

**ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN AT STATE:
LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES**

**September 2011
Margot Carrington
2010-2011 Una Chapman Cox Sabbatical Fellow**

I) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

My review of best practices among private and public sector organizations highlights that the Department of State falls short on several measures of importance to women. Moreover, a pronounced and persistent gender gap exists in the Senior Foreign Service. Employee Viewpoint Survey data reveal problems in the “Family Friendly Culture” and “Work/Life Balance” realms at State. Moreover, a 2010 study of State women conducted by the Women in International Security (WIIS) organization revealed that they struggle to compete on an even footing with their male colleagues. State needs to begin collecting data to better understand how women at State are fairing and determine when and why women are leaving the organization.

The best practices I studied in private sector companies, a number of government agencies, and the military were in areas such as: 1) eliminating gender bias; 2) providing child care options; 3) facilitating spousal employment; 4) specialized training for women; 5) mentoring programs; 6) flexible workplace policies; 7) leave policies for working parents; and 8) creating non-linear career paths for women. I also looked at widespread efforts within the private sector to adopt talent management and succession planning programs to build a pipeline of women to fulfill leadership roles.

Using the best practices as benchmarks, I tried to determine where State policies could be improved. When it comes to eliminating gender bias, the Department compares favorably in combating overt forms of discrimination, but less overt forms of bias continue to hold women back. These should be addressed through training to make employees aware of how these biases can disadvantage women. The Department has made good childcare options available onsite, but demand appears to exceed capacity, which needs to be redressed. Spousal employment is a current area of emphasis for the Department, but more needs to be done to assist with job placement and address the needs of male spouses. Companies that emphasize women’s advancement often provide women specialized training to help them overcome non-overt forms of bias and network and negotiate more effectively. State currently lacks such training, but could easily incorporate it into existing leadership training.

Mentoring is strongly emphasized in companies recognized for their diversity policies. Effective mentoring is often an explicit performance criterion to ensure managers take these responsibilities seriously. State should similarly make it a requirement tied to performance, and pair female Foreign Service employees with more experienced women. Many companies and organizations now recognize that retaining employees requires creating a flexible work environment for working parents. Although efforts are being made to encourage flexible work arrangements, their use is still limited at State. Part of the problem is that current bidding and promotion practices discourage employees from seeking flexible work options. HR should help broker such arrangements for employees.

Even within the Federal government, many organizations have found ways to expand parental leave, which has greatly enhanced recruitment and retention. Moreover, the U.S. Navy has adopted a “stop the promotion clock” system to allow women to take longer leave, or make lateral career moves without fear of impeding their path to promotion. Access to non-linear

career tracks for women has been shown to be essential to their advancement. State should examine how it can modify its current up or out system to make it fairer towards women, who are often the ones who need to step off the career track for periods of two years or more during child rearing years. State also needs to focus more on building a pipeline of talented women early on in their careers so that these women can eventually take on leadership positions. The fact that there continues to be a dearth of female applicants for senior jobs at State indicates that women are leaking from the talent pipeline. It is vital that State retain and advance women who have been hired and trained at great US taxpayer expense, particularly given our current experience gap.

Implementing the best practices outlined in this report could be done even within the current restricted budgetary environment, with costs offset by reducing attrition and increasing employee engagement and productivity. Without more emphasis on encouraging the advancement of women, the gender gap at the senior levels is likely to persist. State also needs to better position itself to deal with demographic changes. Women are outpacing men in receiving college degrees and continue to enter the workforce in growing numbers, making an emphasis on women vital for the future of the organization. Moreover, since members of generation X and the millenials have differing expectations about careers and work/life balance, State needs to better align with current best practices to ensure it attracts and retains the professionals who will one day lead the organization.

II) INTRODUCTION

I appreciate the fact that the Una Chapman Cox (UCC) Foundation and State HR took a leap of faith in granting me, a Public Diplomacy FSO with no experience in human resources, a year to study what has become a highly specialized field. With the growing number of women in the workplace, the issue of how to attract and retain female workers and remove barriers to their advancement is at the center of a wide debate. I have spent the last year examining closely the practices of various “employers of choice.” I focused on those practices that take into account the needs of women and that have resulted in a highly diverse, engaged and productive workforce. I could not have picked a better prism through which to view the dramatic changes my country has undergone during the 17 years I have been overseas. My research required looking at everything from demographic changes in America, to evolving societal norms regarding women, to changes in the composition of the American workforce to include more women and dual earning couples, to the latest management practices designed to respond to these changes.

I started from the ground up and my knowledge grew quickly thanks to the incredible generosity of time and spirit shown to me by many in this field, including the numerous individuals listed in the acknowledgements. Collaboration is one of the hallmarks of this community, and numerous experts explained in great detail the transformations they have witnessed in the American workplace. Most instructive was to learn of the tremendous positive change that comes when organizations put people front and center and nurture their talent. Admiral Mike Mullen, responded in the

“My bet on the future of the military is on its people, and if we get it right for our people and their families and meet their needs, they will more than meet ours, no matter what the mission, no matter where it is.”

Admiral Mike Mullen

following way when asked about the future of a U.S. military spread thin by involvement in two major wars: “My bet on the future of the military is on its people, and if we get it right for our people and their families and meet their needs, they will more than meet ours, no matter what the mission, no matter where it is.” We have a talented and committed cadre of Foreign Service professionals to carry out our mission, but are we getting it right for them?

Certainly women I have talked to (many of whom sought me out once they learned of my project) indicated to me that “the system is not taking care of us” and that “family-friendly policies do not exist.” Although various “quality of life” surveys are administered by the Department and by OPM, no survey has ever been done to determine how Foreign Service women are fairing. I believe a problem exists that State leadership may be unaware of because we don’t solicit the views of women, nor do we collect data on attrition rates that would reveal how many women are leaving. Over the course of my research, I did not encounter a single other organization that failed to collect this key data. Not only do employers of choice strive to learn how many employees are leaving and at what point in their careers, they also conduct detailed exit interviews to help them learn why they are losing those employees and how they can best respond.

My conversations with numerous women and employee groups this year only exacerbated my concern for female Foreign Service employees in our organization who are struggling with work and family demands. I worry that we may have lost women along the way who found it too difficult to both sustain a family and a Foreign Service career. I believe that this loss of talent -- and taxpayer investment -- could be prevented by paying closer attention to the women in the our organization. We need to ask ourselves: are we really maximizing the talent of our female workforce, or do they remain hampered by a bureaucratic system that fails to recognize the realities of life for women in the Foreign Service? Are we cognizant of the barriers faced by women in the Foreign Service? Although we have a meritocracy in place, are we sure that this alone is enough to ensure talented women will thrive? Is an up or out promotion system discriminatory against women who cannot always follow a linear career path if they wish to have a family, or if they have a non-Foreign Service spouse with a career? Does the lack of flexible work arrangements disproportionately disadvantage women with families?

Organizations in academia, the law, and even the military are now moving away from rigid work and promotion policies and instituting more flexible workplace policies because they have seen that failing to do so forces women to leave the organization. The lack of flexible workplace policies at State may account for the fact that we remain a male-dominated Foreign Service. In my 18-year Foreign Service career, I have found that a “family friendly” work environment often depends on the goodwill of supervisors, and that there is no institutional commitment to being an organization responsive to the needs of working parents. Like me, other female Foreign Service employees with families feel that support is lacking as we struggle to balance our all-consuming career as diplomats with our role as caregivers -- and many of our male counterparts with families share these frustrations.

Another great Navy leader, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead is known for saying: “When our nation looks at its Navy, it should see itself reflected back.” The Foreign Service Act mandates that “members of the Foreign Service should be representative of the American people...” Although we are getting closer every year to reaching gender parity in our ranks, we still do not reflect the U.S. workforce, where women make up 46 percent, and women with children under the age of 18 make up 25 percent. When I look at the leadership of my organization, I still see too few women. And, as many have noted, it appears that many women who do make it to the top are single or childless. Women who have successfully sustained a career and a family appear to be few and far between. We should work to ensure there are better prospects for the new generation of smart, young women who have made, or will soon make, the choice to devote their lives to ensuring America’s security and prosperity by joining our ranks.

While the State Department compares favorably in some of the areas I identify as best practices, I do not think we have done enough to keep pace with many of these advances. I worry that unless we do, we will not move beyond our current three to one male to female gender ratio in the Senior Foreign Service. Change will also be necessary to help us cope successfully with our ongoing “experience gap” and retain officers with the necessary policy expertise, language skills and institutional knowledge. Given the growing likelihood of continuing cuts to our current pay and benefits, offering other incentives, including more workplace flexibility and better skills and career development opportunities, will become vital to attracting and retaining a talented workforce.

Moreover, without becoming more sensitive to the needs of women we will not be positioned for generational change, particularly since women now earn 60% of all college degrees and half of all PhD's and professional degrees, and are a growing segment of the professional workforce. We also need to address the growing work/life conflict that men are reporting as they, in some cases, begin to take on more responsibilities on the home front. The elder care responsibilities that our employees are shouldering are considerable and growing, yet the impact of this new phenomenon has not been adequately discussed. At the same time, we need to be better prepared to deal with the differing notions of work held by members of generation X and millenials, who seek greater work/life balance and clear paths to career development and advancement.

Below, I provide recommendations for State and the UCC Foundation to consider implementing to safeguard the continued success of the Foreign Service and the dedicated employees who make up its ranks. Many of these recommendations can be implemented by revising existing policies and without incurring great costs -- something that would be hard to sell in the current budgetary environment. Moreover, I believe that the gains we will reap from these changes, including reduced attrition and better utilizing our female talent, will offset any of the costs associated with adapting our system to reflect today's best practices for ensuring women's advancement.

Note: The recommendations I have made to transform the Department into a more female- and family-friendly organization encompass a number of areas, as outlined below. I strongly recommend that State, with support from the UCC Foundation, create a commission or contract with an outside organization to study the gender problem holistically. Someone within HR and/or the Office of Civil Rights should be given explicit responsibility for ensuring the success of women, working closely with groups such as Executive Women at State. The Office of Global Women's Issues should also pay greater attention to how women within State are fairing. These measures would help transform the Department into an organization more sensitive to the needs of women and make State a model for other Foreign Affairs agencies to emulate. At the same time, it would allow the Department to better embody the empowerment of women that it is promoting abroad.

III) METHODS:

To study best practices, I needed first to identify companies with exemplary diversity policies that might serve as models for us to emulate. Several rankings, including the “Working Mother 100 Best Companies” provided a good starting point. Every year, Working Mother magazine lists 100 companies that provide an outstanding environment for working women by looking at a number of factors, including workforce representation, child care, flexibility programs, professional development opportunities, and leave policies. I also referred to a number of similar rankings including those published by Diversity Executive, Forbes, and Professional Woman magazines. Interestingly, certain companies frequently appear on more than one listing of best companies. The Forbes listing includes best companies as ranked by both men and women, yet there is significant overlap with the Working Mother listing. This is because “female friendly” policies are in essence “employee friendly” policies, and companies seeking to be female friendly end up being sought after employers for both men and women.

A 2011 guide to best practices for “Making Work Work,” published by the Families and Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management also provided great insight into current best practices, which are described in detail in section IV of this report. These publications and various other sources quantify the benefits that accrue to organizations that implement diversity policies. Such organizations have been shown to make better decisions due to the diversity of opinions they gain from their employees. Moreover, better decision-making and wiser policy choices translate into higher profits and better stock valuations. Therefore, pursuing diversity policies is not only good practice; it also directly impacts the bottom line, which explains the emphasis currently placed on attaining and retaining a more diverse talent pool.

While the rankings listed above are limited to private sector organizations and do not include government agencies, a useful comparison of USG departments and agencies is provided by the Partnership for Public Service in their “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government” ranking, based on data from the Employee Viewpoint Survey administered yearly USG-wide by OPM. On the 2010 ranking, the State Department ranks a very high 7 out of 28 Federal agencies in the “best place to work” category. However, the Department is ranked more highly overall by males than females (4 vs. 6). Moreover, on measures of importance to those who act as caregivers, the Department does not fare well, ranking 25th for “Family Friendly Culture and Benefits” and 17th for “Work/Life Balance.” It is worth noting that these scores are based on a department-wide sample of employees and that responses are not shown for Foreign Service employees versus Civil Service.

I believe it would be particularly instructive to learn how Foreign Service women would rank the Department in these areas. Starting with the 2011 Employee Viewpoint Survey there are a number of new questions on work/life, since it was felt that previous questions did not provide the type of data that departments and agencies could use to try to

The Department ranks 7th out of 28 Federal departments and agencies in the “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government,” but is ranked 25th on “Family Friendly Culture and Benefits,” and 17th on “Work/Life Balance.”

address deficiencies in their programs. It has also been announced that starting in 2012, the survey will be given on a yearly basis and will be sent to all USG employees rather than to just a sample of employees as is now the case. This will make the survey an even more useful measure of how satisfied employees are on these important issues, particularly if Foreign Service women's responses can be viewed separately.

For better insight into how women were fairing at State, I relied on a study published in 2010 by a group called Women in International Security (WIIS) based at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). WIIS is made up of 1,500 men and women in 47 countries from government, academia, non-profits and the private sector, who are involved in international peace and security issues. Their study, entitled "Women in Peace and Security Careers," polled women at State, the intelligence agencies, and DOD to identify obstacles to women's progress and make recommendations to improve the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in security-related positions in the federal sector.

Several of the WIIS findings based on responses from women at State were particularly salient, especially when it comes to career development and work/life issues. The women reported facing unique challenges in these areas and felt they had to make significant tradeoffs between their professional and personal lives. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that many women without children felt they could not have succeeded or accomplished as much if they had children. Those with children reported they had been forced to turn down career opportunities due to family considerations. Others felt that they had been passed up for opportunities based on their gender and/or family status. Women also reported that their skills were not being adequately cultivated. Moreover, they felt that rather than learn about good leadership from role models, they had learned what kind of boss they did not want to be after working for bad bosses.

The authors of the study shared with me that women at State seemed to have lower morale than their counterparts elsewhere in the federal branch, particularly DOD, where women felt the organization made more of an effort to address their needs. Interestingly, DOD's report to the White House Council on Women and Girls is a full 50 pages long and covers in extensive detail ongoing programs for women in the U.S. military. By contrast, the State Department's report runs only a few pages and covers primarily the Department's work to advance the cause of women around the world. A mere six paragraphs are devoted to discussing the status of women within the Department.

The most alarming of the WIIS findings was that women continue to leave State and the other organizations included in the study at the stage in their career when child rearing begins to take on more importance, often a woman's most productive years. This was reinforced in a discussion with the Chief for EEO and Diversity for the intelligence community, whose own research on women in government confirmed that women were leaving due to lack of workplace flexibility and, for some sectors of the government, due to the growing emphasis on service in war zones. A senior officer in a regional bureau shared that there is widespread concern among women at State about service at

Reports of women leaving for more family friendly organizations during their most productive years highlights an urgent need to begin collecting data on attrition.

AIP posts and how this might affect their ability to have a family. This only further highlights the urgent need for State to begin surveying women's views and collecting data on attrition.

Recommendations:

- 1. Begin collecting detailed attrition data on female Foreign Service employees and conduct exit interviews to better understand the factors leading to attrition/retention.***
- 2. Request that OPM break out Foreign Service employees' responses in next year's Employee Viewpoint Survey, and provide answers to specific questions by gender. This would provide an excellent snapshot of how both female and male Foreign Service employees feel about State policies, particularly when it comes to work/life balance and family friendly policies.***
- 3. Any future survey conducted by State on issues related to quality of life should similarly be constructed so that the views of Foreign Service Employees, broken out by gender, can be analyzed.***
- 4. State should consider undertaking its own focus group discussions on work/life and family friendly policies. Of particular use would be surveys that would determine what employees value when it comes to work/life benefits and what they would be willing to trade off to achieve better balance.***
- 5. The WIIS study should be analyzed to identify areas that merit follow-up. The study is available on their website at:***
http://esis.org/files/publication/110726_WIIS_ProgressReport_ExecBranch_fnl.pdf

IV) BEST PRACTICES

Reviewing the best practices of “employers of choice” when it comes to workforce representation, childcare, flexibility programs, professional development, and leave policies was both instructive and provided me with useful benchmarks. The purpose of the UCC sabbatical program is to learn about developments in American society at large, and my focus was on companies and organizations outside of State. However, in order to try and make some recommendations, I needed to have a basic understanding of our policies and tried to learn as much as I could. However, there is still much I do not know and I apologize in advance if I have misrepresented State policies or practices in any way.

1) Eliminating Gender Bias

It goes without saying that all of the companies viewed as employers of choice for women have put in place policies to try to create a workplace free of gender bias. Policies regarding hiring and promotion ensure the best applicants are hired, regardless of gender. Employee evaluation systems are similarly designed and implemented so that employees are reviewed on the basis of merit alone, not on the basis of gender or other minority status. The Department compares favorably with top companies on this basis. Forms of overt discrimination are not tolerated and indeed prosecuted whenever possible. OPM's Employee Viewpoint Survey and State's own Quality of Life surveys give the Department high marks for their unwillingness to tolerate discrimination.

However, the WIIS study pointed to other forms of bias. Many women at State, as well as in the other agencies in the study, stated they were acutely aware of their status as members of a minority group. While most women interviewed found our hiring and evaluation systems to be generally fair, they felt that they had a higher standard to meet when it came to establishing their policy "bona fides" in the job. One woman in the study described this as "having to work twice as hard to be considered half as good." Research shows that there is a double standard usually applied to women, whereby men are judged on potential, while women are judged on the basis of what they have already accomplished. While outstanding women will usually get very favorable evaluation, the bar is set quite high, such that women doing good to excellent work are evaluated less favorably than men doing work of similar quality.

According to the WIIS study, women at State reported being victims of another type of gender bias often termed the "double bind." If they are too assertive they are viewed as aggressive and unfeminine" and eventually marginalized. If they are too feminine, they are viewed as not sufficiently assertive and competent and similarly marginalized. Therefore,

Non-overt biases can slow women's rise through organizations and must be tackled through extensive training and diversity goals tied to performance goals.

women have to walk a tightrope to establish themselves as competent and equal to their male counterparts. While men can be respected even if they act in more collaborative ways, often women are not respected for behaving this way. Others have described this pattern of gender bias as the need to choose between being liked and being respected, a choice that men in similar situations do not have to make. Many women also experience bias when they become mothers, and their supervisors make assumptions about their willingness or ability to take on more challenging assignments. Without being given such opportunities, it is more difficult for women to position themselves for promotion. In other cases, even if the performance of mothers remains at peak levels they may be evaluated less favorably on the assumption that their role as a mother is affecting the quality of their work or their commitment to the organization.

A number of State women in the WIIS study mentioned feeling that these types of gender biases occur in the Department. In particular, they felt that because of their gender, it had been particularly difficult to establish their credibility in a male-dominated work environment and to feel included in decision-making. It is critical to be aware of how these types of biases can affect expectations about and evaluations of the performance of women. We can learn a great deal from

programs in the private sector, particularly those of companies like Cisco, which has made raising awareness of unconscious bias a key corporate objective. Corporate wide training is held, which is supplemented by numerous materials and biweekly emails that highlight inclusive behavior. Managers are also trained to recognize unconscious bias and are rated on very specific diversity objectives in their performance evaluations. American Express also provides widespread training on “gender challenges” and behaviors that hinder inclusiveness. Senior executives have to develop specific plans for further developing their understanding of gender in the workplace.

Recommendations:

- 1. Survey women in the Foreign Service to determine how widespread these forms of non-overt bias are and what policy response might be required.***
- 2. Include a discussion of non-overt forms of gender bias in training for supervisors and all State leadership training.***
- 3. Follow up the training with the development of action plans for employees to work towards recognizing and overcoming biases. Tie success on accomplishing these goals to performance evaluations.***
- 4. Task the Federal Women’s Program and EEO Officers with disseminating information on gender bias and holding programs on this topic in Washington and overseas.***

2) Childcare

Companies viewed as ideal employers have gone out of their way to help their female and male employees juggle the demands of their work and the demands placed on them as caregivers. Onsite childcare is often the norm in such companies. Services are sometimes free of charge, subsidized so as to be more affordable, or at a minimum price competitive with similar offsite care. One of the most impressive facilities I visited was the childcare center at Discovery Communications Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, which has won numerous kudos for its innovative children’s programs. While skeptics have questioned whether it makes good business sense for organizations to take on this responsibility, data show that such investments usually bring a three to one yield in cost benefit. Providing these services reduces absenteeism and increases employee morale, engagement and productivity, and brings untold benefit to the children in terms of reduced anxiety and the forming of positive associations about the parents’ workplace.

State should be proud of the fact that it offers daycare services at both Main State and the Foreign Service Institute. However, my understanding is that there is often a waiting list for both facilities. Access to emergency childcare is also a widespread concern among our employees. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that State offers provides assistance to employees trying to identify various childcare options. Services are also available for eldercare, an area of

growing concern for our employees. However, survey data revealed that not enough employees are aware of the services offered.

Recommendations:

- 1. Determine whether demand warrants an expansion of the Diplotots and Foreign Service Institute childcare facilities and whether assistance should be provided for emergency childcare needs.***
- 2. Publicize the services available through State's Employee Assistance Program. In particular, include information on the check-in sheet given to all Foreign Service employees reassigned to Washington, since this is a time when many employees are in need of such assistance.***

3) Spousal Employment

Many companies with a global presence have good programs in place to identify work opportunities for trailing spouses. Companies understand that without such assistance, it is very hard to convince employees to take up foreign assignments. The Permits Foundation was set up as an international non-profit to lobby for legislation that would make it easier to obtain work permits. The foundation cites concern about spousal employment as the main reason assignments are refused, and expatriate spousal dissatisfaction as the biggest reason overseas assignments fail. Because the work permit issue is so critical, many companies have joined forces with the Permits Foundation, or work in other ways to try to obtain permits for spouses and partners.

While many expatriate packages have been cut back in recent years for economic reasons, assistance to spouses or partners continues to be an important component of most relocation packages. Companies cite the increase in female employees in the workforce, the growing number of male partners or trailing spouses, as well as the increase in dual income couples as having made the spousal employment issue more of a priority. Many companies now talk about looking at the “whole” employee while constructing expatriate packages, which includes looking at the entire household income and what an employee will be giving up by going overseas. While benefits varied greatly, many companies in the hospitality industry provide large bonuses to employees to make up for the loss of a spouse's income. Numerous companies also provide job placement assistance or help spouses develop a more portable career. Shell Corporation is often cited as having one of the most impressive programs in place, with a Spouse Employment Center, which helps spouses and partners with career guidance, job search planning, CV development and interview skills, as well as assistance with obtaining work permits. A growing number of companies offer language courses and psychological counseling, as well as assistance integrating the employee and the family in the local community. Within the federal sector, the Central Intelligence Agency's and the U.S. Navy's efforts to provide assistance by securing employment for spouses might serve as a useful guide for us.

I see the spousal employment issue as central to the problems women are currently experiencing in the Foreign Service. This is a difficult issue, and one that has grown trickier with the growing predominance of dual-career families. State has not yet found adequate solutions to this problem, and it may be argued that it has not acknowledged the greater burden this may be placing on female Foreign Service employees. Indeed, while it is clear that this problem affects male employees with female spouses as well, the fact is that it remains harder for male spouses to follow female Foreign Service employees around the world than vice versa. Job opportunities for spouses overseas are more abundant in job categories that women have traditionally belonged to. Moreover, female spouses who can't or choose not to work often get support from other spouses or local women's groups and other organizations that help them make the most of their time at post. Often these groups are less accessible to male spouses making the adjustment to post and life overseas more difficult.

More must be done to assist male spouses and ensure they have access to career opportunities. Without progress on this front, we will have difficulty continuing to attract and retain women.

While some Foreign Service families have managed to make things work – something that is essential upon return to a two-income town like Washington -- there simply remain too many families for which this is not the case. Moreover, members of younger generations expect and want both partners to have challenging work opportunities, making this an issue that is likely to grow in importance in coming years. We should be doing all we can to retain high-performing Foreign Service employees, including ensuring that their spouses and partners are thriving, since failure to do so often leads to attrition. While the efforts of the Family Liaison Office (FLO) are considerable and span many of the areas outlined above, their resources are limited and the work permit issue remains an obstacle in many countries. It has also been suggested that the current 5/8 rule, which sets rigid limits on an employee's time in Washington, means that seasoned employees are often forced to choose between their career and their spouse's career. Addressing the spousal employment issue aggressively is of utmost importance if we want to continue to attract and retain women.

Recommendations:

- 1. Survey the Foreign Service employee population to get a clearer picture of how concerns about spousal employment affect employees' bidding/assignment decisions.***
- 2. Ensure FLO has adequate funding to expand initiatives to help spouses/partners secure local employment or develop portable careers. Such efforts should include working to identify work opportunities with locally-based multinationals.***
- 3. Learn more about the efforts of other agencies with an overseas presence, such as the Central Intelligence Agency.***
- 4. Redouble efforts to secure bilateral work agreements to facilitate the local employment of spouses/partners.***

5. *Modify FLO programs so they take into greater account the needs of male spouses and partners.*
6. *Consider allowing greater flexibility in planning the timing of overseas assignments, as this may help spouses to develop and sustain viable careers.*

4) Specialized Training for Women

I was fortunate in that both HR and the UCC Foundation allowed me to participate in a parallel program this year: the International Women's Forum Leadership Foundation Fellowship, a female leadership program administered by the International Women's Forum (IWF). Founded in 1984, the IWF is a leadership association of 5,000 women in 24 countries, who are devoted to women's global leadership. The IWF Leadership Foundation was started in 1990 to help provide specific training, networking and mentoring opportunities to the next generation of women leaders. The Leadership Fellows program is premised on the notion that without deliberate diversity policies and targeted assistance, women will continue to struggle to advance to the senior levels of organizations. The program includes specialized training and the creation of various networks of support for fellows, including being assigned to a high-ranking female mentor. My participation as the 2010-2011 State Department fellow reinforced my belief that State needs to consider instituting similar measures. Doing so would help guarantee that the talent and abilities of its female Foreign Service employees are maximized, as well as help us reach greater gender parity at the senior levels.

The companies I researched often provide specialized training for women to help put them on equal footing with men. Goldman Sachs has been recognized for a very successful "Women's Career Initiative" that includes training for women to address their particular career development needs. Simply offering the training led to higher morale among women, who felt the company was demonstrating concern for their success. Training focuses on such things as: networking effectively, communication styles, and approaches to negotiating. While many people take issue with the notion that women's approaches differ from those of men, the research shows that this is in fact often the case. Women's leadership styles typically are collaborative and involve helping make connections among people -- a style that is very successful at addressing 21st century work challenges. However, it is far more difficult to be recognized for these achievements, as they may be more complex and subtle than men's achievements. When it comes to communications styles, a more "feminine" style of communication can hamper women's effectiveness and/or lead others to consider women less deserving of leadership positions. It was also found that when women find themselves in difficult situations, they often seek guidance from other women. Instead, women need to learn to reach beyond their circles, and to men, for advice that will help them resolve conflicts, particularly if they are related to gender differences.

Women's leadership, communication and negotiating styles often differ from those of men, and women can benefit from training to ensure they project themselves in ways that mark them as leaders.

The specialized training the IWF provided us through a one-week executive training program at the Harvard Business School (HBS) and the INSEAD business school in France included specially designed modules to help us become more aware of our own leadership and communication styles and develop more effective behaviors. HBS also conducted a special course on how to negotiate for desired outcomes. When it comes to negotiation styles, research shows that women are effective negotiators and that many women employ negotiating styles and tactics that differ little from those of men. However, women are far less effective when negotiating for themselves, which can slow down their progress on the road to the executive level. For instance, women are often very successful at negotiating raises for their employees or mentees, but are far less successful at negotiating raises for themselves. They are also less successful than men at highlighting their accomplishments, which can affect their performance evaluations. Our HBS training suggested ways of overcoming these hurdles so as to put us on par with men. Our training also taught us how to network more effectively and how to leverage our contacts in the same ways that men do. Men learn these skills by observing the more senior members of their formal and informal networks, which, in most organizations, are made up of other males. However, women, who often lack such networks, have fewer opportunities to develop and use these skills.

The WIIS study revealed that women at State felt that their skills were not being adequately cultivated and that they had not received adequate leadership training. State's own quality of life surveys reveal that only one in three employees feel their training needs are being assessed, and another 30% report they are not given sufficient time for training, which further highlights that this in an area that State needs to devote more resources to.

Recommendations:

- 1. Institute specialized leadership training for women that focuses on how to navigate situations where they encounter gender bias, how to become aware of gender differences in communication and negotiating styles, and how to communicate and negotiate more effectively.***
- 2. Training should also help women identify ways to highlight their unique leadership style and their successes and accomplishments as leaders.***
- 3. Provide training and other assistance to women to help them learn to network more effectively and solicit sponsors to help them in their career development and advancement.***
- 4. Assist women in identifying the specific training and skills development they need to further advance; make access to specialized training available to those who need to focus on specific skill sets.***
- 5. Task the Federal Women's program with carrying out training modules for women on these topics.***

- 6. Identify State resources that could be deployed to help build a formal network of women that could operate on a virtual platform so as to be accessible by women in Washington and overseas. Such a site could help identify training opportunities and provide relevant online training, as well as allow for the sharing of ideas and resources and facilitate mentoring/sponsorship match ups.***

5) Mentoring Programs

My research underscored the importance of mentoring and revealed another lesser known dimension. Experts now distinguish between mentoring and “sponsorship.” When sponsorship takes place, mentors will help in all the usual ways, but in addition, mentors will also expend their own political capital to help their mentees advance in the organization. This “sponsorship” happens very naturally among male networks. However, recent research has revealed that while men often act as mentors to women, they typically sponsor their male proteges much more often than the women they are supporting. While female mentors are often willing to do what it takes to help their mentees, they often have less available political capital, having expended much of it to get themselves to the top. Moreover, female mentors are harder to come by in male-dominated organizations. Moreover, a limited number of senior women are often asked to advise more than the usual share of junior employees, which limits their ability to act effectively on behalf of each. I believe this has important implications for State.

Most of the organizations I researched have impressive mentoring programs in place that often include giving high potential women access to very senior leaders in the organization early on in their careers. In response to this latest research on sponsorship, many are also redoubling their efforts to assign senior female sponsors, who could move beyond mentoring and provide very targeted and concrete assistance to assist in the career development of their charges. Many companies are also offering training for mentors and sponsors to help make them more effective and have numerous programs in place to reward effective mentors.

Sponsorship differs from mentoring in that the sponsors will expend political capital to ensure the advancement of their mentees. In many cases this “sponsorship” excludes women in that men are more likely to sponsor others who are like them.

More importantly, a growing number of organizations now rate their executives on their effectiveness as mentors, with the executive’s commitment to and effectiveness at mentoring included in the executive’s own performance evaluation. An executive at Accenture, a high tech company and contractor to the State Department, told me that she devotes a large amount of time to mentoring and that this aspect of her performance is weighed heavily in her yearly review.

Price Waterhouse Cooper, which has distinguished itself by offering sabbatical leave for new parents, has an extensive array of mentoring programs, including one that pairs new mothers with other female employees at the firm who are experienced at successfully juggling the demands of motherhood and career. The IWF program in which I participated this year included a heavy emphasis on mentoring. Each fellow is assigned a senior female mentor and asked to

work with her on a detailed plan of professional and personal goals. This systematic approach to mentoring, which included very specific targets for meetings and deliverables and steps to identify and overcome barriers to advancement, ensured progress towards reaching these goals.

While State has several mentoring programs in place, we have not yet placed adequate emphasis on their importance. When I joined USIA in 1993, I was immediately assigned a female mentor who was very actively engaged in helping me with bidding on my first assignment. Since securing a good first assignment is critical to future progress, this assistance was invaluable. My mentor also gave me good advice regarding the spousal employment issue and put my husband in touch with a number of other trailing spouses, which was very useful as we embarked on life in the Foreign Service. Because of this very positive experience, I have served as a mentor throughout my career and have been very proactive in providing assistance and advice to my mentees.

Recommendations:

- 1. Institute a mentoring requirement for all SFS officers and make them accountable for their performance as mentors.***
- 2. Include in our leadership training modules on effective mentoring; highlight differences between mentoring and sponsoring.***
- 3. Provide training to women so they can leverage their relationships with mentors and build stronger networks of support within the organization.***
- 4. Assign all incoming female ELOs both a senior female as well as a male mentor, so ELOs can benefit from both perspectives.***
- 5. Pair female Foreign Service employees planning a family with more experienced female officers who have successfully juggled work and child care responsibilities.***

6) Workplace Flexibility Programs

With global competition and increasing requirements for a nimble, 24/7 workforce, companies have instituted flexible workplace policies to address the needs of employees trying to balance demanding work schedules with their personal lives. Women are more likely to leave demanding, inflexible workplaces for part-time or home-based work that doesn't conflict as much with their role as caregivers. Rather than hire and retrain new employees at great expense, firms have found it makes better business sense to retain these women by offering them greater flexibility. Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have been proven to be of critical importance to ensuring a female friendly work environment, and to keeping women in the workplace through the most challenging childrearing years. With men recently reporting work/life conflicts to degrees higher than those reported by women, FWAs have become an issue of importance to both genders. More than 90% of companies offer at least one type of flexible arrangement, as do

many public sector organizations. While State offers FWAs, their use among Foreign Service employees is limited, often due to lack of support from managers, and employees' fear of being stigmatized if they ask for flexibility. (While HR keeps count of overall employee usage of FWAs, data regarding how many Foreign Service employees use them are not available).

Recent advances in computing and communications technology make it easier than ever for firms to offer opportunities for flexibility and remote work. Some of the most progressive organizations in this regard give their employees full autonomy over where and when they do their work, provided they deliver results. OPM is currently running a pilot program of one such "results only" work arrangement. The implementation of FWAs has been shown to reduce absenteeism, health care costs and attrition, and to increase employee engagement and productivity. Moreover, significant savings on real estate and other capital costs can be realized as the need for dedicated workspace decreases, bringing environmental benefits as well. Not offering flexibility also comes at a cost, as 87% of workers surveyed by the Families and Work Institute indicated that it was extremely or very important if they were looking for a new job. Moreover, workers report that the existence of usable FWAs was a major factor in their choosing to remain with a particular employer.

The trend has some high level backers. In March 2010, President Obama convened the first White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility, where he stated: "Workplace Flexibility is not just a women's issue. It's an issue that affects the well-being of our families and the success of our businesses. It affects the strength of our economy..." Businesses have become believers in flexibility for other reasons as well. They have found it helps unleash the creative energy of employees and boosts their loyalty to the organization and their willingness to go the extra mile to ensure its success. In a knowledge economy where innovation drives profits, unleashing the creative and problem solving abilities of a firm's human capital in a sustainable way has become the ultimate goal. The data show that this is exactly what happens when flexible work policies are implemented. Not surprisingly, one CEO called FWAs not a perk, but "an incredibly powerful business strategy." Organizations have also found that, with flexible work policies in place, they are better able to attract younger workers, who have been found to be willing to work hard, but on their own terms. Having grown up with mobile technology, they see no reason why it cannot be used to allow them to work remotely, at least part of the time.

A flexible workplace has been found to be a key factor for women and helps attract and retain workers of both genders. Implementing FWAs has been shown to save money by reducing absenteeism and real estate costs, and increasing productivity and employee engagement.

My research revealed myriad FWAs and approaches to implementing them. Often they were used as an "on ramp" to help women -- and men -- gradually phase back to work after the birth or adoption of a child. Dow Jones uses FWAs as a way to allow older workers to ease their way into retirement. Pepsico takes things further by making all employees identify a workplace flexibility or work/life goal on which they are assessed in their performance evaluation. In all cases, FWAs were instituted and administered in such a way that employees can avail themselves of the opportunity to use them without fear of derailing their careers or of suffering

other repercussions. Creating a corporate culture that not only allows, but, more importantly, encourages, FWAs has become a high priority for most employers of choice.

With proven cost savings, the Federal government is embracing this trend, most recently at the urging of the Obama administration. A number of agencies are already reaping the benefits. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has had a forward leaning telecommuting policy in place since 1997. Following its own mandate to cut real estate costs, the General Services Administration has similarly implemented widespread FWAs, as has the U.S. Navy. Captain Ken Barrett, who oversaw implementation of such policies for the U.S. Navy, was tasked by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates with expanding these best practices Pentagon-wide. He sees these policies and the Navy's embrace of non-linear career paths (which are discussed below) as having been critical to the Navy's success in reversing a previously high attrition rate among women. These efforts have also garnered a number of prestigious awards for workplace flexibility and work/life balance.

It is clear that there is a lot of room for growth in the use of FWAs at State. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 provides the Department an avenue for expanding flexible work, and increasing the number of regular telecommuters from the paltry 1,374 (9.83% of total employees) reported in 2010. State employees certainly would be in favor of an increase, with 69.5% reporting they did not currently telecommute due to various barriers. These barriers can be both real and perceived, and included lack of appropriate IT equipment or training in its use, management concerns about insufficient office coverage or work output, and employees' fear they might be harming their image or chance of promotion. The WIIS study underscored the extent to which women at State found it difficult to establish proper work/life balance and State's lack of responsiveness to their need for more flexibility, suggesting this is an area that must be addressed.

With the increasing call for service at danger, hardship and unaccompanied posts, State should also look for ways to allow Foreign Service employees greater workplace flexibilities at other times in their careers to help modulate these demanding assignments and allow employees and their families to regain their footing once they are over. Moreover, since domestic assignments usually provide the best opportunity for spousal employment, an employee on an FWA while state-side would be better positioned to support a spouse's return to work, easing the difficulties inherent in reentry and trying to make ends meet in "two-income" areas like Washington, D.C. Several overseas posts have instituted flexible policies with great success, indicating that expansion need not be limited to employees in Washington.

Recommendations:

- 1. Determine where the use of FWAs could be expanded both in Washington and overseas; identify barriers to their use and learn from current best practices to overcome such barriers.***

Note: In the case of Foreign Service employees, the fear of missing out on promotions or good follow-on assignments may be a significant barrier. Moreover, an employee interested in an FWA is currently forced to ask for such an arrangement when bidding on a position, making

it likely the employee will be passed over in favor of another bidder not asking for what is still considered a “perk” or “special consideration.”

- 2. Allow for an open discussion of concerns about FWAs among middle managers and employees and make use of tools provided by OPM and others for this purpose.*
- 3. Develop and implement metrics for work output to reassure managers that work goals are being met and to ensure that employees’ evaluations properly recognize the work being conducted remotely.*
- 4. Assign someone in HR the responsibility to help broker FWAs, including job sharing, with specific bureaus and offices. Identify possible opportunities for similar options at overseas posts.*
- 5. Explore the possible use of FWAs as an option for employees who are now forced to go on LWOP for lack of flexible work options.*

7) Leave Policies

Companies considered employers of choice for women provide generous leave policies, particularly to help accommodate the birth or adoption of a child. The top five companies on the latest Working Mother list provided leave from eight to 18 weeks, at full salary. After that period, leave with partial pay is also offered, as is paid paternal or partner leave of a shorter duration. In most companies I researched, many of the flexible workplace policies described above usually kicked in after the leave period ended, often extending from months to several years.

In addition, a number of companies offer job-protected sabbatical leave programs, some lasting several years. In some cases, employees on this type of leave are assigned a mentor to keep them connected to workplace developments, and receive training to keep skills up to date and facilitate the eventual phasing back to work. Many organizations have specific programs in place to help women determine when and how to return to work and ways to ramp up work hours when the need for family-related leave decreased.

Of course, U.S. law does not provide for generous leave periods for the federal sector. However, it was instructive to learn that some services of the U.S. military have instituted very progressive policies. (It should be noted that the uniformed military is not covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act.) The U.S. Navy, for instance, now offers six weeks of paid maternity leave and 10 days of paid paternity leave. The Navy has also instituted a career intermission program that can last up to three years. This is job-protected leave during which the employee receives full medical and dental benefits, as

The US Navy has instituted a career intermission program that allows for maternal leave beyond the six weeks of paid maternity leave they currently provide. During this leave the promotion “clock” is stopped so that officers taking this leave are not penalized when it comes to promotions.

well as a small stipend. Most interestingly, during this period the promotion “clock” is stopped so that officers are not penalized for taking this type of leave. Captain Barrett, who helped institute the program, explained that providing employees with the option to take this leave has been shown to have greatly enhanced morale. Moreover, reversing a high-attrition trend, women’s retention is now on par with that of men. These Navy’s “best practices” are now being examined for possible application to other branches of the military and should be closely reviewed by State as well.

Recommendations:

- 1. Within parameters allowed under U.S. regulations, examine what possible new leave policies might be allowable for State employees.***
- 2. As described in the section below, study possible methods for stopping the promotion clock so as to allow female and male Foreign Service employees to take leave and career detours for personal reasons.***
- 3. Identify ways to offer more and longer leave options to spouses who make up part of a tandem couple to ensure we retain these valuable employees.***

8) Non-Linear Career Paths

As has been described above, various obstacles can slow women’s advancement through organizations. One serious obstacle occurs when there are insufficient opportunities to take detours from a linear career path. Most organizations are now cognizant of the fact one in three professional women “off ramp” for an average of 2.7 years during their child bearing and child rearing years. A study of Harvard alumnae found that less than 4% of women without children had left the workplace 15 years after graduating, while nearly 30% of mothers with MBAs had left, as had 25% of lawyers with children and 25% of mothers with Master’s degrees. Up or out promotion systems that fail to take these realities into account are now viewed as inherently discriminatory towards women.

As described above, the U.S. Navy realized that not offering an alternative path was negatively affecting their retention of women, so they instituted sabbaticals and non-linear career opportunities that don’t count against the promotion clock. Academia is known for having a promotion system organized around time benchmarks for achieving tenure. After an outcry from women, many universities have now instituted “stop the tenure clock” systems, and offer women opportunities to step off the tenure track into other types of positions. Similarly, in

Opportunities for lateral career paths are essential for women, who often off ramp for an average of 2.7 years during their child bearing and child rearing years. Organizations that fail to provide such opportunities experience difficulty retaining women.

recent years law firms have been making great efforts to take women's needs into account in the way they calculate progress on the track to making partner in the firm.

In the private sector, a great emphasis has been placed on allowing women who need to take a career "detour" the opportunity to move into lateral, yet challenging positions that offer genuine, albeit slower, opportunities for upward mobility. Some of the most advanced work in this area has been done by Deloitte, the world's largest professional services company. Because Deloitte's workforce was primarily made up of women, they found that their linear promotion system was costing them in terms of high attrition. They initially assumed that women were leaving the firm during their caregiving years to work part time or not at all. However, when research revealed that women were actually leaving to secure more flexible work opportunities elsewhere, Deloitte responded by redesigning the "corporate ladder" into a model they call the "corporate lattice." In this lattice, there are numerous opportunities to keep developing and growing while doing part time or more flexible work, or by moving laterally within the organization rather than solely on an upward track.

Deloitte also developed a very advanced "Mass Career Customization (MCC)" program that builds into their evaluations, promotions, and talent development programs a detailed discussion of employees' skills, potential and career ambitions. The MCC tool allows employees and their managers to work out the most compatible and favorable career path through this lattice for both the employee and the firm. Having MCC in place has not only helped women continue to grow within the firm even as they scale down for childbirth or child rearing, it has had another important benefit as well. By challenging the assumption that certain women wanted to dial down in response to caregiving responsibilities, MCC has been able to clarify the career goals of women who actually wanted to continue to stay on a fast track in spite of those responsibilities. This has helped counter an implicit bias that occurs when managers fail to give women challenging work opportunities on the assumption that their status as caregivers will preclude them from accepting these assignments. Another factor is also critical. By codifying the skills needed for advancement and the steps required to acquire these skills, such systems also help ensure that promotions are made on the basis of merit alone and do not reflect any bias.

We need to examine whether our up or out system, which is premised on a series of linear and progressively more challenging positions, is in fact discriminatory. Evidence from other sectors with similar systems would imply that this is the case. A senior officer in a regional bureau noted that Foreign Service women have expressed reservations about our system on this basis. Pressure for service in AIP posts during what may be a woman's reproductive or child rearing years only adds to this concern. The need to take on increasingly demanding positions regardless of a woman's family status or desire for a family may be putting women on a path where their personal and career goals are simply incompatible. Often, women end up seeking less promotable assignments that are more compatible with their life demands. Others simply decide to leave the Foreign Service, or seek LWOP status until they can resolve their work/life conflict. My research indicates that organizations that have failed to create opportunities for non-linear career paths have not been able to reverse attrition and other trends that ultimately result in a dearth of women in senior positions -- a finding with serious implications for State given its persistent gender imbalance in the SFS.

Recommendations:

- 1. Examine whether the expectation of a linear progression along an increasingly demanding career track is related to the attrition of women, or is forcing them to take positions that all but ensure they will not be promoted. Interview women who have chosen not to open their window to determine why they made that choice.***
- 2. Identify possible lateral positions for women with children. (The current emphasis on interagency expertise would argue for possibly identifying such opportunities in sister agencies).***
- 3. Explore instituting a career customization program similar to the one Deloitte has developed in order to better manage women's career development and offer opportunities for meaningful lateral assignments.***

V) BUILDING A PIPELINE OF FEMALE TALENT

The best practices outlined above have the cumulative effect of ensuring that organizations attract and retain a large cadre of women who are able to successfully balance life and work demands. However, the most advanced companies in this regard, which include General Electric, Pepsico and Unilever, also have very deliberate talent management and succession strategies in place to create a continuous flow of talent, including female talent, up into the executive level of the company. This involves a deliberate process that matches the organization's current and future needs to the demonstrated ability and potential of each employee. Specialized training, mentoring, and the career development measures mentioned above are all carefully applied in this process.

Organizations that are still behind in this area find they suffer from what has been termed the "leaky pipeline" problem. While the glass ceiling analogy fell out of favor because it no longer accurately described a situation in which some women were able to reach the top in spite of barriers, experts now use a "labyrinth" analogy. A labyrinth more accurately portrays the obstacles women encounter, and the complicated paths they must take to move through the organization to overcome gender-related barriers along the way. These obstacles slow women's rise or cause them to simply give up trying to make it to the top. In the extreme, these barriers can cause women who find the labyrinth too difficult to navigate to leave in favor of careers with fewer tradeoffs. For these reasons, women leak out of the talent pipeline at various points in their careers. When organizations experiencing this problem look to put women in executive positions or in positions of authority that will groom them for these positions, many find there are simply too few women to choose from.

It is my understanding that State faces a similar problem in that there are currently too few women applying for senior positions in the Department. The obstacles I have highlighted above,

including the persistence of gender biases, the lack of flexible work options, inadequate mentoring programs, and our up or out system largely account for this problem. Since 1995, women have represented more than a quarter of all Foreign Service employees (27%), with their numbers reaching nearly 40% of the organization in 2010. Yet, the number of women in the SFS was still only 16% in 2005 and 31% in 2010. At the same time, statistics collected by Executive Women at State show that women are often not being promoted to the SFS in proportion to their numbers in the FS-01 promotion pool. There is also a widespread perception that women applying for senior positions are not being selected, which may also be discouraging women from pursuing career advancement.

In other words, we have not yet created a clear pathway to success for women and have fallen short when it comes to nurturing talent and creating a robust pipeline of women to lead our organization in the future. We need to bring itself into better alignment with today's best practices and set a new course for Foreign Service women. Doing so will allow us to more fully draw on the considerable female talent that exists at State and better fulfill the Department's critical mission of creating a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world.

Recommendation:

Explore talent management and succession strategies that would help provide a supply of talented women ready to take up leadership positions and ensure the future success of our organization.

VI) PAYING IT FORWARD: Encouraging Workplace Flexibility in the Department

One of the requirements of my IWF Fellowship is to “pay it forward” by finding ways to help the women who will come after me. I have chosen to focus my project on workplace flexibility and work/life balance. I am currently working with Executive Women at State to address the need for more flexible work options for women. I am also working with State colleagues to start an affinity group to advocate for greater flexibility and work/life balance for our employees. My desire to focus on this issue stems from my belief that greater work flexibility would be one of the best ways to ease the burden not just on women at State, but on the numerous and growing number of employees struggling with work/life balance issues due to childcare, eldercare and other responsibilities.

VII) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I wish to thank a number of people for their assistance during my sabbatical year. By selecting me as one of their 2010-2011 Leadership Foundation Fellows, the International Women's Forum (IWF) put numerous resources at my disposal that have been of tremendous help to my endeavors. I have also been fortunate to have the guidance of numerous individuals including: Paul Rowson of World at Work; Anne Weisberg of Blackrock; Kathie Lingle of the Alliance for Worklife Progress; Jolynn Shoemaker, Executive Director of Women in International Security (WIIS); Foreign Service colleague Carol Volk; Sally D'Amato of Deloitte; Linda Singh of Accenture; Nathalie Jackson of Booz Allen Hamilton; Captain Ken Barrett, Deputy Director, Office of Diversity Management and Equal Diversity, Office of the Secretary of Defense; Diversity expert Ted Childs, formerly of IBM; Julie Weber of Clearspire law firm; Brad Harrington and Danielle Hartmann of the Boston College Center for Work and Family; Judy England Joseph of the Partnership for Public Service; Susan O'Shaughnessy of the World Bank; Carol Evans and Sigrid Senamaud of Working Mother; Lauren Chivee of the Center for Work-Life Policy; colleagues from Executive Women at State; and State Telework Manager Judy Ikels.

I also wish to thank AFSA President Susan Johnson and her staff for their support and encouragement this year.

My husband deserves my thanks as well. After 17 years overseas as a trailing spouse and 13 years as a stay at home father, he has been busy during our year in Washington building a new portable business more compatible with Foreign Service life. He nonetheless took a leading role in caregiving this year so that I could devote myself to this important project.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations I have made to transform the Department into a more female- and family-friendly organization encompass a number of areas, as outlined below. I strongly recommend that State, with support from the UCC Foundation, create a commission or contract with an outside organization to study the gender problem holistically. Someone within HR and/or the Office of Civil Rights should be given explicit responsibility for ensuring the success of women, working closely with groups such as Executive Women at State. The Office of Global Women's Issues should also pay greater attention to how women within State are fairing. These measures would help transform the Department into an organization more sensitive to the needs of women and make State a model for other Foreign Affairs agencies to emulate. At the same time, it would allow the Department to better embody the empowerment of women that it is promoting abroad.

- *Begin collecting detailed attrition data on female Foreign Service employees and conduct exit interviews to better understand the factors leading to attrition/retention.*
- *Request that OPM break out Foreign Service employees' responses in next year's Employee Viewpoint Survey, and provide answers to specific questions by gender. This would provide an excellent snapshot of how both female and male Foreign Service employees feel about State policies, particularly when it comes to work/life balance and family friendly policies.*
- *Any future survey conducted by State on issues related to quality of life should similarly be constructed so that the views of Foreign Service employees, broken out by gender, can be analyzed.*
- *State should consider undertaking its own focus group discussions on work/life and family friendly policies. Of particular use would be surveys that would determine what employees value when it comes to work/life benefits and what they would be willing to trade off to achieve better balance.*
- *The Women in International Security (WIIS) study should be analyzed to identify areas that merit follow-up. The study is available on their website:
http://csis.org/files/publication/110726_WIIS_ProgressReport_ExecBranch_fnl.pdf*
- *Survey women in the Foreign Service to determine how widespread forms of non-overt bias are and what policy response might be required.*
- *Include a discussion of non-overt forms of gender bias in training for supervisors and all State leadership training.*

- *Follow up the training with the development of action plans for employees to work towards recognizing and overcoming biases. Tie success on accomplishing these goals to performance evaluations.*
- *Task the Federal Women's Program and EEO Officers with disseminating information on gender bias and holding programs on this topic in Washington and overseas.*
- *Determine whether demand warrants an expansion of the Diplotots and FSI childcare facilities and whether assistance should be provided for emergency childcare needs.*
- *Publicize the services available through State's Employee Assistance Program. In particular, include information on the check-in sheet given to all Foreign Service employees reassigned to Washington, since this is a time when many employees are in need of such assistance.*
- *Survey the Foreign Service employee population to get a clearer picture of how concerns about spousal employment affect employees' bidding/assignment decisions.*
- *Ensure FLO has adequate funding to expand initiatives to help spouses/partners secure local employment or develop portable careers. Such efforts should include identifying work opportunities with locally-based multinationals.*
- *Learn more about the efforts of other agencies with an overseas presence, such as the Central Intelligence Agency.*
- *Redouble efforts to secure bilateral work agreements to facilitate the local employment of spouses/partners.*
- *Modify FLO programs to take into greater account the needs of male spouses and partners.*
- *Consider allowing greater flexibility in planning the timing of overseas assignments, as this may help spouses to develop and sustain viable careers.*
- *Institute specialized leadership training for women that focuses on how to navigate situations where they encounter gender bias, how to become aware of gender differences in communication and negotiating styles, and how to communicate and negotiate more effectively.*
- *Training should also help women identify ways to highlight their unique leadership style and their successes and accomplishments as leaders.*
- *Provide training and other assistance to women to help them learn to network more effectively and solicit sponsors to help them in their career development and advancement.*

- *Assist women in identifying the specific training and skills development they need to further advance; make access to specialized training available to those who need to focus on specific skill sets.*
- *Task the Federal Women's program with carrying out training modules for women on these topics.*
- *Identify State resources that could be deployed to help build a formal network of women that could operate on a virtual platform so as to be accessible by women in Washington and overseas. Such a site could help identify training opportunities and provide relevant online training, as well as allow for the sharing of ideas and resources and facilitate mentoring/sponsorship match ups.*
- *Institute a mentoring requirement for all SFS officers and make them accountable for their performance as mentors.*
- *Include in our leadership training modules on effective mentoring; highlight differences between mentoring and sponsoring.*
- *Provide training to women so they can leverage their relationships with mentors and build stronger networks of support within the organization.*
- *Assign all incoming female ELOs both a senior female as well as a male mentor, so ELOs can benefit from both perspectives.*
- *Pair female Foreign Service employees planning a family with more experienced female officers who have successfully juggled work and child care responsibilities.*
- *Determine where the use of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) could be expanded both in Washington and overseas; identify barriers to their use and learn from current best practices to overcome such barriers.*

Note: *In the case of Foreign Service employees, the fear of missing out on promotions or good follow-on assignments may be a significant barrier. Moreover, an employee interested in an FWA is currently forced to ask for such an arrangement when bidding on a position, making it likely the employee will be passed over in favor of another bidder not asking for what is still considered a “perk” or “special consideration.”*

- *Allow for an open discussion of concerns about FWAs among middle managers and employees and make use of tools provided by OPM and others for this purpose*
- *Develop and implement metrics for work output to reassure managers that work goals are being met and to ensure that employees' evaluations properly recognize the work being conducted remotely.*

- *Assign someone in HR the responsibility to help broker FWAs, including job sharing, with specific bureaus and offices.*
- *Explore the possible use of FWAs as an option for employees who are now forced to go on LWOP for lack of flexible work options.*
- *Within parameters allowed under U.S. regulations, examine what possible new leave policies might be allowable for State employees.*
- *Study possible methods for stopping the promotion clock so as to allow female and male Foreign Service employees to take career detours for personal reasons.*
- *Identify ways to offer more and longer leave options to spouses who make up part of a tandem couple to ensure we retain these valuable employees.*
- *Examine whether the expectation of a linear progression along an increasingly demanding career track is related to the attrition of women, or is forcing them to take positions that all but ensure they will not be promoted. Interview women who have chosen not to open their window to determine why they made that choice.*
- *Identify possible lateral positions for women with children. (The current emphasis on interagency expertise would argue for possibly identifying such opportunities in sister agencies).*
- *Explore instituting a career customization program similar to the one Deloitte has developed in order to better manage women's career development and offer opportunities for meaningful lateral assignments.*
- *Explore talent management and succession strategies that would help provide a supply of talented women ready to take up leadership positions and ensure the future success of our organization.*