not committed to students.”*

*“When administrators and supervisors equate "hours spent on the job" with "dedication to the field" I feel proper balance of family and career advancement is impossible. Most supervisors want someone to put in extremely long hours and weekends which can get in the way of balancing, effectively, family and work. Just because I keep a tight schedule does not mean I am not committed or that I cannot get the job done efficiently!”*

*“This stupid work ethic drive that is so much apart of US society. I have traveled all over the world, and we are by far the only country that drives people 24/7. We give 2 week vacations ñ other countries give a minimum of 6 weeks. Latin American and Spanish speaking countries observe siesta, giving people family time during the day. Family time is so difficult to find in our work schedules.”*

*“I am also very aware of setting an example for staff and believe that I need to model what I expect from my staff. I have worked with many professionals who do not have families to manage and I am aware that my personal choices do not necessitate that they have to take on the evening and weekend times that have proven to be so challenging for me. I do not want to create a double standard, so that adds some pressure for me.”*

## QUESTION #2:

**What are the environmental factors which enhance a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs?**

#	%	Job Responsibilities Factors
24	69%	Flexibility of work schedule
3	9%	Option to telecommute on some days/access to technology
2	6%	Jobs which can be done over a period of time / not strict deadlines
2	6%	Working less than 40 hours per week - option for reduced schedule
1	3%	Not a lot of meetings
1	3%	Clear work expectations
1	3%	Group work on projects
1	3%	Stability of the job itself
#	%	Climate/Relational/Psychological Factors
19	54%	Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive co-workers and supervisors
10	29%	I can bring my family to events, they are viewed as part of the community
8	23%	Networking with other colleagues who are parents
6	17%	An institution rich in resources (people who can provide advice, facilities to use - libraries, fitness facilities, after-school programs etc.): exposure to higher ed.
4	11%	Working for an institution that values family, wellness and a balanced lifestyle
3	9%	Work is fulfilling and interesting
2	6%	Informal atmosphere
1	3%	Philosophical congruity
1	3%	Insight / appreciation for students and children as individuals and for parents
1	3%	A work environment that values individual differences
1	3%	Having a female supervisor



#	%	Job Compensation/Logistics Factors
9	26%	Affordable, quality childcare right in the workplace or very nearby
6	17%	Ability to live on campus or close to campus/ short or no commute
5	14%	Family-friendly compensation/benefit structures
3	9%	A private office -- important for nursing
2	6%	Ability to use sick time when your children are sick
1	3%	The ability to make private phone calls from my office phone
1	3%	Good pay
1	3%	Access to University health services for children of employees
1	3%	Small size of the campus
1	3%	Nearby area that children and baby sitter could stay while Mom is working

#	%	Other Types of Factors
5	14%	Great partner at home (not work environment)
3	9%	Colleagues and students serve as babysitters
3	9%	Higher education schedules may allow for vacations with coincide with your child's school vacation schedule
1	3%	Supportive family (not work environment)
1	3%	A well organized home (not work environment)

## QUOTES FROM QUESTION #2

*"There is a cognitive and affective balance between behaviors and philosophies at work and home. Student affairs managers and parents must have or develop some of the same skills in order to be successful. Such skills include flexibility, consensus building, multi-tasking, schedule management, empathy, philosophical/principled rationale for actions, developmental appreciation. Thus, one isn't having to shift gears so much mentally between home and work. In addition, colleagues generally share a similar philosophy that is greatly respectful of autonomy, creativity, fun, and the value of each individual. Hence, from other student affairs colleagues, a person receives much validation for work and home roles."*

*"...my office supplies me with a computer and software at home, as well as a modem, so that I can work there if need be."*

*"At some level I think we have more flexibility in our jobs. Because many of us are not working strict 8-5 jobs but must attend evening and weekend events (orientation, parents weekend, etc.), we also have the flexibility to come in a bit later at times or leave for doctors appointments, etc. without many repercussions."*

## QUESTION #3:

**As a working mother, what do you feel are the most important job-related factors in managing work and family?**

#	%	Job Responsibilities Factors
30	86%	Flexible schedule
8	23%	Manageable job responsibilities which give some flexibility about when and how to accomplish the job
6	17%	When weekends and evenings are required, work out schedules and share the load
4	11%	Option to work from home (telecommute and take work home)
4	11%	Quality support staff
4	11%	Keep evenings and weekends to a minimum
4	11%	Management role allows freedom, control and shorter hours
2	6%	Limited travel to conferences
1	3%	Opportunity to job-share
1	3%	Clear expectations
1	3%	No requirement to take work home

#	%	<u>Climate/Relational/Psychological Factors</u>
23	66%	Co-workers and supervisors sympathize with managing work and family
8	23%	Campus climate where your family is welcomed / family-first priority valued
4	11%	Talk about balancing work and family openly in staff meetings
4	11%	Clear personal priorities
3	9%	Fulfilling work
3	9%	Trust & freedom
1	3%	Philosophical congruity
1	3%	Supervisor who is a mother
1	3%	The stability of working in an academic environment
1	3%	Balancing stress
#	%	<u>Job Compensation/Logistics Factors</u>
5	14%	Available, close, quality, affordable childcare
3	9%	Short or no commute to work
3	9%	Insurance - can you get good medical coverage and be allowed to find the best doctors if your child has a special problem
3	9%	Compensation high enough to make it worth it to work
2	6%	Quality maternity leave policies
1	3%	Sufficient vacation time
1	3%	Policies on breastfeeding/pumping in the workplace
1	3%	Private office
1	3%	Supportive Human Resource staff
1	3%	Nearby area that children and baby sitter could stay while Mom works
#	%	<u>Other Types of Factors</u>
2	6%	Organization & time management
1	3%	Delegating
1	3%	Utilizing students
1	3%	After school programs on campus such as piano, dance, swimming, etc.

**QUESTION #4:**

**As a mother, what are the work environment factors you would look for if you were seeking a new position in student affairs?**

#	%	<u>Job Responsibilities Factors</u>
28	80%	Flexible work schedule
8	23%	Option to telecommute sometimes
7	20%	Little evening and weekend hours required
4	11%	Reasonable job expectations
3	9%	Part-time schedule or part-year schedule (such as a 10-month contract)
2	6%	Little supervision responsibilities
1	3%	Project work
1	3%	A secretary/administrative assistant
1	3%	Position working with management of staff rather than management of student programs
#	%	<u>Climate/Relational/Psychological Factors</u>
19	54%	Pro-family supervisor
6	17%	Pro-family campus culture & values
6	17%	Understanding and supportive co-workers
4	11%	Look for position which gives you freedom and trust
3	9%	I would look at the other women/moms at the and see how well they are able to balance their lives
2	6%	Family and children welcome at events and in office
2	6%	I would ask about an institution's cultural norms and values
2	6%	Philosophical congruity
2	6%	Value for creativity and competence
1	3%	Spiritual opportunities in environment
1	3%	Low potential for work-related stress

1 3% Assessment based on performance in my work area as opposed to based on visibility in the office

#	%	Job Compensation/Logistics Factors
15	43%	Affordable, on site or nearby childcare
10	29%	Sufficiently high salary to cover childcare and extra assistance at home
8	23%	Excellent benefits
7	20%	Affordable housing close to campus
7	20%	Little or no commute to work
2	6%	Vacation time adequate and fits child's vacation schedule
1	3%	Option to take children along when overnight trips are required
1	3%	Educational support
1	3%	Support for settling in the area with a family (schools, childcare, etc.)
#	%	Other Types of Factors
2	6%	Private office in convenient location
2	6%	Nearby quality schools
1	1%	University outreach to neighborhood schools

#### QUOTES FROM QUESTION #4

*"I believe that there is a bias against women with families, therefore in interviews, etc. one should not disclose too much...but at the same time you want to know the "real culture of the work environment". One must "DO YOUR HOMEWORK" before applying, interviewing and/or accepting a position."*

#### QUESTION #5:

(Only answered by those who had their first child after beginning their career in student affairs - therefore, percentages are not included)

**How (if at all) has motherhood changed the way you do your job and your career aspirations?**

#	Ways she has changed in doing her job
11	Now I work more reasonable hours
9	All of my priorities changed and my life is far more balanced
9	I am committed to fulfilling my job into a 40 hour work week
8	I work more efficiently
4	I am more focused and directed at work; I use my time more wisely
3	I am more understanding of the parents of the students
3	I don't get as stressed about work related problems
3	I see students I work with through parental perspective
3	I've learned to say no and set limits more clearly
3	When I go home, I am at home mentally
2	I am more understanding of students and their behavior
2	I take my child to lots of campus events/meetings
2	I now need to work through people to get the information I need since I can't be on site at all of the evening meetings and retreats
2	I am a better supervisor in many ways
2	I am much more creative
1	When my children were younger I protected my weekends better.
1	I am more forgiving of myself in relation to "unnecessary standards" such as a perfectly clean house or meals cooked from scratch
1	I am much more humble - I am not indispensable at work
1	I make decisions much more quickly
1	Psychology as a field can do a lot of parent-blaming and I do less now
1	I bring work home and do it when the children are asleep
1	I know that women without children are treated with more professional respect and are chosen to head committees and projects more often than working mothers in Student Affairs

- 1 I incorporate my motherhood experiences into conversations in the workplace a lot
- 1 I am always thinking of who I can call in a pinch
- 1 I want to set an example for my children
- 1 A compromise is made between myself and my husband as to which days I stay late

#### # Ways career aspirations have changed

- 14 I was ambitious, now I am more content to stay put for awhile or less motivated to pursue "the fast track"
- 5 My career planning takes into account my family needs as first priority
- 3 I realized that career success is not the most important factor in my life
- 2 I have cut back on my involvement in professional organizations & professional development
- 2 I am more determined to achieve my career goals
- 2 I am no longer so sure of my career aspirations
- 2 Don't want to supervise right now
- 2 My compensation (salary and benefits) is more important to me
- 1 More of an interest in managing projects as a solo project manager, than to be part of a staff
- 1 I often wish that I could be a stay home mother or work part time
- 1 A planned advanced degree has been put on hold.
- 1 I completed a graduate degree after my child was born as well as working full-time - I sacrificed myself and my health

#### QUOTES FROM QUESTION #5

*"Before having kids, I was driven and intense, worked 60 hours a week and expected that from others (or I didn't see them as committed), and made my job my number one priority. On a deeper level, I believe that my identity was tied up in my work. Since having children my priorities have changed. My family is my first priority. I leave work at 4:30 p.m. to pick up my kids from child care no matter what crisis I'm in the middle of. I've learned that what used to seem a "crisis" really can wait until tomorrow."*

*"My career and educational aspirations have not changed, I think that I have become more determined to achieve them. I want to be an example for my children, hopefully a role model. Having them go through school with me and negotiating time together and time for work is a challenge, but hopefully it will pay off with children who value time and understand what it takes to achieve."*

*"I make decisions that will keep students safe because I now truly understand the depth of emotions a parent has for their child. In terms of my career aspirations, I am more concerned about finding a safe place to raise my children and would be willing to change jobs/careers to do that. It is no longer about me and my career - it is about my kids and creating a home for them. It is very liberating!!! There is a sense of being able to do anything if it gets me to the end goal."*

*"Regrettably, one thing I have less time for is professional development opportunities. I have less time to read journals at work or at home and I am less likely to travel to conferences or even participate in a one-day program which would cause me to get behind with projects or have to be away from home for extended periods."*

*"Prior to having my son, I was very consumed by my job and responsibilities. I was very eager to advance and also very willing to work extra hours. My family has put my priorities a little bit more into perspective. I have advanced but also have taken time off to spend with my son when he was a newborn and also worked a reduced schedule for a couple of years after he was born. In the meantime, I know now that I can manage my time better, still show initiative and hard work and still show that my family comes first but I am able to balance both. (I am expecting my second child and am anxious to see how much that will change things.)"*

## Appendix G

### Round Two Questionnaire

A Delphi Study on  
The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs  
by Kim Braun Padulo

*Administered via electronic mail.*

Last week, I mailed to you a compilation of the panel responses to the first round of this Delphi study (referenced parenthetically below after each question). You may wish to have those results before you as you complete these questions. There are two purposes to this second questionnaire: 1) to narrow the consensus regarding factors which enhance and detract from a mother's ability to balance student affairs work and family responsibilities, and 2) to begin to generate solutions to the problems identified in questionnaire round one. The following questionnaire should take about 30 minutes of your time. Additional comments or insights are welcome in response to any of the questions. Please complete and return to me via e-mail by January 24, 2001.

**QUESTION #1** -- Regarding factors which enhance a mother's ability to balance work and family in a student affairs career (*referencing answers to Questions #2 and #3 on the Round One Questionnaire*)

The following job-related factors which enhance ability to balance work and family were listed by at least four respondents in the round one questionnaire. Please select the five which are most important, in your opinion, and rank them in the order of importance below. Some factors may seem similar or overlapping -- choose the one which most represents your point of view.

- a. -- Flexibility of work schedule
- b. -- Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive co-workers
- c. -- Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor
- d. -- I can bring my family to events, they are viewed as part of the community
- e. -- Affordable, quality childcare right in the workplace or nearby
- f. -- Networking with other colleagues who are parents
- g. -- Manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job
- h. -- An institution rich in resources (people who can provide advice, facilities to use, after-school programs, etc.); exposure to higher education for my child
- i. -- Ability to live on campus or close to campus/ short or no commute
- j. -- Family-friendly compensation/benefit structures
- k. -- Working for an institution which values family, wellness and a balanced lifestyle
- l. -- Option to telecommute some days

Your top five, ranked from most important (#1) to least important:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTION #2** -- Factors in the student affairs workplace which present problems for working mothers to overcome (*Referencing both questions #1 and #3 on the Round One Questionnaire*)

The following job-related factors which detract from the ability to balance work and family were listed by at least four respondents in the round one questionnaire. Please select the five which are most troublesome, in your opinion, and rank them in the order of importance below. Some of the factors may seem similar or overlapping -- choose the one which best represents your point of view.

- a. -- Weekend and evening work/long hours
- b. -- Lack of understanding/support from supervisor
- c. -- Lack of understanding/support from co-workers
- d. -- Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work
- e. -- Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs
- f. -- Organizational culture rewards long hours and does not value balance
- g. -- Job responsibilities do not give flexibility about when and where to do the job
- h. -- On-call requirement for campus emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- i. -- Long, stressful commute
- j. -- The "helping nature" of the job -- need to put students first
- k. -- Jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated
- l. -- Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than one day
- m. -- Guilt
- n. -- No option to telecommute

Your top five, ranked from most troublesome (#1) to least troublesome:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTION #3** -- Strategies for overcoming obstacles to balance

For the five most troublesome job-related factors which you identified above, please list strategies which you use or which you have seen others use to maintain appropriate balance between work and family in a student affairs career.

**QUESTION #4** -- Other factors in maintaining balance (*referencing question #3 on the Round One Questionnaire*)

While the scope of this research project is limited to job-related factors in a working mother's balancing act, several other factors were mentioned in answers to the first questionnaire. One panel member even contacted me to express her dismay that my study does not address the assistance of family, friends and partners in making the working mother's life work. Her arguments (and those of my committee) have helped me acknowledge that factors outside the workplace affect a working mother's ability to effectively employ various strategies within the workplace, hence the following question:

Please list and comment on outside-of-work strategies you use or see others use successfully to maintain appropriate balance between work and family in a student affairs career.

**QUESTION #5** -- Supervision (*referencing Question #4 in the Round One Questionnaire*)

Fifty-four percent of our panel indicated that they would look for a supportive supervisor if they were seeking a new job in student affairs. This is a two-part question:

A. What does a supportive supervisor look like? Please describe supervision style, policies and procedures which a supervisor might use to support working mothers in student affairs.

B. For a mother (or mother-to-be) seeking a new position in student affairs, what are some strategies she might use during her job search to determine how supportive her potential supervisor might be?

## **Appendix H**

### **Round Two Letter of Transmittal**

Kim Braun Padulo  
Research Project Coordinator  
11621 Montecito Road  
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

February 15, 2001

Dear Research Project Participant:

Enclosed are the compiled results of the second round of the Delphi questionnaire conducted in the last few weeks via e-mail. Although the compilation is quite lengthy, I think you will find it interesting. You may want to keep it before you as you answer the next round questionnaire. I included some quotes which were representative of viewpoints on several questions. Despite the vast diversity of the women on our panel, the differences between campuses and the varied job responsibilities, your answers were remarkably similar on the first two questions. The diversity of the panel is more obvious in the answers regarding strategies.

During this week, I will e-mail the third round questionnaire, which will further narrow our consensus on the pros and cons of balancing family with work in student affairs. This questionnaire will also include questions which relate to retention of women with children in our profession. I will need your responses to this last questionnaire by March 5 in order to meet my writing deadlines.

You will receive compiled responses to the final questionnaire as well as an executive summary of the research findings sometime in April. I expect to defend my dissertation during the week of April 9, so expect to hear from me after that week with summary information and a token of appreciation.

Thank you for working with me on this project. I appreciate your time and your attention to the topic. It has been tremendously empowering to learn the many ways you balance your busy lives. I look forward to your responses to the final questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Kim Braun Padulo



## Appendix I Round Two Compiled Responses

A Delphi Study on  
The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs  
*by Kim Braun Padulo*

**QUESTION #1 – The following job-related factors which enhance ability to balance work and family were listed by at least four respondents in the round one questionnaire. Please select the five which are most important, in your opinion, and rank them in the order of importance below. Some factors may seem similar or overlapping -- choose the one which most represents your point of view. Responses are listed in order of frequency**

**a. -- Flexibility of work schedule**

31 (94%) placed in top 5

1st - 23 (70%)      2nd - 5 (15%)      3rd - 3 (9%)      4th - 0 (0%)      5th - 0 (0%)

**c. -- Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor**

29 (88%) placed in top 5

1st - 3 (9%)      2nd - 10 (30%)      3rd - 11 (33%)      4th - 2 (6%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**g. -- Manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job**

17 (51%) placed in top 5

1st - 3 (9%)      2nd - 1 (3%)      3rd - 4 (12%)      4th - 4 (12%)      5th - 5 (15%)

**b. -- Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive co-workers**

15 (46%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 6 (18%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 4 (12%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**e. -- Affordable, quality childcare right in the workplace or nearby**

15 (46%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 3 (9%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 9 (27%)      5th - 1 (3%)

**k. -- Working for an institution which values family, wellness and a balanced lifestyle**

13 (39%) placed in top 5

1st - 2 (6%)      2nd - 4 (12%)      3rd - 0 (0%)      4th - 1 (3%)      5th - 6 (18%)

**i. -- Ability to live on campus or close to campus/ short or no commute**

12 (36%) placed in top 5

1st - 1 (3%)      2nd - 2 (6%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 4 (12%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**j. -- Family-friendly compensation/benefit structures**

9 (27%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 0 (0%)      3rd - 3 (9%)      4th - 4 (12%)      5th - 2 (6%)

**d. -- I can bring my family to events, they are viewed as part of the community**

5 (15%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 1 (3%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 0 (0%)      5th - 2 (6%)

**h. -- An institution rich in resources (people who can provide advice, facilities to use, after-school programs, etc.); exposure to higher education for my child**

4 (12%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 0 (0%)      3rd - 0 (0%)      4th - 2 (6%)      5th - 2 (6%)

**f. -- Networking with other colleagues who are parents**

3 (9%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 0 (0%)      3rd - 0 (0%)      4th - 2 (6%)      5th - 1 (3%)

**l. -- Option to telecommute some days**

10 (30%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 1 (3%)      3rd - 5 (15%)      4th - 0 (0%)      5th - 4 (12%)

**QUESTION #2 -- The following job-related factors which detract from the ability to balance work and family were listed by at least four respondents in the round one questionnaire. Please select the five which are most troublesome, in your opinion, and rank them in the order of importance below. Some of the factors may seem similar or overlapping -- choose the one which best represents your point of view. Responses are listed in order of frequency**

**a. -- Weekend and evening work/long hours**

26 (79%) placed in top 5

1st - 13 (39%)      2nd - 2 (6%)      3rd - 5 (15%)      4th - 3 (9%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**f. -- Organizational culture rewards long hours and does not value balance**

19 (58%) placed in top 5

1st - 2 (6%)      2nd - 4 (12%)      3rd - 4 (12%)      4th - 5 (15%)      5th - 4 (12%)

**b. -- Lack of understanding/support from supervisor**

16 (50%) placed in top 5

1st - 3 (9%)      2nd - 7 (21%)      3rd - 4 (12%)      4th - 1 (3%)      5th - 1 (3%)

**k. -- Jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated**

14 (42%) placed in top 5

1st - 4 (12%)      2nd - 3 (9%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 2 (6%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**m. -- Guilt**

12 (36%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 2 (6%)      3rd - 3 (9%)      4th - 3 (9%)      5th - 4 (12%)

**i. -- Long, stressful commute**

11 (33%) placed in top 5

1st - 1 (3%)      2nd - 2 (6%)      3rd - 3 (9%)      4th - 3 (9%)      5th - 2 (6%)

**e. -- Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs**

10 (30%) placed in top 5

1st - 5 (15%)      2nd - 1 (3%)      3rd - 0 (0%)      4th - 4 (12%)      5th - 0 (0%)

**d. -- Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work**

10 (30%) placed in top 5

1st - 1 (3%)      2nd - 4 (12%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 1 (3%)      5th - 2 (6%)

**g. -- Job responsibilities do not give flexibility about when and where to do the job**

9 (27%) placed in top 5

1st - 2 (6%)      2nd - 2 (6%)      3rd - 1 (3%)      4th - 1 (3%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**i. -- Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than one day**

9 (27%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 0 (0%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 4 (12%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**c. -- Lack of understanding/support from co-workers**

8 (24%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 2 (6%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 3 (9%)      5th - 1 (3%)

**h. -- On-call requirement for campus emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

6 (18%) placed in top 5

1st - 2 (6%)      2nd - 1 (3%)      3rd - 2 (6%)      4th - 0 (0%)      5th - 1 (3%)

**j. -- The "helping nature" of the job -- need to put students first**

6 (18%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 4 (12%)      3rd - 1 (3%)      4th - 1 (3%)      5th - 0 (0%)

**n. -- No option to telecommute**

5 (15%) placed in top 5

1st - 0 (0%)      2nd - 0 (0%)      3rd - 1 (3%)      4th - 1 (3%)      5th - 3 (9%)

**QUESTION #3 -- Strategies for overcoming obstacles to balance**  
**For the five most troublesome job-related factors which you**  
**identified above, please list strategies which you use or which you**  
**have seen others use to maintain appropriate balance between work**  
**and family in a student affairs career.**

#	%	Strategies for: Weekend and evening work/long hours
6	18%	Try to include your children in campus activities where appropriate
4	12%	Flex your time ( with the support of supervisor) (i.e., come in early three days a week, and leave early. In exchange, return to campus a few evenings a month - when campus is full of activity)
4	12%	When you need to work a weekend, take time off the next week to bring things back in balance
3	9%	Set boundaries and keep them, i.e. "I won't attend a meeting past 8pm"
2	6%	Be selective about what you attend, distinguishing more clearly between events you <i>need</i> to attend vs. events that would be "good" for you to attend for visibility, support of staff, etc.
2	6%	Be clear with the student groups that you advise that you have to pick up children from daycare by a certain time
2	6%	Schedule one night a week for meetings and your partner picks up the kids
2	6%	When you have to put time in on weekends, do it in the early morning hours (5-9) when your family is just getting up.
1	3%	Have a Graduate Assistant who attends the evening meetings and meet with the student leaders during the work day
1	3%	Set limits on the amount of evening and weekend work-related things you will do with the understanding that this may hurt you professionally. "[For me] it came down to a simple choice of what would I regret in the future - not going to a student party or not spending time with my kids. The latter won!"
1	3%	Make the most out of non-work time

1	3%	Arrange for job sharing with someone who can handle the weekend and evening hours
1	3%	Be honest and open with students about time limitations; use this as an opportunity to dialogue with students about lifestyles, values, balancing, etc
1	3%	If you can't use compensation time, use other "acceptable" means to get needed time off ( <i>"such as a dentist appt, or my doctor's appt, or meetings out of the office or I'm sick"</i> )
1	3%	Learn to delegate
1	3%	Know ahead of time and plan to work evenings and some weekends

### **Strategies for: Organizational culture rewards long hours**

#### **# % and does not value balance**

2	6%	Model a new culture that is appreciative and accepting of a balanced life (i.e. <i>"As a supervisor, I insist that my staff work a reasonable work week. If they can't do their job in 40 hours (most weeks, anyway) I look at transferring some of their job responsibilities to someone else."</i> )
1	3%	Try to make yourself available at key events so you can be seen by the right people
1	3%	Schedule meetings with upper administration to check in with them
1	3%	Ask for different responsibilities. <i>"Sometimes we need to put ourselves out there and say we are willing to take on different responsibilities -- if we wait to be asked it might not ever happen. By asking it allows them to check in with you about their perceptions of you as a working mother"</i>
1	3%	Communicate your needs clearly to your
1	3%	Look for other employment where the healthy balance between work and family is obvious
1	3%	Realize that <i>"I am making a choice to be a mom, and I will do the best I can while at work."</i>
1	3%	Work with others to use different motivations to get the result you want -- i.e., <i>"my campus was paying so much in overtime it became worth it monetarily to push for 40 hour work week (a more balanced life-style)"</i>
a		
1	3%	Challenge culture in strategic planning - <i>"I'm asking for us as a college to address employee satisfaction."</i>

### **Strategies for: Lack of understanding/support from supervisor**

2	6%	Communicate with supervisor so that you are clear on expectations and needs ( <i>"Try to communicate your needs during one-on-one meeting times, and be honest, upbeat, and creative with how you could be better supported, without being critical"</i> )
1	3%	Try to educate him/her as you go
1	3%	Get your work done well and don't tell your supervisor everything
1	3%	If the supervisor is a major pain, start looking around for something better, and this time, try to find out how supportive the supervisor will be before signing on
1	3%	Allow your child to be familiar within the organization. It's good for your child to see Mommy in the scope of her responsibilities and it's good for the organization to know and see the commitment you have to your child.

### **Strategies for: Jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated**

1	3%	Look for ways to supplement ( <i>"I work a part time job at a local recreation center - not so much for the additional income but because I can pay an extremely reduced rate for summer camp which provides a huge cost savings for summer child care"</i> )
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1	3%	Consider a job change in higher education ( <i>"I have heard that I could work 50% at a community college and make what I am making full-time at a major research university"</i> )
1	3%	Consider a job change outside of higher education ( <i>"My next job move may also be out of higher education into something that pays more. Unfortunate but necessary."</i> )
1	3%	Try to negotiate a 10 month work year going into the job
1	3%	Teach courses at night to supplement income

#### **# % Strategies for: Guilt**

---

1	3%	Talk with friends in similar situations
1	3%	I often wonder if I should stay at home with my children. Make your decision and then move on - you can drive yourself crazy second guessing yourself
1	3%	Try to keep the viewpoint of : <i>"My job is my job and my family is real life"</i>
1	3%	Keep your self-esteem high <i>"I'm doing the best job that I can"</i>
1	3%	Work with women who help with the workload and understand women's issues
1	3%	Let go of having to do things perfectly.

#### **# % Strategies for: Long, stressful commute**

---

1	3%	Alternate work schedules with partner (i.e.: 7:30am - 4:30pm and 8:30am - 5:30pm) - one drops off child and one picks up to shorten daycare needed
1	3%	Use a vanpool or carpool to leave home early and return early
1	3%	Have relatives or neighbors to call on when traffic is bad and you can't get home on time
1	3%	Change work schedule (4/10 or 9/80) or reduce hours to avoid traffic,
1	3%	Utilize public transportation/commuting options in order to do small tasks (reading) or just relax
1	3%	Telecommute one day per week

#### **Strategies for: Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs**

---

#	%	
1	%	Coordinate with partner so that you trade off staying home whenever possible
1	%	Always have a back up plan in place...someone to cover your duties or someone to watch your child
1	%	Show the amount of work that you are actually able to get done on the occasions that you have been home with sick child or sick self -- report that analytical work that is hard to do in the office.
1	%	Have a plan with your supervisor that allows you to work from home when there are conflicts.

#### **Strategies for: Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work**

---

#	%	
1	3%	Hire a nanny -- this also helps with days when your child is sick and could not go to daycare
1	3%	Use child care benefits provided by spouse's work

#### **Strategies for: Job responsibilities do not give flexibility about when and where to do the job**

---

#	%	
2	6%	Be very honest with your prospective or current supervisor about the kind of flexibility you require; negotiate with him/her;
1	3%	Have a partner who can help and has a flexible job
1	3%	Have the university pay for remote computer access. You can still remain connected and productive during evening hours at home, after children are asleep

1	3%	Be smart about how you get my work done. Delve in, waste less time during the work day socializing with staff and colleagues, and limit the work you bring home.
1	3%	Telecommute one day a week
1	3%	When you hit a stretch of time when you cannot be home as much as usual, schedule "quality time" events. (i.e. take each child out for a special meal...just the two of you)
1	3%	Bring a creative proposal to the table which shows how you can accomplish your responsibilities with a flexible schedule; this proposal should include technological resources that would enhance your ability to carry out your responsibilities
1	3%	Don't use family demands as an excuse for anything, but try always to be proactive and honest about your needs outside of work
1	3%	Coordinate your project load so that things which are easy to do at home are mobile and you can get things that need to be done in the workplace done during business hours
1	3%	Stay organized so that you can have maximum flexibility.
1	3%	Prioritize things so that if you have to neglect something it isn't a really important task or it could be something to delegate to someone else.
1	3%	Eat at your desk at lunch to allow you to get my work done
1	3%	Spend an hour at home after children go to bed answering e-mails, writing letters, etc
1	3%	Have excellent communication with administrative staff, request their assistance in keeping your schedule, delegating tasks, asking them to follow-up

**Strategies for: Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than one day**

#	%	
2	6%	Make a conference into a family vacation -- go a day or two early or stay later after the conference
1	3%	Professional organizations should provide babysitting at the conference
1	3%	Have extended family available to assist when there are mandatory retreats/conferences
1	3%	When asked to go to a conference, really check the conference out to be sure it is worth your time. If someone else can learn the info and bring it back, ask if they can go.
1	3%	Be clear when asked to go to a conference that you need to see if you can get childcare before you can say yes.

**Strategies for: Lack of understanding/support from co-workers**

#	%	
2	6%	Do the best job you can- work hard, be collaborative, be a good listener-- strive to be a good co-worker to others.
1	3%	Directly ask co-workers/department members which events they expect you to attend to support them
1	3%	Honesty is best...communicate clearly and professionally with others.
1	3%	Talk to your supervisor about how the problems can be resolved with co-workers who are not supportive.
1	3%	Be as sensitive to staff without children as you are to staff with children, thereby modeling an environment which cares about everyone's needs and priorities outside of work
1	3%	Give certain staff who live-on and have after-hour duties get to flex their schedules so that they can have time-off during the work day to respond to other needs. Thereby creating a sense of fairness for everyone
1	3%	<i>"I realize that I had the same feeling about work while I was in my 20's and 30's"</i>
1	3%	<i>"Avoid those who don't make you feel good about what you're doing, but if you can't avoid them, I just don't discuss anything but the project at hand."</i>

**Strategies for: On-call requirement for campus emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

#	%	
1	3%	Don't apply for jobs that would require on call requirements (i.e. housing positions, public safety, etc.)
1	3%	Rely on live-in staff as much as you can and be less quick to "run to campus" when a problem occurs
1	3%	Carry a pager
1	3%	Have a list of emergency sitters including residents on campus
1	3%	Have understanding and support from partner
1	3%	Explain to the child what's going on when you get a call (in terms they can understand)

**Strategies for: The "helping nature" of the job -- need to put students first**

#	%	
1	3%	Take some time out when first getting home to center your mind, allow children to settle in and shift gears from helping students to focus on home
1	3%	Make and arrangement with your partner to alternate days of who would have the primary responsibility to supervise the children's evening activities - homework, dinner, etc.
1	3%	Schedule time for "drop-in" hours for student concerns so you don't end up staying late to deal with the latest "crisis"
1	3%	Ask co-workers to remind you that today's crisis will be waiting for you when you return the following morning, but your child will not wait
1	3%	Share with students why you need to leave the office on time <i>"I feel that role models healthy family care/concern and balance for students"</i>

**Strategies for: No option to telecommute**

#	%	
1	3%	Try to negotiate one day a week at home or coming in an hour later but doing your email correspondence at night

**QUESTION #4 -- Other factors in maintaining balance**

While the scope of this research project is limited to job-related factors in a working mother's balancing act, several other factors were mentioned in answers to the first questionnaire. One panel member even contacted me to express her dismay that my study does not address the assistance of family, friends and partners in making the working mother's life work. Her arguments (and those of my committee) have helped me acknowledge that factors outside the workplace affect a working mother's ability to effectively employ various strategies within the workplace, hence the following question:

**Please list and comment on outside-of-work strategies you use or see others use successfully to maintain appropriate balance between work and family in a student affairs career.**

**Strategies for General Family Life Management**

#	%	
15	46%	Have a partner who can and will help
6	18%	Partner has a flexible job himself, allowing for shared responsibilities
4	12%	Hire someone to clean your home/do yard work on a regular basis
4	12%	Keep a calendar/plan which you negotiate jointly with your partner
3	9%	Take children with you to work and to conferences and retreats
2	6%	Stay organized/plan ahead
2	6%	Get errands/shopping done during lunch or immediately after work
2	6%	Do purchasing over the internet - kids clothing, formula direct from manufacturer, toys, holiday gifts, groceries delivered to the house once a week.
2	6%	Be judicious in giving out your home phone number and set parameters for when it is appropriate for staff and students to call you at home

2	6%	Be clear with students about what constitutes an emergency
1	3%	Give up sleep to finish projects after children are in bed
1	3%	Do a lot of cooking over the weekend to prepare for the week
1	3%	Try not to overprogram the weekend and just enjoy family time
1	3%	Schedule in intentional family time activities
1	3%	Subscribe to publications dedicated to working mothers
1	3%	Merge two activities into one
1	3%	Ask parents of children's friends to help (i.e. classmate's mom pick up my son and take him to soccer practice along with her child)
1	3%	Utilize students a babysitters.

#### **# % Strategies regarding Childcare**

11	33%	Nearby friends/family members provide childcare and backup for busy times
3	9%	Have your child in daycare close to home or to work to facilitate spouse/neighbors/friends/family help
2	6%	Grandparents visit for extended periods of time
1	3%	Arrange in-home childcare
1	3%	Made career choices based on proximity to family for help
1	3%	Use students to pick up kids from childcare when you work late and then just drive them all home
1	3%	Volunteer/hold volunteer office at your child's daycare or school -- networking with other professional mothers helps
1	3%	Develop a network of friends (a babysitting co-op) where you can exchange baby-sitting time rather than money; the kids have a blast and you will develop strong friendships in the process
1	3%	Church family provides inexpensive/quality daycare
1	3%	Have excellent daycare
1	3%	Helpful older children in the home assist with care of young ones

#### **# % Strategies for Personal & Relationship Renewal**

6	18%	Spend time with close friends who have a life similar to yours
4	12%	Take time as a couple, no kids (i.e. go out on a date once a month, vacation without kids)
3	9%	Don't bring work home
3	9%	Meditate/pray/exercise when you can
2	6%	Laugh a lot with your children/let them help to give you perspective
1	3%	Don't discuss work issues at home
1	3%	Take at least a month off of work in the summer; it gives everyone (parents and children) a break from the hectic pace of trying to get everywhere on time and unfrazzled
1	3%	Get away - have a place to go that is not work and makes you happy

#### **QUOTES FROM QUESTION #4**

*"[I spend time] commiserating with my NASPA buddies on email - this can be fun and funny sometimes. Someone always has it worst!"*

*"I have had meetings at basketball and football games, they are not extremely productive, but my son gets to see a game and I am able to do preliminary work in a relaxed non-threatening environment."*

*"Strive for an equal partnership at home; communicate your needs thoughtfully and non-critically, and develop a plan"*

*"I became the Vice President of the Parents Advisory Committee at [my child's] child care. I have met many professional mothers who are doing the same or more than me. It is wonderful having a friendship with these moms. I have one new friend especially that we meet for lunch about every 2 months. It is great! Of course, being the PAC VP added more responsibilities to my plate, but it is great."*



*"My spouse does not particularly like my job, but at least he is understanding of my passion for it. So for those times when I do need some extra help from him, like working late or going to conferences, he is ok with it."*

*"Be clear with students about your priorities. Prior to being married, I spent a lot of time after-hours at the workplace. When I got married, I made a commitment to myself that my marriage and family came first. I have tried my best to remain true to that. My students have been tremendously understanding of the fact that while I do care about them and am interested in their welfare and the success of their events, I simply cannot be at everything."*

*"Extended family has been critical to my success as a working mother in Student Affairs. I find that in the "busy seasons" of my job, they are able to assist with child care. My spouse is supportive of my career. We, together, negotiate dates for out of town commitments, evening meetings, etc."*

*"This is a difficult question for me. My husband travels extensively for his job and there really isn't other family to pitch in. For me it's a constant juggling act."*

## **QUESTION #5 -- Supervision**

Fifty-four percent of our panel indicated that they would look for a supportive supervisor if they were seeking a new job in student affairs. This is a two-part question:

### **5A. What does a supportive supervisor look like? Please describe supervision style, policies and procedures which a supervisor might use to support working mothers in student affairs.**

20	61%	Trusts my judgment in how I need to flex my schedule in order to balance my work and home
17	52%	Policies & enforcement of those support balance (mission statement, leave policies, flexible schedule, etc.)
16	49%	Interested in you and your family & cares about you/listens
15	46%	Trusts that I will get the job done (gives autonomy)
12	36%	Knows, articulates and understands that family comes first
9	27%	Often helpful if they too have a family
9	27%	Models the balance we strive for
9	27%	Has high expectations, clearly communicated
9	27%	Strives to "make it work" for valued employees with creative solutions
2	6%	Supportive of involvement in child's school during the work-day
2	6%	Tells you to take time off if you look tired or to go home when you need to
2	6%	Has a flexible work schedule themselves
1	3%	Looks at the employee in a holistic way
1	3%	Willing to negotiate creative plans for maternity leave & return to work after
1	3%	Removes any barriers that work might present
1	3%	Takes on a mentoring role,
1	3%	Recognizes that flextime allows us to better serve students (later office hours, etc.)
1	3%	Does not discourage a working mother from taking on demanding assignments, nor does the person assign the employee low-level tasks.
1	3%	Relaxed, intelligent, and has a sense of humor.
1	3%	Isn't into titles or little letters following a person's name.
1	3%	Understands that in order to run an effective department/office, each employee's needs must be met if there is to be harmony in the office
1	3%	Understands the benefits of structure but is also open to change when good solutions to problems are presented
1	3%	Encouraging of gaining more education and training
1	3%	Says that she is not perfect

1	3%	Asks for your opinion
1	3%	Says you are doing a great job
1	3%	Allows me to bring my child to work on occasion and is welcoming of my children at activities
1	3%	Knows my children's names
1	3%	Is willing to communicate via multiple mediums (e-mail etc.)
1	3%	Is willing to take risk to make changes

### QUOTES FROM QUESTION 5A:

*"A comment from my supervisor which was great: 'I don't care when or where the work gets done- just as long as it is getting accomplished'."*

*"Honestly, I think the ideal supportive supervisor is another mother! Lest I stereotype, the supervision style is supportive, encouraging, trusting. A supervisor who doesn't care what hours you put in as long as the job gets done."*

*"A Supervisor who 'Leads with Soul'  
one who gives the 4 gifts of leadership  
-Authorship  
-Love  
-Power  
-Significance"*

*"The supportive supervisor insists on their employees leading a balanced life. They pay attention to imbalance and create an environment where the employee is not rewarded for imbalance."*

*"I have learned that I need to avoid a supervisor who is also a mother and tries to be all things to all people. The "super woman, super mother" syndrome. They represent a professional life I used to have and no longer value and are role models that can be impossible to keep up with!! They also tend to expect others to be able to do the same."*

*"In my first few years at [my university] my supervisor hired someone who had a young daughter. He made it clear to us that we need to respect this person who had family commitments that would prohibit him from staying late. I had no idea that I would benefit from these views at a much later date."*

*"A supportive supervisor is one who acknowledges that there is life outside of the workplace. This individual has achieved or desires to achieve balance in their own life. I have the luxury of working under an extremely supportive supervisor. His management style is very "hands off". He believes/trusts that the job will be done and done well within the prescribed timeline. His confidence in my work ethic has allowed for flexibility in my schedule."*

*"Understand that I have a life and that my personal life is important to me. As a result, there is not an expectation that I will be a everything and/or view my job as my life. If I say no to something, my supervisor knows that I must make choices and he/she trusts those."*

### **5B. For a mother (or mother-to-be) seeking a new position in student affairs, what are some strategies she might use during her job search to determine how supportive her potential supervisor might be?**

#	%	job Search Strategies
16	49%	Assess how many others within the office have children and how they feel about the office climate in that regard.

10	30%	Ask the Human Resources office for information on policies for flex time, sick leave, tele commuting, family benefits, maternity leave, etc.
10	30%	Use your network -- ask people who might know someone that works at that university
6	18%	Ask potential supervisor if he/she has a family, and how they have been successful balancing work and home.
6	18%	Be clear about your needs as a working mother. Then see how the employer reacts. This is too important to not be sure that you will have the support you need.
5	15%	Talk to former employees and students
5	15%	Get a sense of the nature of work commitments -- are evenings/weekends occasional or regular. Ask these questions directly.
4	12%	During the on-campus interview ask your future colleagues to describe your supervisor's strengths and weaknesses.
4	12%	During the interview, give scenarios regarding family commitment and listen for answers that are applicable to the employee.
3	9%	Look and see if they have any pictures of children in their office
3	9%	Go through the application and interview process without prejudicing your candidacy. Only ask job-related questions so as not to create a bias against you.
3	9%	Look at the longevity of the current and previous staff and determine how many of those longtime staffers have young children
2	6%	Look for positions that would fit your criteria -- not involving too much evening and weekend commitments
2	6%	Research childcare and school options, on campus and nearby
2	6%	Try to determine if any of your potential colleagues are parents and contact them after a job is offered but before you accept.
2	6%	If there are specific things you need, negotiate those after a job is offered but don't bring them up in the interview process
2	6%	How would the supervisor describe the staff's ability to balance personal and professional.
1	3%	Ask about why the previous person left the position
1	3%	Ask what interests/hobbies/commitments the supervisor has beyond the job to be sure that they value life beyond work.
1	3%	Ask a potential supervisor about their supervisory style.
1	3%	Ask the supervisor how she deals with the stress of the job
1	3%	Read web sites
1	3%	Talk about what you value in your current position (including flexibility in schedule and an understanding of what her role is with her family).
1	3%	Find out about how the organization feels about its employees in general. Do they value them? Care about them? Or do people just do their own thing and not interact?
1	3%	Ask who the supervisor thinks are the most successful people on campus and why. Then find out who these people are. Are they working parents? or are they married to the campus?
1	3%	Don't think that once you're hired, you can change the system. Chances are null.
1	3%	Ask a few questions that give you an idea about the culture of the workplace there. How is the mission defined? Does it suit your philosophy?
1	3%	Ask about administrative support to assist with work and keeping a schedule.
1	3%	Figure out the awareness level of the supervisor, by asking their knowledge of campus or local child care, parent support groups on campus, local schools
1	3%	Ask how they feel about a woman having a family and career
1	3%	Ask what type of provisions are available in the case of emergency with children
1	3%	Talk, talk, talk to the potential supervisor. I tend to trust my gut a lot....
1	3%	Ask about telecommuting
1	3%	Ask if hours put in on-site considered when evaluating accomplishments
1	3%	Go to an event at the campus- are their families present?

- 1 3% Ask the Supervisor directly about the arrangements she has tried and how successful they have been.
- 1 3% Ask if there are other working mothers and ask them to describe their working styles. By their description, you can tell if it's favorable or not

### **QUOTES FROM QUESTION 5B:**

*“Really look critically at the job requirements to see if they are within your reach at this time in your life. You are the first person that has to assess the balance involved.”*

*“I would ask how the supervisor feels about flexible time, telecommuting, time away for children's activity and comp time. I am a firm believer of asking up front... If there is any hesitancy, there will be another job for you! . . . I would also ask HR about the maternity leave/family leave act policies. I was shocked to find out that I had to pay for my own health benefits while I was on leave.”*

*“My own experience is that I had a child while a part of the organization I am in currently. This is something I would be very careful about in seeking a new position. I don't want to set up the expectation I would ask for special treatment because of my family status. I would be looking for an organizations that values me and the reputation of my work. I would look for a supervisor that has a strong work ethic but I would look for indicators that this person values a personal life too. I think this is something that you can sense more in your gut than any other way.”*

*“Ask a few questions that give you an idea about the culture of the workplace there. How is the mission defined? Does it suit your philosophy? The tricky thing here is that the proximate environment (the actual department) is more important than the larger environment (the whole university). There can be great departments and terrible ones, all in the same university.”*

*“ In an interview situation, it might jeopardize a woman's chances of getting the job if she offers personal information regarding having a family. Asking questions about the expected work hours, overtime, weekend and evening events can be revealing. If she has the opportunity to meet with other staff members as part of the interview process, she may be able to diplomatically frame questions about the work environment and the supervisor without divulging information about her personal situation.”*

*“I feel the best way to determine how supportive a potential supervisor may be is to ask colleagues. Professionals with direct experience in working within an institution and with that supervisor would be able to describe how the actual commitment to balance is expressed. I am confident that many supervisors would consider themselves supportive without truly understanding how that support is given or achieved.”*

*“This is a hard question because you certainly don't want to come across as someone who will have limitations because of your family . On the other hand, I think asking directly or seeing if you can speak to people who will be your colleagues about their impression of the support available.”*

## Appendix J

### Round Three Questionnaire

A Delphi Study on  
The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs  
by Kim Braun Padulo

*Administered via electronic mail*

Last week, I mailed to you a compilation of the panel responses to the second round of this Delphi study (referenced parenthetically below after each question below). You may wish to have those results before you as you complete these questions. This final questionnaire will clarify our consensus around the research questions. The following questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. Additional comments or insights are welcome in response to any of the questions. Please complete and e-mail to me by March 5, 2001.

QUESTION #1: The following job-related factors which enhance ability to balance work and family were listed in the top five by at least 25% of the panel in the round two questionnaire. Please select the four which are more important to you and list those in no particular order.

- a. Flexibility of work schedule.
- b. Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor.
- c. Manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job.
- d. Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive co-workers.
- e. Affordable, quality childcare right in the workplace or nearby.
- f. Working for an institution which values family, wellness and a balanced lifestyle.
- g. Ability to live on campus or close to campus/short or no commute.
- h. Family-friendly compensation/benefit structures.

Your four most important:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

QUESTION #2: The following job-related factors which detract from the ability to balance work and family were listed in the top five most troublesome by at least 25% of the panel in the round two questionnaire. Please select the four which you feel are most troublesome and list them in no particular order.

- a. Weekend and evening work/long hours
- b. Organizational culture rewards long hours and does not value balance
- c. Lack of understanding/support from supervisor
- d. Jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated.
- e. Guilt

- f. Long, stressful commute
- g. Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs
- h. Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work
- i. Job responsibilities do not give flexibility about when and where to do the job
- j. Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than one day

Your four most troublesome:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTION #3:** According to our compiled answers from the first two questionnaires, the support and understanding of immediate supervisors is very important to working women in student affairs. One strategy suggested for evaluating and soliciting supervisor support was to talk directly with your supervisor about your life balance concerns. Have you done this? Please comment briefly on your use of this strategy.

**QUESTION #4:** Did you have your first child after beginning your career in student affairs?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (Continue on to question #4A)

No \_\_\_\_\_ (Skip to question #5)

**#4A:** If you had your first child after beginning your career in student affairs, please answer these questions:

4A1: How long was your maternity leave?

4B2: Did you return to work fulltime at the conclusion of your maternity leave?

**QUESTION #5:** Do you expect to continue to work in student affairs, or do you plan to leave the profession in the next five years?

**QUESTION #6:** If a part-time position at your classification were available, and accepting such a position would not affect your career mobility in the future, would you prefer to work part-time?

**QUESTION #7:** Several panelists throughout this study have commented on the culture in student affairs work which rewards long hours and unhealthy life balance. What would it take to change this culture (assuming you agree it exists) in a lasting, substantive way?

**QUESTION #8:** Would you be willing to be interviewed in the future as part of some post-doctoral research I may be undertaking?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTION #9: Would you be interested in being part of a panel to present a session on working mothers in student affairs at the NASPA regional conference next fall? (*If you answer yes, I will call you to confirm your participation before signing you onto a session proposal*)

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTION #10: Final thoughts: Do you have any final thoughts on this research topic? Have there been any results of our questionnaires which have surprised you?

THANK YOU!! I expect this questionnaire to be the last in this research project. I will have an executive summary of the findings of this research completed by the end of April. Each participant will receive a copy in the mail. Your carefully considered responses to the questions have made this study rich in information and incredibly interesting to me. I appreciate your participation and your honesty!

## Appendix K Round Three Compiled Responses

A Delphi Study on  
The Balancing Act:  
Work Environment Issues for Women with Children in Student Affairs  
*by Kim Braun Padulo*

**QUESTION #1: The following job-related factors which enhance ability to balance work and family were listed in the top five by at least 25% of the panel in the round two questionnaire. Please select the four which are more important to you and list those in no particular order. [listed in order of frequency of response]**

93.9%	31	a. Flexibility of work schedule.
87.9%	29	b. Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor.
75.8%	25	c. Manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility about when and where to accomplish the job.
33.3%	11	e. Affordable, quality childcare right in the workplace or nearby.
33.3%	11	f. Working for an institution which values family, wellness and a balanced lifestyle.
33.3%	11	g. Ability to live on campus or close to campus/short or no commute.
21.2%	7	d. Educated, understanding, trusting and supportive co-workers.
21.2%	7	h. Family-friendly compensation/benefit structures.

**QUESTION #2: The following job-related factors which detract from the ability to balance work and family were listed in the top five most troublesome by at least 25% of the panel in the round two questionnaire. Please select the four which you feel are most troublesome and list them in no particular order. [listed in order of frequency of response]**

66.7%	22	a. Weekend and evening work/long hours
63.6%	21	b. Organizational culture rewards long hours and does not value balance
51.5%	17	d. Jobs in student affairs are poorly compensated.
42.7%	14	i. Job responsibilities do not give flexibility about when and where to do the job
36.4%	12	c. Lack of understanding/support from supervisor
36.4%	12	e. Guilt
33.3%	11	j. Attending conferences/retreats, being away from home for more than one day
30.3%	11	h. Childcare expensive, poor quality and/or unavailable close to work
27.2%	9	f. Long, stressful commute
15.2%	5	g. Inflexibility of schedule when child is sick or other conflict occurs



**QUESTION #3: According to our compiled answers from the first two questionnaires, the support and understanding of immediate supervisors is very important to working women in student affairs. One strategy suggested for evaluating and soliciting supervisor support was to talk directly with your supervisor about your life balance concerns.**

**Have you done this?**

66.7%	22	Yes	15.2%	5	No
18.2%	6	Gave no answer to this question			

**Please comment briefly on your use of this strategy.**

**Quotes from Question #3:**

- It feels better and avoids problems with pent up frustration when you let it out and explain what's going on. The results of listening and sharing with someone you work with are amazing and worth the initial discomfort.*

**For some participants, the supervisor sets the tone**

- So much depends on the supervisor - you really have to either know they will listen and respect you for expressing yourself-then do it, or be prepared that they will pass judgment on you in regards to this-and do it anyway. Or of course not say anything and deal with the stress as best you can.*
- My supervisor is a working mother with 2 small children. . . I would be much more hesitant to discuss these concerns with my supervisor if they had not experienced these issues themselves.*
- Often he comments on "I don't know how you do it" - referring to balancing job with the needs of three kids and trying to work in a little personal time. . .*

**Some participants stressed the need to show that you will complete the work**

- I get my work done so there is no reason for him not to be supportive and flexible.*
- I would never just gripe about being over-worked, out of balance. I might tell him that I am, but then I would quickly follow that with my plan on how I intend to get back in balance and catch up on my work without there being a negative effect on the organization.*
- My strategy has been to expect that those discussions would take place, but to always frame them in reference to my contributions to the workplace (what I can do and when), rather than to focus on potential limitations.*
- He has demands at times where Senior Management must be [at events]. . . I am always there for him, because he knows I get my job done. If there was ever a major conflict with a big family event and I chose that the family event...I believe he would understand because of my commitment and follow through on ALL other events.*
- By raising this issue directly, I have taken charge to be clear about my priorities and at the same time have earned the respect of my supervisors for being honest and up-front about my values as they relate to both my professional and personal life. This has helped to develop a level of trust in our working relationship that while invisible, is essential to my own sense of control over how I meet my professional responsibilities.*

**Some participants negotiated with their supervisors as they began their current positions**

- I discussed this with my supervisor as I was negotiating my job. This was particularly interesting because I had never been a mom before while starting a new job- both unknowns except I knew that I would need lots of flexibility.*
- At the final stages of my interview for a position I offered the comment regarding how much I have truly valued the flexibility and support I have received in the past from previous supervisors. I made it clear that I*

*get my work done and that I am productive but that I truly value work environments and supervisors who allow for flexibility in my schedule when necessary.*

### **For some participants, a bargain has been struck**

- *I did approach my supervisor and was allowed to flex my hours, coming in early 3 days/week, allows me to leave early on those three days. I had to forgo lunches and commit to coming to campus 2-3 evening nights/month.*
- *I talk to him about participating in my children's school functions and staying home when they are sick; he allows me time to do these.*

### **Some participants had discussions with supervisors, but it was a negative experience**

- *. . . she has been somewhat supportive. We have spoken about getting additional help in my office as well as looking at time lines. Unfortunately though I feel it still comes down to me and the responsibility that I have to see that the work gets done.*
- *. . . our administrators are male or if female, do not have any children of their own, there is a high level of ignorance and lack of empathy. When I broached the subject, I was reminded that everyone has responsibilities and I was hired to do a job. . . it is always up to being thrown in my face later as a "favor". Therefore, I avoid this scenario by using sick leave or other acceptable avenues (Dr. appts, meetings, etc.)*

### **Some participants have not discussed their needs with their supervisors for various reasons**

- *I just had my second child and my husband and I decided to give it one year to see how everything works out. If it's not working, then I will approach my supervisor about any concerns. In the past the university has been pretty creative with scheduling for women with children -- unfortunately, they usually end up leaving the university anyway.*
- *Some of my concerns for situation require a more subjective understanding, which is I think is difficult for supervisors who are trying to be fair but also looking to set a standard of flexibility.*
- *I have hinted more. It really is mostly based on his lack of understanding of the work load of the job as it currently is.*
- *I honestly do not feel that my present supervisor has the frame of reference to appreciate my personal issues related to balancing work and family. . . she schedules department retreats for multiple nights away from home (sometimes during the week), seemingly oblivious to the needs of working parents.*
- *I don't share the challenges I face because my experience here is that sharing your concerns and challenges comes back to haunt you.*

### **QUESTION #4: Did you have your first child after beginning your career in student affairs?**

81.8%	27	Yes (Continue on to question #4A)
18.2%	6	No (Skip to question #5)

### **#4A: If you had your first child after beginning your career in student affairs, please answer these questions:**

#### **4A1: How long was your maternity leave?**

3.7%	1	Two weeks
7.4%	2	One and a half months (6 weeks)
29.6%	8	Two months
37.0%	10	Three months
14.8%	4	Four months
3.7%	1	Six months
3.7%	1	Seven months

**4B2: Did you return to work fulltime at the conclusion of your maternity leave?**  
 88.9%      24      Yes (*five individuals reported having reduced hours for one to three weeks in order to ease the transition back to work*)  
 11.1%      3      No

**QUESTION #5: Do you expect to continue to work in student affairs, or do you plan to leave the profession in the next five years?**

57.6%      19      Expect to continue  
 27.3%      9      Plan/hope to leave  
 15.2%      5      Not sure

**QUESTION #6: If a part-time position at your classification were available, and accepting such a position would not affect your career mobility in the future, would you prefer to work part-time?**

51.5%      17      Yes  
 30.3%      10      Yes, but can't afford it  
 12.1%      4      No  
 6.1%      2      Not sure

**QUESTION #7: Several panelists throughout this study have commented on the culture in student affairs work which rewards long hours and unhealthy life balance. What would it take to change this culture (assuming you agree it exists) in a lasting, substantive way?**

**42.4%      14      Supporting behavior and role modeling must come from supervisors and from those at high levels of authority in the university**

- *It would take senior administrators to be honest about who is really doing the work and what it really takes to get the job done. Finally, they would have to be willing to respond. . .*
- *Senior administrators and those who are supervisors need to role model a healthier lifestyle. It is true for single and childless professionals as well as parents.*
- *In essence, change can be inspired by strong, visible role models who speak about life balance as a personal and professional value – and asset.*

**24.2%      8      More working mothers at higher levels in student affairs**

- *Women in high positions who understand from their own experience what this means*
- *The only way it will change is if women who are working to balance their lives are in more top leadership positions. The problem is that it is hard to get there if you value balance.*
- *More balanced working mothers in higher administrative positions. Sometimes working mothers achieve these higher-level positions, but end up trying to be superwoman or "one of the boys" in order to maintain those positions.*

**21.2%      7      Working mothers need to assert their needs**

- *If enough people become assertive and let their supervisors know that a certain amount of hours is unacceptable, there will be some change.*
- *I believe it is up to the individual to set limits and express priorities in life.*
- *I also think it takes women like us to be the pioneers... if we don't cry out for balance, it won't happen.*

**15.2%      5      More education is needed for individuals at all levels**

- *Every one in our field should know about laws that protect you from being taken advantage of.*
- *Educating students, administrators, faculty, and other staff on the importance of maintaining balance and striving for personal wellness.*

- *Provide better training for supervisors/managers that address these issues. . . Providing appropriate flexibility and support can create a better working and productive environment for staff and reduce "burnout"*

**15.2%            5            More staff and more resources can lighten the load for everyone**

- *The staffing level is the primary issue. Our (and I'd guess most) Department is not staffed well enough to meet the continuously building demands. In addition we have severe budget constraints and struggle to get the training and prof. development which would make our jobs easier.*
- *The change, at least at my institution, will come only by hiring additional staff. There has to be recognition that each staff person can only accomplish so many things. . . This "system" leads to a lack of balance among professionals because the "to do" list seems never ending and always expanding.*

**15.2%            5            Policies to encourage a balanced life**

- *Workplace policies that encourage a balance life would help - flexible hours, ability to work at home some part of the week, sabbaticals for personal and professional growth. . .*
- *Allow for professional staff to be contracted (hourly wage employees). No incentive to be part-time at university since you work more hours than part-time (20 hours)*
- *Policies would need to be instituted that allowed for flexible work schedules, job sharing, telecommunicating, etc. People would need to be rewarded for achieving balance, not for working long hours.*

**12.1%            4            Modify our expectations of ourselves as a profession**

- *I think that part of this culture comes from the belief that by working harder (more hours) and saying yes to too much, we are serving our students best. I disagree -- I think we need as a profession to be ok about not taking on the world*
- *We make our work our life - maybe because we enjoy what we do or the nature of our work lends itself to some non-traditional hours - but we often fail to focus on our own well being.*
- *I think there is a dynamic that occurs when individuals go up through the ranks to be a VP of Student Affairs. I think the mentality is "I put in the long hours so young professionals should do so as well."*
- *You would need to have a meeting of all senior student affairs officers (through NASPA) and have a frank discussion and implement some strategies that are listed in your study.*

**3.0%            1            Focus media attention on higher education's failing in this area**

*I believe many private sector companies have successfully addressed these issues by providing onsite child care, different kinds of family leave programs, job sharing... due to focused pressure, which includes media attention. The world of higher education has never been put in the spotlight on these issues. I believe that it is assumed that the education world is a warm and fuzzy place where staff have cushy jobs. When in fact we provide programs that range across all kinds of spectrums...we make it look easy... we need to bring the issues to the surface and cause those in control to seriously consider the effects of the unhealthy balance.*

**3.0%            1            You cannot change the culture**

- *[It is] not possible to change this culture on this campus.*

**QUESTION #8: Would you be willing to be interviewed in the future as part of some post-doctoral research I may be undertaking?**

32    Yes  
1     No

**QUESTION #9: Would you be interested in being part of a panel to present a session on working mothers in student affairs at the NASPA regional conference next fall? (If you answer yes, I will call you to confirm your participation before signing you onto a session proposal)**

27    Yes  
6     No

**QUESTION #10: Final thoughts: Do you have any final thoughts on this research topic? Have there been any results of our questionnaires which have surprised you?**

**QUOTES FROM QUESTION #10:**

- *This research may also bring the concerns of working mothers in Student Affairs into the spotlight a bit more as well as the issue of balance for all Student Affairs practitioners. The final summary may provide us with some information to utilize as we negotiate with our supervisors and possibly in future jobs.*
- *It was also very helpful to hear the strategies that others are employing to meet the challenges of balancing multiple roles.*
- *I don't think any results have surprised me, rather validated all that I have been feeling and thinking about as a working mom. Perhaps, I was a little taken back at how strong some of your results were – i.e. the flexibility issue and understanding supervisor.*
- *The shame is that no one helped us to learn balance. We are having to provide the modeling for better balance. To be a woman in administration with serious management responsibilities and balance that with the responsibilities of raising children is tough.*
- *My last thoughts are that as mothers we need to be real with ourselves, put our families first, and not be afraid to ask for help.*
- *I think it will be invaluable to share your results once completed to the student affairs community and beyond. I would hope that it could help to speak to some of those who do not model or encourage balancing work and life.*
- *I think the information could be a powerful tool and beneficial to many women and mothers.*
- *I am surprised by how many people are bothered by the time conferences take. Those are times when I refresh and gain perspective.*
- *I have thought about changing fields or doing a simple job search, but I am actually reconsidering and coming up with ideas on how to modify my current position to accommodate the extra little needs that I have.*
- *I like the sophisticated level of some of the qualitative responses, and it was enormously therapeutic to read the results from the first two rounds.*
- *It has been a comfort to know that I am not alone in what calls me to this work and what makes the work difficult. I don't remember if you told us, but it would be interesting to see how the issues we've discussed correlate to the ages of our kids?*
- *What I am struck by after reading the comments is how we as student affairs practitioners have the solutions within our grasp. We can identify the problems, but we do not have to be subject to them if we apply the same professional skills as we apply on a daily basis in working with students. Perhaps we simply need to be empowered.*
- *. . . it is a nice feeling to know others are struggling with the same issues that I am as a professional with a child.*
- *Hope that this is the first step towards changing the culture.*

- *I know I serve students as effectively as I did before I had children, but I get tired of having to justify my time.*

- *The setting in which we do our work is very dynamic and takes energetic and resourceful people to keep it running. Although I do believe that the expectations for student affairs professionals are geared toward single or at least childless professionals, I think we can mold the culture somewhat to make it doable for working parents.*

*Some people ask me how I keep everything together and I always respond with the fact that I have a very supportive husband, I pray a lot, and I always wonder whether I am doing the right thing. . . Then I think about all the time and energy I have put into my career – I love what I do, but, at what cost?*