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Knowing Your Value for Academic Career Negotiations

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Knowing Your Value for Academic Career Negotiations

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Academic positions are highly competitive and rare in the field of Apparel and Textiles, especially in comparison to other disciplines such as science, engineering, and English. Negotiating for that position can be an overwhelming, yet an exciting part, of the application process. Many academicians, particularly women, have a difficult time knowing, communicating, and negotiating their respective personal value for a competitive salary, benefits, and start-up package that is commensurate to their research, industry and teaching experiences (Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2005; Wade, 2001). It is challenging to *tactfully assure* adequate compensation and positive perceptions related to the value of one's professional work and experience. Women in the workplace oftentimes hinder their own continued professional growth by preconceived notions and assumptions regarding their own value (Kettle, 1996).

Workshop Structure

Six female academicians, representing assistant/associate professors, department chair, and endowed scholars from several institutions throughout the United States, thought it would be helpful to discuss the importance of understanding one's value for career advancement via a panel workshop at the 2015 International Textile and Apparel Association conference. *Knowing Your Value: Women, Money and Getting What You're Worth*, by Mika Brzezinski (2010), served as the common source of inspiration for the workshop/panel discussion structure. The session included topics of but not exclusive to: (1) position fit depending on individual goals and aspirations, (2) defining (or re-defining) one's personal brand, (3) advancement through administrative opportunities, (4) interviewing or relocating to increase one's market value, and (5) playing the political game that is prevalent in many programs and universities. (6) Additionally, the workshop included a discussion on balancing a satisfying career with motherhood. Panelists aligned book reflections with personal academic experiences to facilitate a lively discussion for participants. Personal experiences, challenges and successes, and honest insights were shared throughout the interactive workshop to provide strategies for participants, particularly women, to enhance their value and career successes, both before and after tenure.

Although there are challenges for all academic positions, women have some unique professional and personal obstacles and opportunities in their respective life-long careers. Frequently women are overlooked and/or under-compensated for certain positions. Beyond that, "women don't ask for what they want and need, and suffer severe consequences as a result" (Babcock & Laschever, 2008, p. 2). Women tend to behave differently than men do in similar situations for fear of being perceived as pushy or aggressive, or not placing value on their own worth. As such, this workshop was divided into several topic areas to provide information about valuing their own worth at different points during their career trajectory.

Applying for that Perfect Job: *Knowing your value* begins with the job application process. One way to *know your value* is to always be aware of the job climate, the available positions in the field, and what the financial compensation is for comparative positions. This is true even for people who are satisfied with current positions. It is important to network and to have strong curriculum vitae so that one is competitive within the profession. During the application process knowing one's value means owning successes and what one can bring to enhance the position. Often there are times women are shy about communicating their achievements. However, this is not the time to be bashful or holdback. Fully explain accomplishments and talents to one's potential employer. Once the position is offered, the negotiation process starts. Be sure to ask one's potential employer about any parts of the contract that confusing or unsatisfied before signing it.

Negotiations: *Knowing your value* is essential during the negotiation process. Prior to applying for a position it is important to define the parameters, conditions, and limitations that will make one accept the position or walk away during negotiations. What are "deal breakers?" Academicians usually have been trained as a researcher, so prior to entering a negotiation it is imperative to do research. Generally there are two main areas to negotiate: (a) salary and (b) start-up package.

Prior to entering salary negotiations learn what peers are researching, teaching and disseminating in the discipline. Analyze how the work load given is in comparison to colleagues in same type of position. Simultaneously, research salaries of peers across the country, especially at state institutions where salary information is public information. In addition, find the typical salary range for one's discipline on the campus; Check human resources department if they can provide this information. Consider contacting a real estate agent in the community where the position is located and interview her or him about the cost of living in the community. Analyze one's own personal budget so a proper budget can be created with appropriate contributions to one's retirement. When the time comes for the salary discussion, let the financial negotiation begin with the hiring party, do not give a salary number when asked, if at all possible, because one most likely will *under-value* oneself. During this process, try to remain calm and consult with any professional mentors who can provide alternative perspectives and questions.

Generally, the next stage of negotiation process is the start-up package. As a future colleague and employee, one needs to decide whether the start-up package is: (a) personal start-up package or (b) the program's start-up package; essentially what items are negotiable for personal scholarship and teaching *and* what items will be used to enhance the overall program? Often the hiring party will have a list of typical items that will be included in the start-up package such as moving expenses, graduate assistantships, summer salary, etc. If seeking items for the program, spend time ascertaining colleagues' view of programmatic needs. It is helpful to provide a justification statement for every item listed in the start-up package. Verify that everything needed is clearly identified in writing and be ready to walk away from the whole offer if there are "deal breakers" with the hiring party's offer.

Personal Branding: Whether referring to educators, researchers, or industry professionals, having a defined identity makes it easier for others to understand a personal brand. Developing a *personal* brand is similar to product branding with the overall goal being to differentiate oneself in

the market to attain objectives (James, 2013). By developing a personal brand, one has control over others' initial perception.

The following five-step approach emphasized in the workshop was organized from a variety of personal and product branding resources and websites: (1) Clearly define career aspirations and goals, (2) know oneself, (3) conduct research, (4) find like-minded cohort, and (5) game plan (Arruda, 2014; Caprino, 2014; James, 2013). Once clearly defined personal and career aspirations have been identified, SMART (*Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound*) goals help to define the steps an individual may take to determine specific aspirations. SMART goals are the stepping-stones utilized to reach a desired destination. Truly understanding one's self (using specific, action oriented words) helps to determine exactly what makes up an individual and his/hers corresponding brand. This process of *self-reflection* to understand one's self captures information about internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats – referred to as SWOT. Women struggle to articulate facts and emotions in the workplace and translating the powerful sense of self-worth into tangible outcomes (Brzezinski, 2010). Conducting steps one through three of the personal branding approach may help women in academia to more clearly understand and communicate their value.

The next steps in personal brand development is to conduct research to find the proper institutional and cohort 'fit' so that connections with individuals who are like-minded and pursuing similar objectives may be joined together. Another component of proper 'fit' is identifying those individuals for networking and work critique assistance. By forming relationships and seeking feedback with like-minded individuals, one's personal brand and value can grow to become a sought-after asset. The final step outlined in the workshop involved creating a game plan for branding and value success to clearly define a path specific for the individual that includes tangible and intangible characteristics, such as behavior, appearance, activity, and communication.

Post-Tenure: Post tenure is a different time for any professional in academia as there are less external pressures directing how to spend work time. There are three primary career directions post tenure. These include working: (1) to earn promotion to full professor, (2) in administration, and (3) as a consultant. Once a direction is established it is important to be sure to spend time on achieving that goal. Mika Brzezinski (2010) notes that women in particular, have a difficult time saying "no," often making decisions on *emotion rather than fact*. Kerry Ann Rockquemore (2015), President of the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity suggests, overcome "post tenure paralysis" by tracking time spent on each activity throughout the day. After a week examine these notes and adjust work time to better align desired career direction. This process will provide evidence needed to guide accepting or declining work activities.

To assure the best possible position in negotiating post tenure, similar skills apply from pre to post tenure. Continuing to network and build brand regionally, nationally and internationally is important (Paris & Homrighausen, 2015). As a researcher, seeking opportunities to collaborate and mentor others also assists with continued success in building reputation and network. With tenure comes some power and it is advised to use this power wisely (Paris & Homrighausen). It can be a balancing act to be kind and supportive of students and colleagues, but firm in preserving time and position. Finally selecting an appropriate moment to apply for promotion is important, but taking this risk is the only way to achieve it. Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor the President Obama knowingly

stated to Mika; “If you’re not asking for a promotion...you’re not going to get the golden ring” (Brzezinski, 2010, p. 37).

Administration: Administration might be the next logical transition for certain individuals who desire change in their career. What is important to realize is that administrators are not only responsible for administrative duties, but also responsible for lighter teaching load yet continue on research. Many have to become adept at human resources, and have to put the goals of the many over the goals of the single individual. Before entering administration, consider one’s own special and unique skills and strengths, depth of knowledge, demonstrated performance, reputation, and personal leadership. In administration, it awards the opportunity to affect students, faculty, and the discipline at another level. From a negotiation stand point, consider what is needed by the department. This might be the one time when the opportunity to request additional positions, lab space, or even to secure full professor exists.

Motherhood: “Knowing your value” is especially important for working mothers. The gender gap for earnings and advancement is widest for working mothers; mothers who are managers earn \$0.79 for every \$1 paid to managers who are fathers (Brzezinski, 2010). In her book Brzezinski (2010) argues that motherhood actually makes women more valuable employees than when they were childless because they have another level of experiences in their lives and they use their time more efficiently at work. Many working mothers feel like they must work even harder than before to show that having children has not affected their productivity. Brzezinski (2010) offers advice to working mothers. For example, work for a family friendly company, do not slow down the advancement of career in preparation for a child, and in terms of family, do not be afraid to ask for what needed and what matters most.

Summary

Women have both professional and personal challenges in their respective life-long careers as academicians. The multidimensional workshop presenters reviewed common challenges and suggested solutions to help grow personal value to obtain career and financial success in academia. Female academics are underrepresented and typically under-compensated for many positions at institutions of higher education (Kettle, 1996). This workshop and paper provided recommendations for establishing and cultivating value for career advancement. Ultimately, it is important to stay focused and motivated throughout the promotion and tenure process, and make wise decisions that best suit outlined career goals. Post-tenure is when, if done in a suitable manner, one's academic value increases.

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