NSF Workshop Fostering Gender and Work-Life
Inclusion for Faculty in Understudied Contexts: An
Organizational Science Lens

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Under Pressure: Achieving Work-Life Balance in the "Always On University"

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A robust literature documents the time-intensive and multi-faceted nature of faculty work and the associated challenges of achieving work-life balance. Despite the increased presence of policies designed to address those challenges (e.g., parental leave and stop the clock policies), evidence continues to show that faculty, on the whole, are not satisfied with their ability to balance work and non-work demands. Further, relative to their male peers, female faculty continue to report more deleterious personal and career outcomes (e.g., greater work-related stress and delayed promotions) stemming from overabundant and conflicting, and often inequitable work and non-work (i.e., family) demands. During this panel, I will argue that one possible explanation for the persistence of work-life imbalance within the academy may be the failure of both research and practice to consider how technological advances have changed the nature of faculty work and expectations for when and where this work can be accomplished. I will provide examples of several technology-enabled changes, ranging from how faculty teach to how they are expected to be available, and then discuss how these changes may differentially and adversely impact women faculty. I will also offer a number of suggestions for future research designed to better understand faculty experiences in the "always on university," the strategies faculty may use to manage the boundaries between work and home to ensure successful career and non-work outcomes, and the ways in which departments and institutions may shape policy and practice to support those efforts.