

UCSD named one of most "Family Friendly" universities

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UCSD NAMED ONE OF MOST "FAMILY FRIENDLY" UNIVERSITIES

The University of California, San Diego has been named as one of the most "family-friendly" institutions in the country in a recently completed survey sponsored by the College and University Personnel Association (CUPA).

UCSD was one of 29 colleges and universities singled out as the most "family friendly" in a report called the College and University Reference Guide to Work-Family Programs. The report is based on a survey, conducted for the first time, of work and family policies at 375 four-year institutions.

Although the report concluded that the majority of institutions are doing very little to help their employees ease tensions between family and work, it hailed the efforts of UCSD and 28 other institutions which it said help faculty members and staff balance the pressures of work and family life by offering such programs as child care centers, job-sharing opportunities, and support groups for people with sick relatives. The programs help the universities not only to recruit and retain employees, but to increase their productivity, said the report.

"This study really makes the case for a work-family focus," said Rogers Davis, UCSD's assistant vice chancellor for human resources. "At UCSD, we have long realized that there is a strong connection between morale, retention, and being a highly productive work-family environment. We are very pleased to have been recognized for our efforts."

The leadership campuses cited in the report were praised for offering a wide range of programs aimed at easing the stress between family and work life. Many of the academic institutions rated highly in the study, including UCSD, have child care facilities, family leave policies, sensitivity and diversity training for employees, job-sharing, wellness programs, and flexible benefits. Domestic partners also are included in the programs of some of these universities.

"The innovations and level of activity among these leadership schools is really quite outstanding," said Arlene Johnson, vice president of the Families and Work Institute, a non-profit group in New York that conducted the survey along with CUPA.

According to CUPA, the survey represents the first comprehensive look at work-family initiatives across a broad spectrum of colleges and universities, and provides a set of benchmarks and guidelines for campuses seeking information about creative policy development and ways of fostering a culture that is supportive of people and their personal and family responsibilities.

The study found that there are two major predictors of family-friendly programs and policies: having a large budget and student body; and having human resource managers who are familiar with the family demographics of employees, and who are focused on strategic planning and change management. Another key finding of the report is that there is a correlation between the schools with the most comprehensive work-family agendas and those that have recently experienced some change, such as restructuring, downsizing, or a change in leadership.

"For many campuses, the upheaval created by major change efforts and concerns about cost containment are used to justify moving work-family issues to the back burner," said Dana Friedman of the Families and Work Institute. "But when an institution examines its priorities, it often finds that problems like reduced recruitment and retention are a window of opportunity for work-family programs. The institutions we've called leadership campuses are often the ones that see family-supportive initiatives as an effective and inexpensive way to address these other issues."

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