Supporting Breastfeeding Mothers at MSU

By Allison Foster

Michigan State University supports breastfeeding mothers. The university recognizes that there are many benefits to breastfeeding for the moms’ and babies’ health outcomes. As an employer, MSU benefits by achieving higher employee retention rates, lower health insurance costs, and fewer absences from work. By supporting breastfeeding mothers, MSU also experiences an increase in workplace productivity and employee job satisfaction, due to lower stress levels and more trust in the workplace environment for the mother.

In an effort to further support breastfeeding mothers, the MSU WorkLife Office offers a free breastfeeding educational workshop four-week series led by a breastfeeding expert, which occurs once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester each year. These workshops are available to expecting university staff, faculty, and students as well as their partners. The series is a great way for soon-to-be mothers who are interested in breastfeeding to learn the ins and outs of breastfeeding and ask questions of a trained specialist.

The WorkLife Office can assist faculty and staff who are in need of a flexible work arrangement to accommodate their breastfeeding schedule upon their return to work. On the MSU WorkLife website, you can find a number of links that will direct you to breastfeeding resources for support and information. The WorkLife Office breastfeeding page can be found at: https://worklife.msu.edu/family-care/kids-parents/breastfeeding.

The WorkLife Office can also help you locate the breastfeeding space that is nearest to your workspace. The office promotes a virtual map that shows where each of the 60+ breastfeeding rooms on campus are located. The map also provides the contact information for who to reach if you wish to utilize a room. To access the virtual breastfeeding room map, go to the WorkLife Office breastfeeding page and click on the “Map” hyperlink at the top of the page next to “Breastfeeding Room Location.” As part of the campaign to support breastfeeding mothers, mothers and departments may request materials from the WorkLife Office to identify the physical room with a hanging door sign, a window cling, or laminated sign to make the room more visible.

You are encouraged to contact the WorkLife Office if you require support in setting up a flexible work arrangement, finding a breastfeeding space, or if you have any other questions about resources available at MSU or about breastfeeding support.

Retirement Symposium Recap

On March 22, 2017, the WorkLife Office and Academic Advancement Network, in collaboration with the College of Education, hosted “Taking the Taboo Out of Retirement: Reimagining Later Academic Life.” The symposium was centered around the nationally recognized scholarship of Dr. Roger Baldwin (pictured left), Erickson Distinguished Chair of Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education. The symposium featured speakers such as Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil (pictured below with Dr. Elizabeth Simmons) and Dr. Carole Goldberg from UCLA. A panel of Michigan State University leaders also offered their unique perspectives on supporting later-career academics. Participants also had the opportunity to work together to brainstorm ways of reimagining retirement at MSU.

All-in-all, the symposium was a productive and thought-provoking event.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS
2017 MSU OUTSTANDING SUPERVISOR AWARD

Members of the MSU community are invited to nominate a supervisor/administrator who consistently supports the WORK/LIFE (professional/personal) needs of their employees/staff through positive leadership and managerial practices for the 16th Annual Outstanding Supervisor Award. Please complete the nomination form available on the WorkLife Office website: http://worklife.msu.edu.

All staff, faculty and students may nominate their supervisors who have been in their position for more than two years. The nomination package must include the nomination form, nomination letter, plus 2 to 4 letters of support. The nomination package must be submitted electronically by Friday, June 30, 2017 via the WorkLife Office website. See the website for instructions and the nomination form (http://worklife.msu.edu).

Nominators will be notified in late September if their supervisor has been selected. Celebrations will occur around National Bosses Day, October 16. Remember, the process is more fun for everyone if you KEEP IT A SECRET!

Questions? Contact the WorkLife Office by phone at (517) 353-1635 or via email at worklife@msu.edu.
Flexible Arrangements for Small Units

Outstanding Supervisor Award recipient and Director of MSU Safe Place, Holly Rosen, says that offering flexible work arrangements can be easier with a small staff, but that it doesn’t alleviate all of the challenges. Rosen supervises two APA staff and two graduate and two undergraduate interns each semester, so accommodating schedules can be simpler than for other units, but working together and communication are critical to maintaining a flexible work environment. WorkLife Office staff member, Lydia Weiss talked with Rosen to learn more about how she creates a positive work environment through flex.

When considering flexibility, what are some of the advantages of having a small staff for being able to offer flexible work arrangements? It’s easier to offer flexibility if you don’t have many employees that want the same thing. I supervise staff who are very responsible. I know that if they say they’re working from home, they will be. I don’t feel the need to monitor their schedules. If I had a larger staff, though, some employees could take advantage of my flexibility. We’re not in that situation. When any of us work remotely, or flex our hours, we make sure there are people who can answer the phones or be available to meet clients or attend events. Once those obligations are covered, I fully support being flexible about hours. I think we have the ability to be more flexible due to having a smaller-sized staff.

How does communication play a role in arranging a flexible work environment? We have a central staff calendar, so if we’re with clients, out of town, taking time off, or flexing hours, we make sure that we note that so there’s a central place where we can go. We’re also constantly checking in with each other.

As the supervisor, were there certain things that you did intentionally to develop that level of trust? Developing this level of trust wasn’t strategic. It evolved over time. We’ve had the same staff in place for over 15 years, and that’s helped. In addition, I’m not the kind of supervisor who micro-manages the work or schedules of the staff I supervise. We inform each other where we are during work hours, and I trust them to complete needed tasks, and that has worked well. I think if any of my current staff decided to work somewhere else, and I was still supervising this program, I would want to continue the same level of communication and expectations we have now. If I felt that the new staff weren’t able to work remotely and be productive, or they were flexing a lot of hours and I wasn’t seeing them produce and put in a full week’s worth of work, I would reconsider the level of flexibility I offered as a supervisor.

With a small staff, what are some of the challenges of being able to offer flexible work? There are many challenges with the type of work we do, because we’re the domestic violence program. Our location is confidential. We don’t have a staff person at a reception desk from 8am-5pm every day. All of the Safe Place staff are busy, at meetings, trainings or off with clients, and sometimes that means someone is not physically at our office. We make it work, but it can be challenging because we are a small staff.

What role do you see a supervisor playing in creating a positive work environment? My role is to make sure that communication and the completion of tasks and projects occur. Luckily I have a staff that care about that, too. I try to foster a work environment that demonstrates that I care about my staff, including asking about what goes on in their personal lives, without spending too much time talking about that. It’s a balance. We keep some of our personal lives private, but it’s clear that when good or bad things go on in our personal lives it can impact our lives at work. I believe showing an interest in how everyone is doing sets a tone for the office that helps us work better, together. Not everyone wants to share how their weekend went, though. As supervisors, we need to respect the boundaries that employees set.

We often hear from people that they are nervous to ask for flexible work arrangements – so what advice would you have for employees who want to broach these difficult conversations with their supervisor? One thing is to think about the benefit for the unit. When proposing a flexible plan, consider having a trial period. If it doesn’t work, employees need to understand that they are part of a big machine and they may not be able to get the flexibility in all the areas that they want. They might want to check in with some of the other employees to get a sense of how other people would feel about it. Also, when working remotely, being able to demonstrate to their supervisor what they’re working on can be helpful.

How has offering flex impacted your staff? I believe offering flexibility has helped my staff feel connected to their job and to each other. They do what needs to be done, knowing I will accommodate their scheduling needs to achieve win-win situations. I’ve never heard them say my flexibility has led to their staying so long, but I do believe it is an important factor in their longevity.

Anything else you want to add or ways that you think about flexible work? I think supervisors that are asked to allow flexibility of their employees should pause before immediately saying no. My advice is to think outside of the box; pause and say, “Let me think about that and get back with you;” maybe reach out to other supervisors that offer it. There are a lot of ways to accommodate staff requests. I believe flexibility leads to an increased commitment to staying at the job, connection and productivity. If there are problems, consider working on an alternative plan to make it work.
Calendar of Events @ a Glance

For a full listing of events with details and RSVP information, visit https://worklife.msu.edu.

April 4
12:00PM—1:00PM: Help Secure Your Retirement with Lifetime Income Webinar. Co-sponsored with TIAA.

April 8
8:30AM—1:00PM: Girls Get Going. IM West. Co-sponsored with Recreational Sports and Fitness Services, MSU Intercollegiate Athletics, Student Parent Resource Center, and Daring Ideas Consulting, LLC.

April 11
3:30PM—5:00PM: Perfecting Your Persuasion: Negotiation Skills for Women—Academic Women's Fourm. MSU Main Library, Green Room (W-444). Co-sponsored with Health4U, and Academic Advancement Network.

April 13
6:00PM—7:00PM: Adult Children Caring for Aging Parents. MSU Federal Credit Union-Farm Lane Branch Community Room (4825 E. Mt. Hope Road, East Lansing). Co-sponsored with the MSU Federal Credit Union.

April 18
12:00PM—1:00PM: Divorce: From the Children’s Perspective. Linton Hall, Room 113 (479 West Circle Drive).

April 19
8:30AM—10:00AM: Empowering Others through Your Personal Brand—Women’s Networking Association. Chittenden Hall, Room 110.

April 26
12:00PM—1:00PM: Estate Planning. MSU Federal Credit Union-Farm Lane Branch Community Room (4825 E. Mt. Hope Road, East Lansing). Co-sponsored with the MSU Federal Credit Union.

April 27
All day: Take Your Child to Work Day. Campus-wide.

April 29
9:00AM—2:00PM: Living Longer, Living Better. St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Gym (955 Alton Road, East Lansing). Co-sponsored with the East Lansing Catholics’ Senior Ministry, Knights of Columbus #7816, and Seniors Alliance for Education (S.A.F.E.).

SAVE THE DATE
FREE registration required

MSU ACADEMIC WOMEN’S FORUM PRESENTS...

Perfecting Your Persuasion
Negotiation Skills for Women

Tuesday, April 11, 2017
3:30PM-5:00PM

MSU Main Library, Green Room-W444

We all negotiate every day, in our jobs, in our homes, and on behalf of others. This session offers tools and strategies for successful negotiations, with a focus on gender differences and gender stereotypes. Participants will acquire a deeper understanding of both distributive (win-lose) and integrative (win-win) negotiations, and strategies for effectively negotiating on behalf of themselves and others.

Guest speaker: Dr. Rachel Croson
Dean, College of Social Science

RSVP at:
http://health4u.msu.edu/courses/academic-womens-forum#course-sessions.
24th Annual
Take Your Child to Work Day
Thursday, April 27, 2017

Welcome future Spartans! The theme for this year’s Take Your Child to Work Day is "Count On Me...To Inspire the Future!"
Activities intended for children ages 8-14.

Schedule of Events @ a Glance

8:30am, 9:30am, 10:30am:
Department Tours and Career Exploration
30-minute tours

11:30am-12:00pm:
Recognition Ceremony -
MSU Union Main Lounge

12:00pm-1:00pm:
Lunch on your own

1:30pm, 2:30pm:
Department Tours and Career Exploration
30-minute tours

A complete list of tour sites, activities, and details will be available by Friday, April 21, 2017 at worklife.msu.edu.

Sponsored by:
WorkLife Office
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Questions, call
(517) 353-1635.

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- Pet care
- Childcare
- Home maintenance

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