Cal Poly’s
STEM WOMEN FACULTY
Climate Survey
Focus Sessions/Interviews

Prepared for:
Cal Poly Advance Team

Prepared by:
Robyn Letters

June 15, 2010
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Section 1: INTRODUCTION

This document reports findings from eight focus groups and six individual interviews conducted among Cal Poly’s STEM women faculty between April 7th and 30th, 2010. This effort follows the completion of a campus-wide Climate Survey in Spring 2009 that indicated that STEM women faculty members are more dissatisfied with some aspects of their work environment than are their male counterparts. While the Climate Survey did an excellent job measuring sentiment on the campus, it did not identify specific issues that contribute to women’s concerns. Before seeking additional NSF funds to effect change, the Advance committee decided that supplementary information—more qualitative in nature—was needed to better understand the issues facing STEM women. Opinion Studies, a research company located in San Luis Obispo which does not have any affiliation with Cal Poly, was contracted to talk in depth with STEM women and to provide a third-party view of Cal Poly’s current climate.

The purpose of the current effort was to elaborate on the Climate Survey’s findings and to determine specific factors that contribute to this dissatisfaction so that corrective measures can be developed and instituted as appropriate. The focus sessions and interviews were designed (1) to clarify findings of the Climate Survey by asking participants to describe personal experiences and observations that support as well as refute the survey findings, (2) to elicit ideas about possible solutions, and then (3) to establish priorities for instituting corrective measures. Among other issues, participants were asked to discuss how Cal Poly differs from other campuses they are familiar with, why STEM women leave Cal Poly, and what barriers stand between them and their professional and personal goals.
Section 2: METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The initial research protocol called for the completion of a series of eight focus sessions. Individual interviews were added to the protocol later to accommodate some faculty members who were not able to participate in the focus sessions because of previous commitments but who indicated interest in taking part.

To promote disclosure and candidness, each focus session was limited to five participants rather than the typical focus session format of eight to ten. An effort was made to include faculty members from different colleges and departments in each session; however, this was difficult due to faculty members’ busy and restricted schedules so several sessions included faculty members from the same colleges and even departments. Four sessions were comprised of tenure-track faculty only and four of tenured faculty only. Sessions were scheduled to be two hours in length; none went less than that while a few went longer. All were conducted off campus at the Holiday Inn Express. All sessions were audio taped to facilitate the preparation of this report; those tapes plus notes taken at the time of each session will be destroyed upon acceptance of the final report.

All current tenured and tenure-track female STEM faculty who are not members of the Advance committee were invited to take part in the sessions. Consistent with NSF definitions of STEM disciplines, STEM faculty were defined as those working in STEM fields in the following four colleges: CAED, CAFES, CENG and CSM. A total of 82 women were identified as possible participants. On March 29th, an introductory e-mail from Nilgun Sungar, principal investigator, was sent to all prospective participants explaining that the NSF Advance project team had contracted with Opinion Studies, a research company, to conduct a series of focus groups as follow-up to the Climate Study (see Appendix A for all e-mails). On March 30th, a follow-up e-mail was sent from Robyn Letters of Opinion Studies explaining specifics about the focus sessions and inviting recipients to take part in one of four sessions scheduled for their tenure status. This e-mail invitation also described specific measures that would be taken to ensure participants’ anonymity. The same e-mail was re-sent on April 1 to all who had not responded
to the first invitation. Within a few days of receiving a positive response, Ms. Letters e-mailed a note confirming the participant’s session assignment.

A total of 44 tenured faculty and 38 tenure-track faculty received e-mails. Twenty three tenured faculty and 19 tenure-track faculty responded. Several in both tenure statuses responded that they were interested in taking part but unable to attend any of the scheduled times because of previous commitments. Several agreed to take part but at the last minute had to cancel. In the end, 16 tenured faculty and 14 tenure-track faculty took part in the eight sessions.

Opinion Studies agreed to conduct additional one-on-one phone interviews to accommodate those who were interested but unable to attend the focus sessions. A total of six such interviews were completed. They ranged in length from 45 minutes to 60 minutes and followed a format similar to that used in the focus sessions. Information obtained in individual interviews carried no more weight than information obtained in the focus sessions; only sentiments reported by more than one person (focus group participant or interviewee) are included in this document.

In total then, 36 women contributed to this effort. These contributors represent 44% of Cal Poly’s STEM women faculty. Nineteen are tenured faculty and 17 are tenure-track. Representatives from STEM disciplines in all four colleges participated. CSM faculty made up the largest portion of attendees and CENG faculty made up the second largest portion, similar to their distribution among the STEM women population at Cal Poly. CAFES faculty (tenured and tenure-track) were slightly under represented while CENG tenured faculty and CSM tenure-track were slightly over represented.

Please see Appendix B for Informed Consent forms reviewed and then agreed to by all participants, Appendix C for Pre-Session Questionnaire form and Appendix D for Interview Agendas.

**Current Participants versus Climate Survey Respondents**

Prior to the commencement of focus sessions and interviews, participants completed a short questionnaire. Five of the items on this form were essentially the same as questions in
the Climate Survey and were asked of participants to determine how similar or different current participants are to the Climate Survey respondents (both STEM and not-STEM). Tables 1 to 5 below compare results collected from female respondents in the Climate Survey (STEM and not-STEM) to results collected from the focus group/interview participants. [Note: The sample size for the Focus/STEM group reported in the tables below is 34 (two interviewees did not complete the questionnaire); the sample size for the Climate/STEM group is 65 and the sample size for the Climate/not STEM group is 26.]

These tables clearly show that the focus group participants are very similar in their living arrangements and in their attitudes to the women STEM faculty surveyed in the Climate Survey. Table 1 shows that one in four of both sample groups is not married and nearly one in five lives apart from their partner most of the year. Far fewer non-STEM respondents live apart from their partners but more are not in partner relationships.

Table 1: Marital/partner status and living arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q: What is your current marital/partner status and your living arrangement?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus/STEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with spouse/partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 2, 3 and 4 below show results from three attitude questions—feeling valued, being recognized in groups and feeling mistreated. On all three measures, current participants answered similarly to the Climate Survey STEM respondents.

Table 2: Feelings of being valued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q: I feel valued by my departmental colleagues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus/STEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Feelings of being recognized in groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q: I feel recognized by my departmental colleagues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus/STEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Feelings of mistreatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q: I feel mistreated by my departmental colleagues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus/STEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Women speaking versus men speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Focus/STEM</th>
<th>Climate/STEM</th>
<th>Climate/not STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: In meetings in my department and/or college, people pay just as much attention when women speak as when men speak.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/never</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On only one measure did the participant sample deviate in any significant way from the Climate Survey STEM sample. That measure was on informal networks. Sixty-one percent of focus participants say they are excluded from informal networks in their departments (all the time, often or sometimes) versus only 44% of the Climate Survey STEM respondents.

Table 4: Mistreatment due to gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Focus/STEM</th>
<th>Climate/STEM</th>
<th>Climate/not STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: I feel mistreated at Cal Poly due to my gender.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Exclusion from networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Focus/STEM</th>
<th>Climate/STEM</th>
<th>Climate/not STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: I feel excluded from informal networks in my department.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often/all the time</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This current effort supports many of the Climate Survey findings and clarifies others. It also identifies some other issues not covered in the Climate Survey that impede STEM women’s success at Cal Poly. A few of these issues are gender-related, but many are not. Generally speaking, tenured faculty members are less content than are tenure-track faculty.

As in the Climate Survey, personal and family issues emerged as major concerns for women who took part in this project. Finding a reasonable balance between their personal lives and their demanding professional schedules is a constant struggle. Securing and managing adequate childcare is an on-going concern. Helping their typically highly trained spouses/partners find satisfying employment or living apart from them for some part of the month or year is a reality. Those who aren’t married or in a partner relationship when they arrive at Cal Poly are troubled by, but resigned to, the fact that they are unlikely to find a prospective partner in the immediate community.

Job-related issues are more wide-ranging than are personal issues. Topping the list are concerns about an increasingly heavy workload and a sense of ambivalence about Cal Poly’s new research focus. While some resist this research vision because they don’t want to be pulled away from teaching, those who support it express doubt that Cal Poly is really equipped (either with resources or culture) to do what needs to be done to make the University a top-rated research institution. Many commented that the University is top-heavy with senior faculty who have not been engaged in significant research and who resist instituting the necessary changes to support research efforts. Collaborative projects are difficult to get approved in the current atmosphere because they often require departments to make adjustments to schedules or long-standing practices.

Participants also acknowledged that they don’t feel valued by the University as a whole and sometimes by their departments. They feel isolated in part because their busy schedules prohibit networking, but also because there is limited opportunity to connect with other faculty—either socially or professionally. Participants noted that there isn’t any one place on campus where faculty can gather to relax or meet informally with other faculty members.
Few of these issues are gender-related, however. Male faculty are coping with these issues along with female faculty. Some participants reported experiences with students and some administrators where they felt they had been mistreated due to their gender. However, they were inclined to say these incidents were isolated and not the result of pervasive gender bias at Cal Poly. The exception is CENG which was described as 1) dominated by a group of senior faculty who are not very hospitable to either younger faculty or to women; and 2) having an atmosphere that is unfriendly and unnecessarily competitive, with little done within the college to nurture a collegial environment.

Some expect some of these issues to be resolved as senior faculty retire. As one participant said, “progress is one retirement at a time.” Others believe these issues will be more effectively addressed by President Baker’s successor. Participants noted other more immediate solutions, the top one being the development of a faculty childcare facility and after-school programs. Such a facility is long over due according to participants and was strongly endorsed by nearly all participants as top priority! Other priority solutions include the development of more assertive spousal-employment plans and the creation of a faculty center. Like the development of a childcare center, participants perceive the development of a faculty center to be a relatively easy ‘fix’ compared to the fundamental attitude changes required by some other solutions. The benefits of a faculty center are numerous. In addition to providing faculty with a place to network with other faculty (an important attribute in itself), the center would be a symbol that the University values its faculty and encourages collaboration across colleges.

Another top-ranking suggestion is to shift from a quarter-based system to a semester system. With the University’s ever increasing emphasis on research, participants suggested this change as a way to minimize the frenzy faculty now feel in their 10-week course schedule and to give faculty more control over their time to allow development of more meaningful research activities. The semester system is perceived as both more efficient and calmer than the quarter system. According to participants, reducing their workload (which sometimes equates to 60 to 80 hours a week) should be another objective.
Other suggested solutions include the development of more networking opportunities and a program that encourages and fosters collaboration. Participants also suggested that various training programs be instituted, the most important being a mentoring program for junior faculty and the second most important being a management training program for faculty taking over administrative tasks (department chair). Developing more perks for faculty, improving the University’s research infrastructure, and eliminating red tape in the University’s decision-making and approval processes were also suggested and considered important. Building more classrooms so that classes do not have to be scheduled very early and late in the day was also suggested as a way to improve the quality of life for STEM faculty at Cal Poly.

The issues raised by participants in the focus groups are important and affects the long-term tenure of women faculty at Cal Poly; while their expressed perceptions may or may not be substantiated, these perceptions nevertheless have impact. While most who participated in these sessions are committed to staying at Cal Poly, about one-third (or 10 of the current participants) say they are somewhat or very likely to leave in the next five years. (This is consistent with the results of the Climate Survey in which 43% of STEM women indicated they had considered leaving Cal Poly in the last three years.) The 10 who indicate they may leave are evenly divided between tenured and tenure-track faculty. Four are living apart from their spouses or partners for most of the year and one does not have a current partner.
Section 4: DETAILED FINDINGS

Focus sessions and interviews were relatively free-flowing and spontaneous. Participants were asked to discuss a number of predetermined topics but were also encouraged to talk about issues that were on their minds and of greatest importance to them. As issues emerged, an attempt was made to determine consensus—how true the experience was for other attendees. Only those experiences that had at least some consensus in one session or across several sessions are reported here. Participants were consistently asked to brainstorm about possible solutions to commonly experienced problems and, near the end of each session, to identify solutions that should be instituted first and those that could be addressed later. In all cases, participants were asked to focus mainly on solutions that would impact STEM women campus-wide, not just department-specific solutions (though some of those are noted below).

Research findings are organized in four main topics: (1) Overall Observations, (2) Job Related Issues, (3) Personal and Family Life Related Issues and (4) Suggested Solutions. Within the Job-Related section are three subtopics: work environment, interpersonal relations and career advancement.

Section 4A: OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

Before identifying specific issues and solutions, a few comments regarding overall observations are in order.

Observation #1: Cal Poly’s STEM women are a talented and conscientious group of individuals who are interested in engaging in constructive dialogue.

Participants’ credentials are very impressive; their combined backgrounds and interests are diverse and inspiring. Many have experiences as faculty on other college and university campuses and quite a few have worked at one time or other in private industry. Comments were thoughtful and often supported by specifics. Suggested solutions focused on ways to improve their individual situations as well as those of women in non-STEM disciplines and their male STEM counterparts. Participants were careful to point out positive aspects of their lives at Cal Poly as well as areas where things can be improved. No one promoted nor was anyone eager to jump on a ‘down with Cal Poly bandwagon.’
Observation #2: Tenured STEM women faculty members are generally more dissatisfied than tenure-track faculty.

The four sessions and two interviews among tenure-track faculty differed in tone from the four sessions and four interviews among tenured faculty. Generally, comments made by tenure-track faculty indicated an eagerness to learn their profession, to fit into the Cal Poly community and to achieve. Many expressed anxiety about their ability to keep up with the workload and to find a reasonable balance between their professional and personal lives. By contrast, comments made by tenured faculty indicated more self-confidence in their skills and contributions but significant disappointment in their work surroundings and the Cal Poly community. As a group, they were far more outspoken than their tenure-track counterparts about their discontent and expectations about how things could and should be in their departments and colleges and at the University. Tenure-track faculty portrayed their discontent as their inability to keep up with demands on their time whereas tenured faculty saw issues as more systemic, a failure of the system to provide adequately for their needs or as a system that stands between themselves and their goals.

Consistent with this observation is the data collected prior to each session and interview. On the on-site questionnaire participants were asked to indicate on a 10-point scale how satisfied they are with their lives at Cal Poly. The most common rating among both tenured and tenure-track faculty was ‘8.’ However, more tenured faculty gave ratings between ‘1’ and ‘6’ while more tenure-track faculty gave ratings of ‘9’ and ‘10.’ The average rating for tenured faculty was 6.6; the average among tenure-track was 7.1.

Observation #3: A portion of STEM women faculty (both tenure-track and tenured faculty) report they are likely to leave Cal Poly in the next five years.

To further test satisfaction, participants were asked how likely they are to leave Cal Poly in the next five years. While most participants (70%) are not likely to resign and move on, almost one in three says they are very or somewhat likely to leave. Of the 10 who indicated an inclination to leave, five are tenured and five are tenure-track. Five are married or in a partner
relationship and living with that partner in the same location, four are married/in a partnership but living apart, and one is not married/in a partner relationship.

Table 6: Intentions to leave Cal Poly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q: How likely are you to leave Cal Poly in the next five years?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus participants and interviewees were asked why STEM women leave Cal Poly. Responses were consistently ‘workload’ and ‘spousal employment.’ More information regarding these two topics is presented below.

Observation #4: Climate Survey results regarding gender bias were not always consistent with participants’ personal experiences.

When asked if their professional and personal experiences were consistent with the results of the Climate Survey, many participants indicated that the Climate Survey results seemed more extreme than their own personal experiences. Although there were exceptions (see Observation #5 below), most indicated they had not been mistreated by their colleagues because of their gender. Some indicated mistreatment due to their gender by students; others indicated mistreatment by a few administrators. Most were quick to point out that mistreatments were the exception and not the rule.

“Mistreatment is kind of an individual thing. There are some people in my department who are dismissive towards women but that isn’t the case of the whole department.”

Most also said that many of the problems they face are not gender-related, that their male counterparts are dealing with the same issues. Issues more often revolve around older faculty interests versus younger faculty interests and not male faculty versus female faculty.
Observation #5: As a group, CENG participants expressed more discontent related to gender bias than did faculty in other colleges. Participants from CSM (with some exceptions) expressed the most overall satisfaction and least gender bias.

Tenured and tenure-track CENG participants related a number of events that suggested ineffective leadership and poor management styles at various levels in the college. By contrast to other colleges in this study, CENG was portrayed as suffering from poor communications, a decision-making hierarchy that favors older faculty over younger faculty and men over women, and a lack of collegiality. CENG participants reported little networking and limited socializing within their departments. Asked what compromises they have to make in order to fit in at work, one CENG faculty member said, “I can’t ever talk about my children.” Another said, “I can’t cry; I have to appear to be tough all the time.” CENG faculty participants also reported suspicion that some decisions related to scheduling and promotions were influenced by gender bias. Junior faculty reported a culture that encourages one to be “invisible” until they’ve achieved tenure. By contrast, junior faculty in at least one CSM department said they are encouraged to speak up because they are believed to be, as one participant said, “the future of the department” and what they think matters.

Section 4B: ISSUES AND BARRIERS

Participants identified some twenty issues and barriers that impact their success at Cal Poly. Sixteen of these issues are job-related and four are related to family and personal life. Job-related issues concern work environment, interpersonal relationships and career advancement. Although the list of family/personal life issues is shorter than the list of job-related issues, these personal-life issues were considered as a group equal in importance to job issues in determining one’s success and level of satisfaction at Cal Poly. In fact, some participants ventured to say that personal-life issues were more important than job issues. They described them as ‘deal breakers.’ While one can learn to tolerate and work around on-the-job problems, it is more difficult to work around stresses and disharmony in one’s personal life for an extended period of time. This is consistent with the Climate Survey findings which
found that the professional lives of STEM women are more impacted by family and personal issues than are the professional lives of their male counterparts.

Job-related issues are presented in the first three sections below, followed by a section on personal-life issues. Exemplar comments are used throughout these sections to illustrate the richness and subtle nuances of participants’ observations and experiences. In order to protect the identity of speakers, specific references to departments, events or people have been deleted from these verbatim comments. Many of these comments illustrate more than one point but are shown only one time for the sake of brevity.

**Job-Related Issues: Work Environment**

Participants discussed a wide variety of issues related to their work environment. These issues are condensed here into seven key issues.

**ISSUE: Workload is too heavy.**

*Without exception,* participants expressed dismay about the amount of work they are required to do. In addition to teaching 12 units, they are increasingly required to conduct a significant amount of scholarly research, to serve on various committees and to attend social and promotional events (Open House, graduation, student presentations, student camp, etc). Several participants indicated that they believe Cal Poly has a heavier workload than any other CSU institution. This workload issue impacts many aspects of participants’ lives, including their ability to connect with other faculty as well as to manage their personal lives.

“I feel like they just keep piling tasks on top of tasks. Teaching 12 units is difficult along with all the prep and advising but when you are also asked to do meaningful research on top of that and then also to take part in committees and help out in the department, it’s just too much.”

“Cal Poly will suck you dry if you let it. There is no such thing as balance between professional and personal life. At least 2/3 of your life is for Cal Poly.”

“There is a tremendous obstacle to the scholarly activity demanded by the University and my department. Teaching loads here at Cal Poly are heavy, and in addition there is a tremendous number of evening and weekend activities. Most faculty are on 9-month appointments. The demands on faculty time are tremendous, then add grant pursuits and writing for publication on top—of which is usually uncompensated. It is not reasonable and is not sustainable.”
"The workload is a big issue. An 80 hour week is not unusual, 7 days a week. Twelve units is a lot of teaching and research on top of that makes it very difficult to keep up. It’s next to impossible to do a good job in the classroom and fulfill research and other service requirements. This is on top of preparing for reviews every year and attending conferences."

"We need to be teaching fewer units so we can have time for professional development. People came here because they love to teach. People find it hard to pull themselves away from students to fulfill professional development requirements. Personal lives take a distant third."

"Because I have so much to do, I feel like I am not doing a very good job teaching and not doing a very good job with research. Forget about my personal life. I just can’t get it all done well."

"I feel pulled in so many directions. I want to give 100% at work and I should give 100% at home but my personal life takes a back seat all the time. If my husband was not in academia as well, he would not understand."

"My husband refers to himself as a Cal Poly widow all the time."

"In general, Cal Poly faculty are very underpaid for the amount of work we do. We are paid more than community college faculty but less than UC faculty. There’s an imbalance here. If there is high teaching expectations then there should be lower research expectations. Unlike UC where teachers teach less and usually the same classes over and over again, we are required to teach more and then to take on new classes each quarter which requires a tremendous amount of preparation."

"Faculty has been shrinking but the curriculum hasn’t. Plus some teachers are buying out more and more often to do research. That means that we have fewer people to handle the teaching load."

"No one cares what anyone else is doing. We don’t have time to find out so everyone works in their own bubble."

"One of the biggest adjustments I had coming to Cal Poly from [private industry] where we all worked together on the same project...was the sort of complete and total isolation I seem to live in here. I just don’t have time to make connections with other people because I am so busy. There are times when I can go days without talking to anyone else except students."

Participants consistently expressed the belief that the current quarter-based calendar intensifies the frenzy of a heavy workload. Teaching multiple courses and labs in 10 weeks and having three (assuming no summer quarter) starts and stops to teaching periods, rather than two, contribute to this frenzy. Those who have experienced both quarter and semester systems described the semester system as “much calmer” and “more efficient” than the
quarter system. Others indicated that a semester system would promote more scholarly pursuits and allow students to be more engaged in meaningful research.

“We need to be on the semester system, there is no question about it.”

“If we are going to be asked to do this much research, we need to be on the semester system.”

“Being on the quarter system creates havoc with my family life. Every two and a half months my teaching schedule changes and I have to completely rearrange my childcare. My husband who has his own business then has to change his schedule so he can take care of the kids or transport them when I can’t.”

Participants also noted that too many classes are scheduled very early or late in the day because the University lacks adequate classroom/laboratory space. This adds to the sense of work overload. These early and late classes place special burdens on faculty with children. They also place burden on faculty without children when preferences for mid-day classes are given to faculty with children.

Participants acknowledged that this issue of work overload is not only an issue for STEM women; it is an issue for men in STEM disciplines and men and women in non-STEM fields as well. However, participants also pointed out that women faculty typically do not have stay-at-home husbands/partners to carry the ‘load’ at home. Because of this, women faculty members feel at a disadvantage compared to many of their male counterparts.

“I sometimes feel like I’m competing against men who have stay-at-home wives who do all the house and family work, kind of like having a personal assistant. That takes some of the load off of the workload issue if you have someone to take charge of everything at home.”

**ISSUE:** Feelings regarding Cal Poly’s transition from being a teaching institution to being a more research-oriented campus are mixed; the transition is causing a significant amount of discord and friction. In addition, some question whether Cal Poly has an infrastructure to support a research focus.

Some faculty support current efforts to transition the University into a more scholarly institution. They recognize the financial benefits of research as well as the professional growth aspects. They also see the advantages of incorporating research into their teaching tool-chests. In fact, several accepted positions at Cal Poly to be a part of this new research vision. Others feel betrayed by this new direction. They chose to come to Cal Poly because it is a teaching
institution rather than to go to an R-1 institution. They resent being pulled out of the classroom to do research. They also resent being judged by new professional development standards that require a substantial amount of research when research is not necessarily their strength or part of their professional goals. Sentiment expressed by this group was ‘let each person do what they do best.’ If a person wants to make teaching a priority then they should be allowed to do that; if someone else wants to do research then that person should be allowed to do that. Everyone should not be required to teach a heavy load and do a significant amount of research.

Because the number of years faculty members have been at Cal Poly may significantly influence their perspectives regarding this institutional transformation, sample comments below have been identified according to whether the speaker was a tenured or a tenure-track faculty member.

“It’s a system in transition. Cal Poly is the best in research of 23 CSU campuses which focus mainly on teaching. It is in an awkward place. It is trying to be the best in research. But it is struggling. It has different pockets and is being pulled in different ways. There are many who are stuck in their ways and until they aren’t the majority it will be hard to be really the tops in research.” [Tenured]

“Our students are incredibly bright and fun to work with. They are often very career-focused and practical and want to do well so they will do well in life. If everyone just left you alone to play with your students, it would be ideal! What is not ideal is the increasing pressure to do more research and to bring in more money. I’ve seen a distinct shift in the last ten years so that new faculty are being pulled in so many ways and pulled away from teaching. The faculty is now being told not to let teaching pull them away from research. This is entirely wrong and negative. The administration is trying to turn us into a UC and a lot of people did not come here to do that.” [Tenured]

“Some of the older tenured faculty didn’t have this research requirement. When they were hired they did not have this requirement so they have little idea about how difficult this is to do.” [Tenure-track]

“Those who want to do research set the bar for everyone including those of us who do not want to do research. Those who want to teach should be judged by different criteria than those who want to do research.” [Tenure-track]

“We need a system where everyone is encouraged to do what they do best, not one that requires everyone to do the same thing. If someone wants to teach then they should teach. If they want to do research, then that’s what they should do. If they want to sit in office and write then that’s fine. If they want to be out in field then that’s what they should do. People need to be allowed to determine what is best for them personally, not be judged by the same criteria.” [Tenured]
Whether or not they embrace Cal Poly’s research vision, all agreed in their perception that Cal Poly does not have the resources or infrastructure to do meaningful research or even a culture that promotes it effectively. Several who were hired by Cal Poly because of their research endeavors said they came to Cal Poly because they were promised a significant amount of support for their work but then when they got here found that support was not forthcoming. They referred to this as Cal Poly’s “bait and switch program.” Participants offered examples such as lack of lab and office space for research, lack of grad students to assist with research, lack of even minimal funds to start up a research effort and lack of assistance with grant writing.

“Cal Poly does not have the infrastructure to do decent research. While we are required to do research, the University provides very few resources to help us do that research. There are limited startup funds; there isn’t even space for me to do research in, let alone have any tech support or even time.” [Tenure-track]

“There are small colleges with bigger budget issues than we have that have all their classrooms wired for technology. Here, I have to schlep a projector from my office to my classroom....If you are looking for barriers that prevent people from being creative, that’s one.” [Tenured]

“I am often told I can’t do something [research] because it’s not the Cal Poly way of doing things.” [Tenured]

“I don’t have any hesitation about moving in a research direction. I like doing research, as long as I get the support I need to do it. I like getting excited about my field. Deans don’t really understand what it takes to put a research project together. Even if I can get the resources together to do the project, I need release time to do it.” [Tenure-track]

ISSUE: University suffers from an inflexible, rigid system of decision-making that stifles change and innovation.

While many positive comments were made about students, colleagues and life at Cal Poly, there were comments in all groups that suggest the University has a bureaucratic system governed by patriarchal attitudes that often makes ‘getting things done’ or doing something innovative impossible. Participants were particularly concerned with how this system curtails cross-college collaboration and experimentation with curriculum. Several attributed an attitude of anti-intellectualism on campus to this system.
“It’s really a matter of newcomers versus old comers here. There are newcomers at various levels of professorship who have brought in all kinds of new ideas. And then there are the old timers who are admin or full professors who have never been anywhere else and were never encouraged by the system to network outside this community and to entertain new ideas. And sometimes actually often these older ones are the ones that sit in judgment of the newer faculty.”

“I kind of describe the system here as disorganized and rigid. It makes it very frustrating for people who come here with a strong background in research. They are always saying ‘no, you can’t do that because it’s state money’ and ‘you can’t do that because that’s foundation money’ and so on. You just want to do your job but the system gets in the way.”

“When I move outside my department, I encounter what I call the ‘beast,’ the institution of Cal Poly. There is a rigidity there that in my experience is asphyxiating. If one is interested in intellectual creativity or something larger than themselves, Cal Poly is just like a boat anchor, an incredible drag on any partnership across college lines or on any collaboration.”

“I think this is an anti-intellectual university which is counter to everything I think universities are all about. I was told that one of my documents was too intellectual. I was flabbergasted. I was also told that no one would ever read [another document]. The things that I’ve heard people say here on this campus are amazing to me.”

“The system is rigid and antiquated and revels in its rigidity. It’s like working at the post office for some people. The system is jaded and filled with people who have tenure and seniority and don’t want to do things differently. ‘That’s not how we do things at Cal Poly.’ ‘That’s not how we do it here.’ If I had a dollar for every time I’ve heard that statement since arriving here, I’d be able to take a very nice vacation. They don’t want a visionary exploding dynamic world. It’s strange because on the one hand that’s what Cal Poly says it wants to be [innovative, changing, an R-1 institution] but then on the other hand it does everything it can to not be that.”

“Many people in administration have never been in the research world or the business world so they don’t know what is normal there. Many have gone straight through their education and have no life experience except to be at Cal Poly…. When I first arrived here, everyone told me how much the general community of San Luis loves Cal Poly. Well, when I started asking questions of the [business] community, I found something completely different. The business community doesn’t love Cal Poly. They say Cal Poly is just using them. The students aren’t prepared, they have no work ethic, they don’t want to work on days they have papers due or have the sniffles. Life does not work on a 10-week time frame. Life is life, it moves on. Cal Poly expects the rest of the world to fit our model and time frame and that’s unrealistic.”

“Just something as simple as class scheduling can stymie a new program or something you want to do. In a world today which requires flexibility, Cal Poly is not that.”

“If someone has a PhD in something they probably have a few clues about how things should be done. The atmosphere here is paternalistic, even punitive. I often feel oppressed and then slapped.”
“This is a very patriarchal environment. And it’s threatened by change. What is the resistance to making change?”

“I think some of the points of inflexibility and rigidity come from the men who have been on this campus the longest. I think the layer of the faculty that is relatively new – women and men – that have come from doctoral programs that are a bit more robust in terms of complexity or interdisciplinary focus have a different perspective. We have a dean who only wants to do things the traditional way.”

“Collaboration is not facilitated at all. It is encouraged only to the extent that it doesn’t bring down barriers or change the system in anyway. It is kind of like the diversity issue. The sense is ‘we don’t want to have to change anything to make it happen, we just want it to happen without our help.’”

“Imagine that you come to an institution of higher education and you have no mandate for creativity or intellectual creativity or collaboration…that is totally crazy.”

“Risk taking and experimentation is not encouraged here at Cal Poly. To truly be risk taking, you have to be willing to fail once in a while. Not all experiments work out; some do and prove to be very beneficial. It seems that the only ideas that are really funded or approved here are those that are guaranteed to work out.”

“It’s impossible inside the current system to collaborate and do experimental classes. Your have to go before the Academic Senate, you have to sacrifice your first born child, it’s just impossible to get through the bureaucracy and barriers. It would be great if there was some mechanism in the system that was for innovation that helped build relationships.”

In part, participants attribute this inflexibility and resistance to change to a desire to protect one’s territory. Despite having tenure, participants report that faculty are concerned that change will lead to the modification or elimination of programs and thus will threaten individuals’ status at Cal Poly. Several believe this posture negatively impacts the University’s curriculum development.

“Students are not always the priority when people think about change within this institution. Students are certainly the focus on a daily basis but sometimes we don’t ask what is best for the students when we are discussing curriculum or creating an atmosphere of creative thinking. At the instruction level, the priority seems more to protect one’s territory.”

ISSUE: Participants/faculty generally don’t feel appreciated or valued by the University.

Cal Poly does not go out of its way at the University level to reassure faculty that they are a valued entity in the community. The interests of the students often supersede the interests of the faculty. Recognition does not need to be in formal accolades but rather in
subtle gestures like reduced parking fees or development of faculty dining areas and meeting rooms or a separate workout area or locker room in the gym. Developing a childcare center was also mentioned as a way to communicate to faculty that the University values and supports their efforts (see more comments about this later in report).

“I get really tired of seeing that sign that says “it’s all about the students.” Well, what about the faculty? Aren’t we important here somehow? But you sure wouldn’t know it. I would never take anything away from the students but it would be nice from time to time to hear that we are valued, if even in some small way.”

“When I taught at xxxx, I felt valued. That school bent over backwards to make faculty feel special and appreciated.”

“I wish someone would just pat me on the back once in a while and tell me I am doing a good job.”

“The University’s priority should be to keep people here. The attitude should be, ‘we want you to stay, to be fulfilled here and satisfied.’ Instead, it’s a tone of ‘we hired you but if you do something or aren’t good enough then we can let you go.’... My point is--everyone should feel welcome here.”

“I don’t have any sense that Cal Poly really values having women in STEM positions. There is no communication that that is something that is important.... There isn’t anything tangible. There is a lot of verbiage about that but nothing backing it up. I do hear words like ‘we want to hire more women’ but I am not sure the top administration really thinks that. It is a concept but not a reality. It’s like the issue of diversity—it’s talked about a lot as a concept but isn’t a reality.”

**ISSUE: University/colleges coddle and protect students more than necessary.**

By comparison to other campuses, some participants believe that Cal Poly encourages professors to pamper and overprotect students. Some of this hand-holding results in additional work and advisement time than might be necessary if expectations of students were different. They also expressed some belief that Cal Poly students are not as engaged in intellectual pursuits and learning for the sake of learning as are students on some other campuses.

“I get the sense that the student body is really laid back, more laid back than some other places. They are focused and work hard, but there is a big group that is not motivated and it’s hard to get them to learn things. They think they are here to hop through your hoops and they forget that they are here to learn something. They constantly are asking what problems will be on the test, not about the bigger meaning of some concept. I get feeling that they miss the point of the education, they are focused on the degree and not on learning the material.”
“Sometimes it seems like an attention span thing. It is really hard to engage them in something at a deeper level. If you can’t compartmentalize your teaching into little bites you will lose them.”

“Students are coddled a lot here. At [other school] it was the student’s responsibility to be there to learn. Here at Cal Poly it’s our responsibility to hold their hand and teach them. I am told to give them more handouts, give them more everything, give them more questions. I just want to say, ‘you have a book, you should open it up and read it!’ Basically, here at Cal Poly we are responsible for giving the students their education, not for them working for it.”

“Students are more demanding of their professors here. Students want their professors to provide everything. They are good kids but they expect too much. If I don’t post things on line right away they act like the world is falling apart.”

“Students at other places figure out how to sink or swim on their own. They don’t have the same constant connection with professors as students do here.”

“Students come first and faculty are somewhere way below. We are there to do everything for students. If students don’t do well in your class, you have to bring students up to that level. I have to come up with some new way to do something. I have been told sometimes that I don’t give enough A’s. Shouldn’t the students be figuring out how to earn that A. I feel a downward pressure that I have to keep bringing the students up.”

“Students know the system is here to protect them. I have heard, ‘I came to every lecture and I took notes. Don’t you think that it is your fault and not mine that I am failing the class.’ I have never heard that any where else.”

**ISSUE: Students sometimes treat female faculty differently than they treat male faculty.**

While most attendees said they are not mistreated by their colleagues because of their gender, some say they are treated differently and even mistreated by students. Participants report being called ‘ma’am,’ or ‘Ms/Mrs. Xxxx’ instead of Doctor xxxx. Several indicated that students had been outright disrespectful to them in class. Still others indicated that students more often have more biases against women professors than they do against men professors and that they hold them to a different standard. Participants reported being concerned that these biases are reflected in student evaluations. For this reason, participants expressed concern about the emphasis that is placed on student evaluations. (More comments are made about this issue under Career Advancement.) As one participant said, “Student evaluations are like popularity contests. They shouldn’t carry as much weight as they do in performance reviews.”
ISSUE: Faculty members are expected to work without compensation.

Requests for additional contribution of time either during the summer quarter or at other times to pick up the workload for faculty who are not able to teach for some specific reason (maternity leave, sudden illness, etc.). This is very difficult if not impossible for women with young children.

“If I don’t agree to take up some of the slack [when a colleague is ill or on maternity leave] for no compensation, then I am considered a bad team player. This puts such a crunch on my family life.”

“I have a 9 month contract but I am expected to conduct research during the summer months. During those months, I am essentially working for nothing. This is very difficult for a lot of reasons but above all else I need childcare during this time. I just can’t do it and at this point in time I refuse to worry about the consequences.”

“Even though I have a nine-month contract, I am expected to work through the summer without compensation. I have to say, I resent it!”

Job-Related Issues: Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are an important part of one’s everyday work environment. The importance of connecting with others in a positive way was discussed in all sessions. Those who had the most opportunities to connect with others seemed to be the most content.

ISSUE: Networking opportunities are too infrequent.

Some departments are more social than others. A few departments do not socialize at all. Many participants—even those from the more socially interactive departments—talked about wanting more networking opportunities. Nearly all acknowledged that these opportunities do exist but that they are infrequent and sometimes not as well attended as they could be because people are so busy.

“When I was at [other university], we had free faculty dinners from time to time. It was a great opportunity to meet other people and helped get us all out of our offices. I’ll go far for a free piece of pizza.”

“It would be interesting to meet with other STEM women and to have more chance to network. If we were given more opportunity to network together, we might seem more women helping
other women advance into more leadership roles. That way more informal networking groups would form.”

“I met a lot of people during the WOW week orientation but I haven’t had an opportunity to reconnect with any of them.”

“We know and studies tell us that women thrive when they are in an intellectual and socially dynamic environment, women like social interaction and networking. I sometimes find it hard to do that on this campus.”

**ISSUE:** Along with doing more networking, participants are eager to engage in more collaborative work. At present, the University does not have a means to foster collaboration.

As mentioned in an earlier section in this report, the University’s decision making process is perceived as curtailing collaboration. At present, participants find it hard to identify and meet potential collaborators. More than one person noted that there is not a system in place to help faculty interested in collaborating find each other. Participants expressed interest in seeing the development of a clearinghouse or central office to facilitate collaborations.

“The thing that I most miss...is the ability to set aside some time to do what I really want which is to actually go out and make connections with people outside my department so that we can find ways to work together. My field is a natural field to collaborate with 90% of other fields. But when it’s 2:00 in the afternoon and I have to get prepared to do a lecture, something [like a collaborative course] that is two years down the road doesn’t get very high on my to do list.”

“I wish there was a clearing house or some central location where I could go to find people to collaborate with. Even if I don’t have an idea, I’d just like to find people who are interested in collaborating on something. It would be nice if there was some office on campus that would facilitate that, like grant writing. It could be like collaboration.com, like match.com.”

**ISSUE:** Faculty members have no place on campus to meet other faculty members not in their college or department nor do they have a location which allows them to ‘get away’ from students for even a brief amount of time.

Participants believe that the lack of a dedicated faculty center makes it difficult for faculty members from different colleges to meet spontaneously. It also communicates a subtle message that cross-college collaboration is unimportant and not something the University supports. STEM faculty are very interested in networking with other faculty – men and women alike, STEM and non-STEM faculty alike. Participants also noted that it would be helpful and refreshing to have a location where they could relax for a short while without interruptions from students.
“There isn’t one place on campus where faculty can gather that is just for faculty. We don’t even have a faculty center or house. The President’s house would be a great faculty center.”

“Sometimes I’d like to be able to just get away for a few minutes from students where I can have a quiet lunch or take a break without being interrupted.”

ISSUE: The department chair often determines the morale in the department. Chairs and other positions of authority (deans) should be required to have some training in management and interpersonal communications before they take the reins.

The department chair is an important position and often sets the tone for the entire department. According to participants, too many chairs are not qualified for the position because they have poor communication skills and/or limited management experience. Chairs should be chosen carefully and for their skill set, not just because they are the most senior person in the department or next in line for the position. At minimum, all people with authority should receive some management training.

“In private industry, when someone moves into management, they are expected to go through a significant amount of training in order to be effective in that position. In academia that doesn’t happen. People become chair and then bumble through making lots of mistakes. Those mistakes are mainly interpersonal ones, how to treat people, but can be so detrimental to the morale of the department.”

ISSUE: Women differ from men in their communication styles, expectations and needs.

As a special note, participants acknowledged that there are differences in how women and men receive information and react to it. They also pointed out that women seem to have different needs than some men regarding interactions with others. Several participants said that recognizing these differences helped them deal with stressful situations.

“Have you ever noticed how men and women introduce themselves in meetings? Men introduce themselves by talking about their accomplishments and positions and women introduce themselves by talking about their backgrounds and where they are coming from. For women, it’s the social context and for men, it’s the hierarchy.”

“Women may need to be reassured more than men that they are doing a good job. I sure do.”

“I’ve wondered why I take negative comments so much to heart but then I read a book saying that men and women react to criticism differently. A man has the capacity to say, ‘The boss is a jerk.’ A woman is more inclined to say, ‘Oh, my god, I am such a failure.’ I don’t think deans have to write evaluation for men and women differently but it seems like it would be awesome
to have acknowledgement about things when they are going well.  It feels like you are never doing enough.”

“I’d like to see my dean and his staff be better with communications.  He never communicates positive things, only things that have gone wrong.  But I seem to be more bothered by this than some of the other people [men] in my department.”

Several participants also acknowledged that they may have different communication styles than women in less technical disciplines.

“I try to be a chameleon whenever possible so I’ve probably taken on some of the communication style of the men in my field.  I find when I am with women from non technical fields I am a little too loud and probably too aggressive.  I have to watch myself.”

“I tried to collaborate with someone in [non STEM field] and it was a disaster.  I just have a different way of communicating and relating to others which did not work well with these other people.”

**Job-Related Issues: Career Advancement**

These issues focus on participants’ views of their current professional development efforts as well as on their professional aspirations.

**ISSUE: Current RPT process is ambiguous.**

Several tenure-track faculty indicated frustration with the current RPT process. Although they feel supported in the process, they find directions from their committee members “vague,” “ambiguous” and “inconsistent.”  For instance, they feel uncertain about what counts as external validation and what does not.  They also expressed some concern about the subjective nature of the reviews, acknowledging that the content of a specific review depends significantly on who prepares the review.  They pointed out that the current RPT process is relatively new and many of the current tenured faculty who are reviewing their progress/development did not have to go through the process as it exists today.  They indicated they wished there was more opportunity for tenure-track faculty to discuss their professional development plans with committee members before a review is prepared, finalized and placed in one’s permanent file.
ISSUE: Mentoring programs are inconsistent and sometimes non-existent.

Junior faculty expressed a need for more mentoring and more resources to help them develop their professional skills and teaching styles. Programs to mentor junior faculty vary from college to college and within each college. Some departments have formal mentoring programs while others have none. Some mentoring occurs informally because a senior faculty member takes a special interest in a junior faculty member. However, it seems that junior faculty are often left to their own devices to ‘figure things out.’ All agreed that mentoring is important and can be extremely helpful.

“I was surprised how little direction I was given when I started here at Cal Poly. I had no idea how autonomous I would be. Basically, I was told here is what you have to cover in this class and here are the skills we expect students to have when they get done with his class. I wasn’t even told what text book to use.”

“The women’s mentorship program was a really good thing for me. It matched me up with a senior woman who was not in my department but was in my college. It allowed me to ask questions that I would not have asked of any of the men in my department. No way would I have given them ‘any blood’ before I got tenure. The program was really helpful. I didn’t meet with my mentor very often but it was helpful to have a sounding board and to get someone else’s perspective.”

“I got assigned to a mentor when I first got here but I’ve never met with him.”

“I feel really bad. I have a ‘mentee’ but I’ve never met with her. I pass her on the street and we say hi.”

“Sometimes it’s the female students who act out more than male students. There really isn’t any training for young faculty about how to deal with difficult students. It is sometimes harder for young women faculty to establish who the boss is in the classroom.”

While the new faculty orientation during Week of Welcome is considered very helpful, some felt it covered too much information at a time when they were not equipped to absorb it all.

“The University does offer a new-teacher orientation, during WOW week. I thought it was great...it covered some basic things like what to put in a syllabus, how to use Blackboard, how to make lectures more lively. Kids today have a need for instant gratification and lectures have to be lively to keep their attention. It would be helpful to have something later though, after the first quarter. That was a lot to take in at one time but necessary to have to get started.”
Others expressed a desire for more ‘continuing education’ on such topics as how to establish authority in the classroom, how to deal with difficult personalities in the classroom, what kind of grievance systems are available to faculty to deal with difficult students and ideas for improving teaching methods.

**ISSUE:** Current review system emphasizes the negative rather than reinforcing the positive. The system also places great emphasis on student ratings which can be biased against women faculty.

In addition to not feeling valued by the University in a global way, participants had some concerns about the current review system.

“I thought written reviews would be the mechanism for applauding and acknowledging contributions but it seems rather to be a way to find deficiencies. No evaluation comes back without something you have to work on. This seems like a means to cover their butts—if they ever have to get rid of you this is a way to do that. Every year they had something to complain about. “

“Negative carries more weight than positive comments. I think I’ve heard that for every negative you need to hear 3 positives to balance the negative. Otherwise you get so weighed down.

Participants indicated frustration with students’ ratings of professors. Several indicated that students are more critical of female professors than they are of male professors and described the ratings as similar to popularity contests rather than a true evaluation of their effectiveness as a teacher. While they accept the need for student evaluations, they find it unfair that their review is in large part based on these ratings.

“My department requires that everyone get at least an average rating of 3.5. There is a lot of pressure to do this. Students in my college are harder on women faculty than they are on men faculty. I’m at a disadvantage going in.”

**ISSUE:** Women faculty have little interest in taking on leadership roles or moving up into administrative positions.

Administration is perceived as being removed from teaching and students and is not why some women went into academia. Others see administrative positions as thankless jobs and not worth the additional pay. Others look to their fields for advancement, not to Cal Poly.

“I don’t want to advance. I love being in the classroom. It is so much more fun than managing people.”
“When I came here, I was a lot more ambitious. I probably would have said I want to be chair. Not now; I don’t see any joy in being part of the administration. Some people see it as a step up on their career but others think of it as just a lot of personnel issues that I would not want to have to deal with.”

“I don’t see the chair job or an administrative role as advancement in my career. Chair is a dreadful job. I am more interested in being known for my research. In STEM fields there are so many other strong ways for people to be rewarded for their excellence. When people say they want to advance, they want to advance their scientific name or reputation, not move into administration or leadership roles on campus.”

“I might be interested in being in administration if I saw that it allowed me to accomplish some larger personal goal. However, it seems there is very little opportunity at Cal Poly to step into an administrative role of value. Rather it appears that there are several dead ends that have been created for those who have defied the Peter Principle and are somehow two levels above their level of competence. This is kind of a dark view, but that is what it looks like from "down here" at the faculty level.”

“I cannot imagine going into administration. Some of my colleagues have encouraged me to take the chair job. It just gives me hives thinking about it. I think it has to be worse the higher up you get.”

**FAMILY AND PERSONAL LIFE ISSUES**

Information gathered in the focus sessions about personal issues is consistent with the Climate Survey findings. STEM women are very concerned about family and personal life issues. As mentioned earlier, these issues may not be large in number but they are often the ones that cause STEM women to resign if not satisfactorily addressed. All participants acknowledged that it is very difficult to find a reasonable balance between their professional and personal lives.

**ISSUE: Lack of on-campus childcare causes considerable stress for STEM women (and probably for non-STEM women as well).**

Participants in all eight focus sessions and most interviews at one point or other stated that childcare is a major issue for faculty families. Women feel especially concerned with finding adequate childcare that can adjust to their changing work schedules.

“Cal Poly pretends to be a family-friendly University but it really is not. We don’t even have childcare available to us. We all struggle to find decent childcare and some kind of a network
system to help us with our personal lives. My husband doesn’t feel at all connected here. Faculty housing is helpful but not enough.”

“I think we need more support for people’s professional lives and for ways to create a sense of community. Things like readily available child care. Why that has not been done is beyond me.”

“This issue of childcare has been talked about for 15 years. It’s about time it gets done. There is a total denial of reality on the part of the upper administration. As more and more women faculty are hired, this will become an increasingly bigger problem. A generation ago when faculty were most often men with stay-at-home wives to care for children, childcare was not such an important issue. But today it is. If Cal Poly wants to attract women faculty then it needs to help take the stress out of people’s personal lives in order to take stress out of professional lives.”

“After school programs would also be helpful. There are very few options in this town for decent activities for kids after school.”

“I put my name on the waiting list as soon as I found out I was pregnant. My daughter just turned 4 and was just admitted [to on-campus childcare].”

“Childcare and after school programs are really feasible, more feasible than some other things we’ve talked about. There’s a model in place with the student’s childcare program. It’s excellent.”

“The lack of childcare impacts all faculty members. Even though I don’t have children, I still feel it. In our department, faculty members with children get preferences when it comes to class times. Their preferences often revolve around their available childcare. That means I sometimes end up teaching at times when I don’t want to.”

“I have managed to find great childcare but I would feel so much more comfortable having my children in a childcare facility here on campus. They would be close to me and I could even go over and see them during the day, have lunch with them, go for a walk.”

ISSUE: Spousal employment is a major deterrent to job satisfaction among STEM women.

STEM women often marry or partner with other STEM or highly trained men or women. STEM women leave Cal Poly most often because their partners cannot find appropriate employment in the area. Living apart, which approximately one in five is doing, puts too much strain on their marriage and family lives. Unfortunately, it is more often women who relinquish their positions in order to maintain harmony in their homes.

“Women leave because the strain in their personal life is too much to bear for long periods of time. This includes living apart from their husbands but also because the demand for their time is so great….Men [STEM faculty] are married to professionals but not necessarily to other academics; they’ve managed to carve out jobs here that work for now... So many science and
engineering women are married to other scientists and engineers who oftentimes are academics, too. If they don’t work for Cal Poly, it’s hard if not impossible to find work in the area.”

“My husband is a xxxx. He won’t want to stay here very long without a satisfying job. He is not 100% happy. Traditionally men are the breadwinners and he won’t be okay being a stay-at-home dad for very long.”

“I think this partner issue is huge. It’s the main reason women in our department have left. Their husbands can’t get the right kind of job or adequate employment…. I am thinking of one person in particular. She seemed really happy with the department and her job…the only real stress in her life was that her husband was very unhappy.”

“I think spousal employment is a Cal Poly problem. Historically, I think Cal Poly has not acknowledged the need for help with jobs for spouses. In fact, at one time, there were nepotism rules that prevented relatives from being hired. Even in my time here, spouse jobs have not been taken seriously.”

“San Luis is as expensive as LA. It’s hard to make it here on just one professional salary. We may need to move somewhere where both of us can work.”

Over the past few years, several departments have instituted the practice of hiring couples as a way to address this issue. This practice is perceived as an excellent way to encourage STEM women to stay at Cal Poly. Coercing other departments to hire a new faculty member’s spouse has not been as effective as the practice of couple hires.

**ISSUE:** Single faculty are not able to meet suitable mates at Cal Poly or in San Luis Obispo.

Women who are not married or in a partnership when they arrive at Cal Poly have a difficult time finding suitable partners in the community. Dating is also difficult in a small community where students frequent the same establishments as faculty.

“Being single in San Luis is hard. Single men are either in the 20s or in their 70s—very few are in their 30s and 40s. There are lots of single women but not many single men. Some women faculty have moved away from here to find more eligible men. This is a small rural town, there aren’t many things to do here outside of Cal Poly.”

“When I do have a date, I usually hear about it on Monday morning from a student. ‘So how was your date on Saturday night?’ ‘You looked really great on Saturday.’ It’s very embarrassing to have your personal life so open and exposed to students.”
ISSUE: Some younger faculty feel pressure from older faculty to put their careers before their family life.

Several younger faculty observed that older faculty—both men and women—have different priorities than they do with regard to balancing their personal and career lives.

“Some of my female colleagues come from a different generation where careers came before family. I feel like the older generation in my department looks down on me because I wanted to have a child.”

Section 4C: SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR JOB-RELATED AND PERSONAL-LIFE ISSUES

Participants suggested many solutions; ideas ranged from the very tangible and immediate (develop a childcare facility) to the more abstract and long-range (institute systemic change). Admittedly, solutions for many of these issues are fairly obvious. Some are relatively easy to implement while others will require substantial debate and a change in attitudes and established policies. Some can be put in place with minimal funding and others call for a significant outlay of dollars.

In addition to brainstorming about how to correct problems, participants were asked to prioritize these solutions. Twelve ideas emerged as more important and perhaps more viable than some others. They are listed below more or less in order of their expressed importance and feasibility. It should be noted that these suggestions were all generated by participants and not by Opinion Studies, and are related below in the voices of the participants.

1: Develop a childcare facility and after-school programs. As noted, this idea has been discussed for many years and is strongly supported by faculty with and without children. As more women faculty are hired in STEM fields, this will become increasingly important. Creating a childcare facility will help families manage their childcare needs and at the same time communicate to faculty members that Cal Poly does value families and does value faculty.

2: Continue finding creative ways to employ spouses. This too is a problem that will continue to be an issue as more STEM women are hired. Hiring couples appears to be very effective but won’t always be possible.
3: **Develop a faculty center.** Create a location where faculty can meet other faculty formally and informally and can relax away from students. This could be one large single center or several smaller centers in various places on campus. The President’s house was suggested by several people as a suitable site. The center(s) would help faculty network with others not in their departments and colleges and would also communicate that the University values faculty. The center could also be a focal point for an office dedicated to fostering collaboration.

4: **Shift from a quarter-based calendar to a semester-based calendar.** While such a shift will initially require a significant amount of work, the more relaxed pace of a semester system will encourage more research activities and help reduce the frenzy both faculty and students feel on the quarter system.

5: **Reduce work load.** Provide more release time to help faculty undertake research and other tasks. Help faculty write grants; provide tutorials that assist with this skill. Review extracurricular activities. Are some of these activities really necessary? As one faculty observed, “We spend a lot of extra time [at Open House and otherwise] telling prospective students how great we are and encouraging them to apply and then we only accept 10% of them.”

6: **Plan and schedule more networking opportunities.** These opportunities can be as simple as getting together for appetizers and wine or as formal as a lecture series of some sort (women in STEM fields sharing their current research efforts). Give women a chance to get together to talk and exchange ideas. These activities of course don’t have to exclude men or non-STEM faculty. Don’t be deterred by low attendance; experiment with a variety of activities until several are found that are successful.

7: **Develop a program that fosters collaboration.** Review process for getting collaborative efforts approved. Are all of these steps necessary? Can some be eliminated or made easier? Do these efforts really have to be planned two years in advance? Establish an office or website or bulletin board that can help bring prospective collaborators together. Recognize that collaboration is important and support it.
8: Develop more training programs for various faculty levels:
   - Mentoring programs for junior faculty. In addition to orientation programs, etc., junior faculty need at least one person they can consult with from time to time about interpersonal relationships and other touchy issues. Their mentor should not be on their tenure committee. Ideally, that mentor should be someone outside their immediate department.
   - Management training for faculty moving to administrative positions.
   - Refresher courses, workshops and seminars for more experienced faculty.

9: Develop more perks for faculty. Find ways to convey to faculty that they are a valued part of the Cal Poly community. These perks can be as simple as reduced parking fees and free lunches periodically, or more extensive like a faculty center or a separate workout area or locker room in the gym. Perks could also be the development of discount mortgage plans and other financial packages. Rethink slogan, ‘It’s all about the students.’

10: Improve research infrastructure. Make certain that those doing research have what they need to conduct their research. Help faculty write grants; provide tutorials about how to do this. Develop more graduate assistantships to help carry the research workload. Recognize that not all faculty share current research vision; find ways to make these disparate views more compatible with current vision.

11: Review decision making processes and find ways to eliminate red tape. Streamline approval processes and encourage people to be innovative. Review current curriculum practices to see if established practices are still reasonable; if not, eliminate.

12: Build more classrooms. This of course takes long-range planning and capital funding, but construction of additional classrooms would eliminate the need to have very early morning and late evening classes which contribute to a sense of work overload and frenzy.

No specific solutions were proposed for dealing with some issues, particularly those having to do with attitudes (coddling of students, communication differences between women
and men, etc.) or even those related to review processes. While these are all important, they were considered less important in the context of other solutions. They should by no means, however, be overlooked or dismissed as unimportant.
Section 5: COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

First, a few comments about focus group research in general: it is relatively rare that a focus group project calls for the completion of eight sessions (plus six individual interviews) on a single topic and even rarer that those who participate make up nearly half of the population in question. Such circumstances provide a sound base from which to draw conclusions; readers should feel confident that information provided here does in fact reflect the sentiments of Cal Poly’s STEM women faculty.

There are a variety of ways to analyze information gleaned from focus group and other qualitative research efforts, but perhaps the most used and accepted method is to review recordings and notes of sessions (multiple times if necessary) and to listen for and to identify common themes. These common themes are ideas that are mentioned several times in several sessions or by several people in the same session or by one person but endorsed either verbally or nonverbally by others in the same session. The most obvious ‘common themes’ are those that are mentioned and endorsed frequently in all or nearly all sessions. When eight focus sessions and six interviews or twenty two hours of interviews are conducted—as in the current project—as opposed to only one or two sessions (two to four hours), the collection of comments is large and the most salient points or common themes, relatively obvious. Ideas regarding issues and solutions reported on the previous pages are those that emerged most frequently from the many hours of interviews conducted in this project.

As mentioned in the methodology section of this report, 36 of the 82 STEM women faculty (44%) took part in this project. This is an enormous number or sample size in relationship to the target population. Focus group research is often criticized for its small sample size; opponents say that information generated from focus groups cannot be generalized to the larger population. However, in this situation, participants represent nearly one out of two of the population in question. So, given the size of the data collection effort in this exercise and the size of the participant base in relationship to the population, there should be little doubt about the accuracy of the information presented here.

One other comment regarding focus group research: focus session participants typically reveal their perceptions about situations and circumstances along with their opinions on any
given topic. That in large part is the purpose of focus group research—to bring forth people’s perceptions of situations as those perceptions impact their thinking and behavior. These perceptions may be correct and in sync with the actual situation or they may be wrong, founded on incorrect or no information or on a misinterpretation of information. No matter whether they are right or wrong or somewhere in between, these perceptions are powerful and should not be dismissed as irrelevant. They determine people’s attitudes and behavior and are important to acknowledge and understand. If wrong, perceptions need to be corrected with new and accurate information. If right, they need to be reinforced. On some issues reported on the previous pages we suspect that people’s perceptions may in fact be wrong or based on a misunderstanding of a situation or set of circumstances. However, these perceptions are nevertheless important; we urge all to take even ill-founded perceptions seriously and find ways to correct them as Cal Poly addresses issues identified in this project.

Now, a few concluding comments: All or nearly all participants expressed appreciation for being part of Cal Poly’s team. However, their comments and stories clearly show that there are a significant number of barriers that prevent STEM women faculty from being more successful at Cal Poly. These barriers are relatively wide spread and impact faculty members’ personal as well as professional lives. While smaller in number, personal barriers (i.e., spousal employment and childcare) prove for some to be ultimately more challenging than work environment issues. Some of these personal and work environment barriers are gender and/or STEM-field related but many more are not. While a number of participants recounted incidents of gender bias and mistreatment by colleagues and students, comments by other participants indicate that these gender bias incidents are relatively infrequent and isolated in several departments rather than pervasive. This of course does not make such behavior acceptable but it does appear that such behavior is the exception rather than the rule. Participants were generally more concerned with other work environment issues such as workload and instituting change on campus than they were with issues related to gender bias.

To the best of our knowledge, the 2009 Climate Survey and this effort are the first attempts to document these barriers. While some barriers such as childcare and spousal employment have been discussed openly for many years and acknowledged frequently as a
serious concern, we suspect many other issues reported here have only been discussed in small gatherings or perhaps not discussed at all. We hope this effort provides some framework regarding the importance of these issues and prompts discussion and ultimately action. Cal Poly’s transition from one administration to another over the next few years is an opportune time to address barriers discussed in this report and the 2009 Climate Survey and to effect change.
Section 6: APPENDICES

Appendix A:
E-MAIL INVITATIONS
NILGUN SUNGAR’S INTRODUCTORY E-MAIL

Subject: Help shape the future for STEM women faculty at Cal Poly

Dear xxx,

You were previously invited to participate in some way in efforts to further the goals of the Advance Project at Cal Poly, which are to identify and address the factors that are critical to the retention and recruitment of women faculty in STEM disciplines. If you were able to respond in the past, we sincerely appreciate your support. The analysis of our climate survey, which was conducted in spring 2009, has been completed and three main areas have been identified as significant to the experience of women faculty. These are: on-campus childcare, partner placement, and work environment. Below, I have appended a summary of these results; you can find more detailed information on the web site: (http://idstem.calpoly.edu/events.html).

Once again we need the help of Cal Poly women in the STEM disciplines. Because the goal of the Advance project is to devise a plan to improve the environment for women faculty in STEM disciplines, it is important for us to better understand the factors leading to the negative perceptions of work environment that were revealed by the climate survey. To this end, Robyn Letters of Opinion Studies (http://www.opinionstudies.com) has been contracted to conduct follow-up focus groups. This approach ensures confidentiality for the participants. No Cal Poly faculty or administrators, including the Advance team members, will know the identity of the participants. Only a summary report, without any identifying information, will be provided by Robyn Letters to Advance team members.

You will soon be contacted by Robyn Letters with an invitation to participate in a focus group. Your input is critical and fundamental; it will be used to improve the environment for all faculty at Cal Poly. I sincerely hope that you will be able to participate. If you should have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,
Nilgun Sungar
Advance Project PI

Outline of Gender Comparisons in Survey responses

1-Spouse/partner status
The marital status of female faculty in comparison to male faculty is quite different. The following bar graph shows that a female faculty member is three times more likely to be single than a male faculty member. Furthermore, female faculty are five times more likely than male faculty to be living apart from their spouses/partners. They are also more likely to have spouses who are employed at Cal Poly.

2- Childcare
On-campus childcare is a high priority for women faculty. Although many male faculty also rated childcare as a high priority, the odds of a female faculty member doing so were 15 times those of a male faculty
member. Similar differences were observed for rating on-campus, after-school and summer care as a high priority.

3- Work Environment
In almost all questions related to work environment, women faculty reported more negative perceptions. They report being far more likely to feel isolated, excluded from informal networks, mistreated and less valued. The following graph shows the odds ratios for responses that are in agreement with the statements shown in quotes. In each case, female faculty members are disproportionately represented among faculty who agree with the statement. It should be noted that 32% of women faculty in the survey reported that they feel mistreated due to gender.

Similarly, the following graph shows the odds of being in disagreement with the statements shown in quotes. Again, in each case female faculty members are disproportionately represented among faculty who disagree with the statement.
Subject: FOLLOW UP TO NILGUN SUNGAR’S E-MAIL REGARDING STEM FOCUS GROUPS

Dear STEM faculty member,
You recently received an email from Nilgun Sungar, principal investigator on the NSF Advance grant, describing a series of mini-focus groups that will be conducted over the next weeks among tenured and tenure-track STEM women faculty members. As a reminder, information gathered in these sessions will be used to augment findings of the Climate Survey conducted last Spring. This information will be used by University administrators to develop plans to address issues and to seek funding to implement plans. Your participation in these sessions is extremely important.

I have been selected by the committee to facilitate these sessions and am writing to you today to introduce myself and to invite you to take part. As background, my name is Robyn Letters. I have a research company, Opinion Studies, here in San Luis Obispo and regularly conduct focus groups among various populations. I have been asked to facilitate these sessions in part because I am not affiliated in any way with Cal Poly and thus can ensure a high degree of anonymity and confidentiality to all participants. If you choose to take part, you should feel free to be as candid as you like and to disclose any information you care to without fear of reprisal or consequence. No one other than myself and my assistant (who is also not affiliated with Cal Poly in any way) will know your name and college affiliation unless you choose to disclose either during the session. Also, please be assured that in my summary report to the committee any comments you make during the session will not in any way be associated with you personally.

Each focus session will be two hours in length and will be conducted off campus at the Holiday Inn Express (corner of Monterey and Grand). Sessions will be informal and will include no more than seven participants; some sessions could be as small as four or five. Tenured and tenure-track faculty will be interviewed separately. We are attempting to include representatives from a variety of STEM colleges in each session. That way you will have the opportunity to discuss issues with women faculty members that are not in your college and you do not normally talk to.

[Included in email to tenured faculty]
Sessions among tenured faculty are scheduled for:
Session A: Wednesday evening, April 7th 7 to 9
Session B: Thursday evening, April 8th 4:30 to 6:30
Session C: Tuesday evening, April 13th 7 to 9
Session D: Wednesday evening, April 14th 4:30 to 6:30

[Included in email to tenure-track faculty]
Sessions among tenure-track faculty are scheduled for:
Session A: Wednesday evening, April 7th 4:30 to 6:30
Session B: Thursday evening, April 8th 7 to 9
Session C: Tuesday evening, April 13th 4:30 to 6:30
Session D: Wednesday evening, April 14th 7 to 9

To be included in a session, simply reply to this email indicating which session you would like to attend (A, B, C or D). If possible, please indicate a second and third session choice as well. I’ll do my very best to accommodate your first choice. I’ll then send a personal email confirming your session time and giving details about the meeting location. In the meantime, should you have any questions regarding this project, please do not hesitate to call me or to send an email. I look forward to hearing from you.

Robyn Letters
OPINION STUDIES
784 Greystone Place * San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805 549 0367 / C: 805 704 9014
Subject: STEM FOCUS GROUP--SESSION ASSIGNMENT

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for your interest in taking part in the STEM focus groups. This note is to confirm your session assignment. Please plan to attend:

Session x: xxxxx evening, April xx from x:xx to x:xx

As a reminder, the focus session will take place at the Holiday Inn Express at the corner of Grand and Monterey. The meeting room is to the right of the main lobby, through the breakfast area. Light refreshments will be available. Also, if you prefer not to use your own name during the session (for confidential reasons) that will be fine--each participant will be asked to create a name tent card to place on the table in front of them. Feel free to use any name you like.

Looking forward to meeting you. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Robyn

Robyn Letters
OPINION STUDIES
784 Greystone Place * San Luis Obispo, CA  93401
805 549 0367 / C:  805 704 9014
Hi xxxx,
Thanks very much for your interest in our research among STEM women faculty. I am sorry you couldn't be a part of any of the focus groups. However, I am conducting some one on one, personal interviews over the phone with interested faculty members who were unable to attend the focus sessions. So, I'd love to talk to you for 15 or 20 minutes. I am very flexible regarding time. If interested, please suggest a few times (day or evening) that are convenient for you.

Best regards,
Robyn

Robyn Letters
OPINION STUDIES
784 Greystone Place * San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805 549 0367 / C: 805 704 9014
INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Cal Poly ADVANCE IT-START:
An Assessment of the Climate for Women Faculty in STEM Disciplines at Cal Poly

A follow-up research project to identify methods to increase participation of Cal Poly women faculty in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is being conducted by Nilgun Sungar (Physics), Heather Smith (Statistics), Kathy Chen (Materials Engineering), Dan Walsh (College of Engineering), Susan Opava (Research and Graduate Programs), and Jean DeCosta (Student Affairs) at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

You are being asked to take part in this study by participating in an off-campus focus group discussion at the nearby Holiday Inn Express with 3 to 6 additional Cal Poly women faculty from other academic colleges and of similar tenured/tenure status. Your participation will take approximately two hours for the focus group discussion and will require no preparation or follow-up. The focus group discussions will be led by Robyn Letters of Opinion Studies, an outside consultant who is not a member of the Cal Poly faculty or administration, and who has no role in retention, tenure or promotion at the university. The focus group agenda will include: (1) a 7 item pre-discussion questionnaire; (2) review of relevant results of the institutional climate survey completed last spring; (3) identification of problems related to work environment, career advancement, interpersonal relationships and family/personal issues; (4) identification of solutions and prioritization of efforts; and (5) identification of additional pertinent issues.

Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You may also elect not to answer any questions or discuss any issues you would prefer not to discuss.

The possible risks associated with participation in this study include possible secondary adverse effects of information or impressions you share with your discussion group. While the focus group leader will keep your identity confidential, and will take steps to preclude the identification of any subject based on reports of the findings, there is no mechanism available to absolutely prevent other members of your focus group from subsequently reporting what you’ve said to others outside the group. To protect your confidentiality, you may choose to use an alias as you introduce yourself to your focus group, and/or to withhold the names of your department or academic college. You may also choose to describe situations in the 3rd person, or use fictitious names. You are being asked to participate only if you are willing to keep all information shared by others completely confidential. While the focus group discussions will be audio taped to allow for more thorough post-discussion data capture, these tapes will be destroyed immediately after useful data have been gleaned from them. In the interim the tapes will be kept in a locked private location accessible only to Robyn Letters or her transcriber. Reports of the focus group discussions will describe general themes.
without names of individual participants or their departments. Reports may be disseminated to specific academic colleges if the focus groups reveal college-specific issues, and will then discuss information gleaned from the participants related to that particular college.

The overall goal of this National Science Foundation-funded research is to find ways to improve the climate at Cal Poly in ways that will facilitate the participation of women faculty in STEM. Your contributions to this research may help to both identify barriers to participation and to find practical solutions for overcoming these limitations.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Nilgun Sungar at 756-2851 or nsungar@calpoly.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu.

Please retain this informed consent form for your reference. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research as described above, please indicate your agreement by attending and participating in the focus group discussion.

Thank you very much for your consideration of participation in this research.
INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

Cal Poly ADVANCE IT-START:
An Assessment of the Climate for Women Faculty in STEM Disciplines at Cal Poly

A follow-up research project to identify methods to increase participation of Cal Poly women faculty in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is being conducted by Nilgun Sungar (Physics), Heather Smith (Statistics), Kathy Chen (Materials Engineering), Dan Walsh (College of Engineering), Susan Opava (Research and Graduate Programs), and Jean DeCosta (Student Affairs) at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

You are being asked to take part in this study by participating in a one on one phone interview at a time convenient for you. Your participation will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes and will require no preparation or follow-up. The interview will be conducted by Robyn Letters of Opinion Studies, an outside consultant who is not a member of the Cal Poly faculty or administration, and who has no role in retention, tenure or promotion at the university. The interview agenda will include: (1) an 8 item pre-discussion questionnaire; (2) identification of problems related to work environment, career advancement, interpersonal relationships and family/personal issues; (3) identification of solutions and prioritization of efforts; and (4) identification of additional pertinent issues.

Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You may also elect not to answer any questions or discuss any issues you would prefer not to discuss.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. The only other participant in the interview will be Robyn Letters, the interviewer, who as described above is an outside consultant without any role in retention, tenure or promotion at the university. The information you choose to share in the interview will be held in the strictest confidence. There will be no recording of the session; Robyn Letters will take notes during the interview but will destroy those notes upon completion of the final report. Your name will never be associated with any of the information you provide. You may also choose to describe situations in the 3rd person, or use fictitious names. The information you provide will be combined with that obtained from other faculty members in previously conducted focus group discussions. The final report summarizing findings from the focus sessions and interviews will describe general themes without revealing names of individual participants or their departments. Reports may be disseminated to specific academic colleges if the focus groups reveal college-specific issues, and will then discuss information gleaned from the participants related to that particular college.
The overall goal of this National Science Foundation-funded research is to find ways to improve the climate at Cal Poly in ways that will facilitate the participation of women faculty in STEM. Your contributions to this research may help to both identify barriers to participation and to find practical solutions for overcoming these limitations.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Nilgun Sungar at 756-2851 or nsungar@calpoly.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at 756-2754, sdcv@calpoly.edu.

Please retain this informed consent form for your reference. At the outset of the interview you will be asked to indicate that you have reviewed this form and that you agree to voluntarily participate in this research as described above.

Thank you very much for your consideration of participation in this research.
Appendix C:
PRE-SESSION QUESTIONNAIRES
PRE-SESSION QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR FOCUS SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Thank you very much for taking part in today’s session!

Before we begin, please take a few minutes to complete this short questionnaire. To ensure your anonymity, insert this questionnaire form into the envelope provided once you have completed the form. Please do not sign your name or otherwise indicate your identity.

1. I feel valued by my departmental colleagues.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

2. In meetings in my department and/or college, people pay just as much attention when women speak as when men speak.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

3. I feel mistreated at Cal Poly due to my gender.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

4. I feel excluded from informal networks in my department.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your life at Cal Poly?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>3 4</td>
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<td>7 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 10</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. How likely are you to leave Cal Poly in the next five years?
   - Very likely
   - Somewhat likely
   - Somewhat unlikely
   - Very unlikely

7. What is your current marital/partner status and your living arrangement?
   - Live with spouse/partner in same location
   - Have spouse/partner but live in different locations most of the year
   - No spouse/partner currently
PRE-SESSION QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Thank you very much for taking part in this important research!

Please take a few minutes to complete this short questionnaire before your scheduled interview. Once completed, return to Robyn Letters via fax (805 549 9046) or US mail (Opinion Studies, 784 Greystone Place, SLO 93401). Please do not sign your name or otherwise indicate your identity. If easier for you and you are comfortable revealing your identity, you may email completed form to (rletters@opinionstudies.com).

1. I feel valued by my departmental colleagues.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

2. In meetings in my department and/or college, people pay just as much attention when women speak as when men speak.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

3. I feel mistreated at Cal Poly due to my gender.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

4. I feel excluded from informal networks in my department.
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - All the time

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your life at Cal Poly?
   - Very Dissatisfied
   - Very Satisfied

6. How likely are you to leave Cal Poly in the next five years?
   - Very likely
   - Somewhat likely
   - Somewhat unlikely
   - Very unlikely

7. What is your current marital/partner status and your living arrangement?
   - Live with spouse/partner in same location
   - Have spouse/partner but live in different locations most of the year
   - No spouse/partner currently

8. What is your tenure status?  □ Tenured  □ Tenure-track
Appendix D:
INTERVIEW GUIDES/AGENDAS
Focus Group Discussion Guide/Agenda

1: INTRODUCTIONS
Moderator (Robyn) Introduction:
• Opinion Studies, third party, no association to campus
• Confidentiality: how that will be ensured
  o Audio recording, no video
  o All recordings will be erased after summary report is prepared
  o No names associated with content
• Explanation of how information will be used
• Explanation of interview’s goals, overview of agenda

Participant Introductions:
• First name (optional) (can use a pseudonym if preferred)
• Department (optional)
• Length of time at Cal Poly

2: PRESENTATION OF CLIMATE SURVEY FINDINGS/DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN TERMS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Robyn explains specific findings from Climate Survey:
• Women faculty members (STEM)
  o feel more isolated on the Cal Poly campus than men do.
  o believe they are excluded from informal as well as formal networks.
  o believe they are treated with less respect than male colleagues.
  o feel ignored and overlooked.
• Family issues such as childcare and spouse employment are major concerns to women faculty members, far more so than to men.

Robyn probes:
• Are these findings consistent with your experience? Do they make sense?
• Can you provide some examples to support or refute these findings?
• What have you observed?
  o Why are STEM women faculty dissatisfied?
  o Why do STEM women faculty leave Cal Poly?
  o How does Cal Poly differ from other campuses you are familiar with?

3: SPECIFICS: Climate Survey results indicate four broad problem areas—work environment, career advancement, interpersonal relationships and family / personal issues. Let’s talk about these specific areas and try to identify the problems.

Work Environment
  o What are your perceptions of Cal Poly as a university, an employer?
  o Do you feel collaboration is important? What kind of opportunities do you have to collaborate within your department, outside department? Is collaboration encouraged or desired?
  o What compromises, if any, do you feel you have to make in order to fit in?
  o Envision the ideal work environment. What is it and how does it differ from your current work environment?
  o How serious are these problems?
  o What can be done to correct the situation?

Career Opportunities and Advancement
What are your thoughts about current pathways toward RPT? Do you feel that the RPT criteria in line with your personal professional goals? What type of support do you need to meet RPT criteria? Are you getting it?

How interested are you in advancing in your career?
- How do you want to advance?
- How do you define advancement and success?

Are you interested in leadership roles?
- If so, what kind?
- What do you expect in terms of applying for these roles?
- Have you been encouraged to take any leadership roles?

What are your long range plans and expectations?

What barriers stand between you and ‘success’?

How do you define advancement and success?

Are you interested in leadership roles?
- If so, what kind?
- What do you expect in terms of applying for these roles?
- Have you been encouraged to take any leadership roles?

Interpersonal Relationships
- How are you treated by colleagues (men and women), administration, staff and students?
- What kind of formal and informal communication channels do you see in your departments?
- When female faculty say they feel isolated at Cal Poly, what do they mean?
- We talked about the ideal work environment. How do interpersonal relationships fit into that ideal environment?
- How serious are these problems?
- What can be done to correct the situation?

Personal and Family Issues
- How important are personal and family issues in creating a positive work environment for you?
- Are you able to meet your personal goals here at Cal Poly?
  - Development of friendships
  - Childcare
  - Spouse employment
  - Cost of living
- How serious are these problems?
- What can be done to correct the situation?

4: FINDING SOLUTIONS / PRIORITIZING EFFORTS
- Of all the solutions discussed here today, which should be done right away?
- Which can be done down the road?

5: OTHER ISSUES
- Is there anything else we haven’t discussed that you think would be helpful to the Advance team?
Personal Interview Guide/Agenda

Please tell me about your background—where did you do undergrad, grad work? Have you taught/done research on any other campus? Held a faculty position?

How do your experiences on other campuses compare to your experiences here at Cal Poly?

WORK ENVIRONMENT
How is the morale in your department?

How satisfied are you at Cal Poly?

Have you ever felt mistreated because of your gender at Cal Poly? By colleagues? By administration? By staff? By students?

Do you feel valued by your department? By the university?

If you could change the environment, what would you change/how would you change it?

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
Do you have enough opportunity to collaborate professionally with other faculty?

Do you have enough opportunity to network / meet with other faculty?

Are you satisfied with your personal and professional relationships at CP?

Have you had to compromise in any way to fit in at Cal Poly?

ADVANCEMENT
Are there any barriers / anything that gets in your way at Cal Poly?

When you think of yourself 5 or 10 years down the road, where do you see yourself in your career?

Are you interested in leadership roles?

PERSONAL/FAMILY LIFE
Are you able to meet your personal goals at CP?

WRAP UP
Why do STEM women leave Cal Poly?

What solutions can be put in place to make things better for you?

What is most important?