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Faculty career flexibility: Why we need it and how best to achieve it¹

KATE QUINN, American Council on Education

Research conducted over the last decade provides compelling evidence that higher education institutions have a strong business case for providing flexibility for their tenure-track and tenured faculty. Flexibility constitutes an effective tool for recruiting and retaining talented faculty. Career flexibility is especially critical to retaining some of the most qualified female PhDs in academic science, engineering, and mathematics. Acquiring the best talent is essential to an institution's ability to achieve excellence and maintain its competitive advantage in a global environment. In an effort to increase the flexibility of faculty careers, the American Council on Education partnered with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to create the Award for Faculty Career Flexibility. This presentation will address the origins of the award and share findings from the awards process. Fairly simple and cost effective strategies have been successful in accelerating the cultural change necessary to increase the flexibility of faculty careers. This presentation shares these strategies in addition to information about the types of policies and practices being adopted to support faculty work-life balance through career flexibility.

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