

The Geography of Work and Home at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Executive Summary

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During the 2008-2009 year, the Joint Administration-Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP) Work-Life Committee designed a campus-wide survey to shed light on the ways in which faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst negotiate the boundaries between work and life. The MSP, the Provost's Office, and the Office of Faculty Development funded the study. The study included a survey of all faculty, who were not serving in administrative roles, and focus groups. Information about commutes came primarily from the survey, which had 349 respondents and included personal and professional time-use measures. The report focuses on the physical aspect of the work-life divide by estimating the role of commuting and revealing a complex story about the social and physical geography of workers and their families which affects integration in the campus community, productivity, and satisfaction.

Key findings from this report include:

- The median sales price for single-family homes in Amherst remain above the Northeast regional median, which is above the national median. These costs, relative to faculty salaries, have led faculty to live farther away from Amherst, despite the higher quality schools in Amherst.
- Assistant professors and women faculty are most likely to be affected by lengthening commutes, making commute time an important recruitment and retention issue.
- Commuting is more likely even for senior women, relative to senior men, which may be because women faculty members are more likely to be partnered to someone working full-time than men. Almost one-third of men have partners that do not work full-time, compared to 17% of women.
- For those who share a residence and whose partners do not work at UMass, men's partners commute 50 minutes and women's partners commute on average 70 minutes – both much longer than national averages for commute time.
- Of all UMass faculty who live apart from their partners for work-related reasons, 72% are women. In these cases, men's partners were more likely (75%) to have tried to get a job at UMass than women's partners (38%).
- Those who live close to campus (0-10 minutes) express greater satisfaction with the University's career support and work-family balance support.

Recommendations include:

- (1) Provide a Housing Assistance program to faculty and librarians, along the lines of mortgage assistance plans or forgivable loans.
- (2) Increase salaries, so that they are more competitive, and provide a better quality of living.
- (3) Develop strong partner-hire programs, including a staff member in charge of helping faculty and librarian partners find employment within the university or community.
- (4) Improve and better publicize commuter assistance programs, to help develop less stressful commutes for faculty and librarians, and easier public transportation access from other cities and towns.