

**BENCHMARKING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE PROGRAM AT JOHNSON SPACE  
CENTER**

**Submitted to the faculty of  
The University of Houston Clear Lake**

**by  
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**In partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Arts  
in  
Behavioral Sciences (Psychology)**

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We the undersigned, certify that we have read this project and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the Master's Degree in Behavioral Sciences (Psychology).



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Scott McIntyre, Assistant Professor  
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**Abstract**

**Johnson Space Center is home to approximately 3300 federal civil servant employees. NASA is undergoing major business practice shifts that could impact the size and nature of work that is done at Johnson Space Center. Based on this, the Human Resources Operations Office is looking at the work-life program to make sure that it is meeting the needs of current and future employees. This project consisted of benchmarking with three other organizations to see what improvements, if any, could be made to the current work-life program. It was found that the work-life program at Johnson Space Center was offering similar activities as the other organizations such as flexible work schedules and family assistance programs. There are some recommendations about a few additional activities to add to the program that were presented to the Human Resources Leadership Team which were launching a carpool website, starting a student loan repayment program, and forming affinity groups. After the major business practice shifts are clearly defined and finalized, these recommendations will be examined again to see if they can be implemented.**

### **The Need for Work-Life Balance Programs**

The NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC) Human Resource Operations Office is currently updating policies to provide expanded “work-life” flexibilities to the workforce. JSC uses the term “work-life fit” instead of work-life balance, noting that flexibilities are needed to support individual needs and preferences. A recent survey conducted by Universum (2009) revealed that NASA is the most desired employer by engineering graduates. That survey also showed that “work-life fit” is one of the top considerations of students in their choices of employers. Therefore, to remain an employer of choice, JSC needs a long-term strategy for work-life fit policies. While the near-term policy improvements are currently being implemented, a 5-year strategy and plan is desired for the future. This 5-year strategy and plan will be created by benchmarking other organizations to see what improvements, if any, can be made and incorporated into this strategy and plan.

JSC’s HR Leadership Team understands that work-life balance (referred to as “work-life fit” at JSC) is an increasingly important topic in today’s workplace. Companies are trying to build a program that helps employees address the demand of an employee’s work-related and personal expectations. Employers realize that despite the cost of work-life balance activities, the benefits make the program a smart investment. According to Johnson (2004), employers that have successful work-life balance programs have less turnover and higher productivity, two major cost savings for organizations. Johnson (2004) also states that today’s employee sees work as an extension of who they are. Due to this, he or she will seek a job that meets his or her needs and criteria. Additionally, Blumenthal (2010) notes that the Generation Y workforce, which consists of people born between approximately 1980-2000, is making work-life balance a priority over compensation and other benefits. This is because employees have other aspects of

**life that they want to balance with work in order to feel complete with whom they are.**

**Employees who can have this balance are less stressed and distracted while performing work functions, increasing productivity. Due to this, offering appropriate work-life balance options to employees can be a cost-effective way to attract and retain employees (Kisilevitz & Bedington, 2009). In order to offer appropriate work-life balance options, Johnson (2004) notes that a company has to sell itself and its resources. A strong work-life balance program can give an organization the competitive edge it needs. For current employees, the program shows an organization that the employees are valued. This can be seen through the increased return on investment employers see with increased employee engagement and a stronger employee performance since they feel that they are (through the work-life balance program) being properly rewarded and valued (Kisilevitz & Bedington, 2009).**

**Work-life balance in the workplace means providing employees a work environment that allows them to have a lifestyle where they can properly honor work and personal commitments (Johnson, 2004). Employees ideally want to work for an organization where meeting work commitments does not mean that he or she has to continuously sacrifice personal commitments. Due to the fact that work-life balance differs for each employee, flexibility by the employer is pivotal to help ensure as many employees as possible have sufficient work-life balance. Johnson (2004) further explains that a work-life balance program is a formal program by an employer that provides benefits to employees to help support individual work-life balance. Examples of this can include medical benefits, wellness programs, transportation subsidies, and flexible work schedules. In order to properly implement a work-life balance program, Johnson (2004) discusses that a formal policy supporting the work-life balance initiatives needs to be in place. This will ensure everyone is able to utilize the benefit and no one uses it improperly. According**

to Blumenthal (2010), there are numerous tools, including employee participation, to monitor and ensure fair use of initiatives.

One of the prime initiatives to be considered by an organization is childcare. More families have both parents working or are single parent households, which creates a need for quality, affordable childcare. For an organization to provide on-site daycare and/or rebates for daycare can help ease this burden. Flexible work schedules are another main benefit employees seek. This can include flexible working hours or working less than 40 hours a week. According to Johnson (2004), Belgium and the Netherlands have already adopted three and four day work weeks for those who want them; this has created a rise in job sharing which reduces unemployment rates. There is also an increase in wellness programs being established by U.S. organizations. Wellness programs, such as workout facilities, can aid in reducing stress and helping reduce medical healthcare costs; this is a direct savings to the organization (Johnson, 2004).

Of prime importance in a work-life balance initiative is to have a program that matches employee preferences (Kisilevitz & Bedington, 2009). There are factors, like age, that influence an employee's life and career decisions; work-life balance programs should aim to provide necessary support to each employee. Employees should be allowed to provide feedback on the programs at least annually. This will allow organizations the ability to improve the programs for greater employee satisfaction, which works to maximize their investment.

### **Work-Life Balance Programs in the Federal Government**

The federal government, as a whole, understands the need for work-life balance for employees and is working to implement necessary programs to provide this. Posner and Schmidt (1996) showed, through a nationwide sample of employees from federal government and non-

government organizations, that federal government executives had higher regard than executives from non-government organizations among employees, colleagues, and managers. Even though ratings for personal and organizational values were lower in the federal government, the overall rating was still above the mid-range. Ratings also showed that the best way to improve "Quality of Work Life" in the federal government was to adopt a cooperative value system (where value principles are unified). The scores indicate the value the federal government places on its people.

A report by Deckman and Ezra (1996) notes that from 1976 to 1990 the percent of women in the public sector increased faster than in the private sector. An increased diversity in the workforce provides a greater need for programs to be designed or re-designed to meet the needs of all employees. There are changes in the family structure that an organization needs to be cognizant of, like the increase of women workers. These changes in the family structure mean changes in the needs of workers, which can be resolved with work-life balance programs. The federal government would be a prime example of an organization needing to know what work-life balance programs support this new family structure because 44% of the government's current workforce is female (Office of Personnel Management, 2010). For example, Flextime, a federal government program to provide alternative work schedules, was first piloted in 1972 (Deckman & Ezra, 1996) and is available in numerous agencies and positions; this survey indicated that two-thirds of those who use flextime are able to spend more time with their families. Currently, according to 2010's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, 60% are satisfied with their flexible work schedule. This is down from 63% in 2006 and 61% in 2008, which could indicate a potential area of concern that needs to be investigated further.

According to Deckman and Ezra (1996), work-life balance is the most significant contributor to job satisfaction among parents -- greater than challenging work, use of skills and



abilities, and understanding how the job contributes to the agency mission. If this is the case, the recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (2010), showing a work-life balance satisfaction rating of 39.5%, could indicate potential issues in retaining parents in the federal sector. Also, considering the fact that 3.6% of the federal workforce is under the age of 25 (Office of Personnel Management, 2010), this is a significant number of people to be at risk of losing in coming years as they get married and/or have children and do not have work-life balance to accommodate their personal lifestyle. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), who administers this survey, recognizes that the work-life balance satisfaction score is low, especially when compared to private industry, and wants to address this issue. Because this is the first year they have measured work-life balance there are no data for comparison, but OPM is hopeful that they are able to implement a successful action plan to address this, as well as other negative report findings, and see positive trending in the future.

A report by Delowery and Stephenson (2005) notes that Occupational Health programs are increasingly popular. These programs, provided through employers, offer services to employees (for free or a reduced fee) that give employees support beyond work activities. These programs include Employee Assistance Programs, Wellness Centers, and on-site Clinics. The Federal Government even has a department called Federal Occupation and Health that works to provide these services within the government and help implement them within government agencies. The formation of this agency shows the federal government's commitment to its workforce and an understanding of the link between work and personal life. NASA benefits from having on-site clinics, fitness centers with comprehensive wellness programs, and an employee assistance program that provides services including financial counseling, alcohol abuse counseling, and alternative dispute resolution.

### **Work-Life Balance Program Benchmarking at Johnson Space Center**

The NASA Johnson Space Center houses the three human spaceflight programs – Constellation Program, International Space Station Program and the Space Shuttle Program. It is also home to the astronaut corps and the Mission Control Center responsible for directing activities on all Space Shuttle missions and activity on board the International Space Station. The Human Resources Operations office develops Human Resources (HR) policies in support of the JSC and HR strategy for the Center's 3300 JSC Federal employees.

JSC has several work-life programs that have been implemented for the needs of all employees. While some policies are federally mandated and some are NASA requirements, JSC has a lot of flexibility to implement additional programs along with the ones that are externally mandated. Non-mandated programs include a child care facility, fitness center, employee assistance program, cafeteria, and clinic, among other programs. Certain “work-life fit” programs (such as offering flexible work schedules, earning credit time, and offering work-from-home options) are available through the federal government, but only to civil servant employees, due to legal restrictions set by the federal government. Many of NASA's contracting companies offer programs similar to those available for civil servant employees. Previously there were 10 categories that were identified previously by the JSC's Human Resource Office and used to organize work-life balance program activities [See Appendix A]. To maintain consistency with JSC, these categories' were the same ones used to organize the other companies' work-life balance program activities.

As mentioned before, JSC wants to remain an employer of choice. One way the JSC HR Leadership Team aims to do this is by ensuring that work-life programs offered to employees are appropriate. The JSC HR Leadership Teams wants to compare JSC's programs to those of other

similar organizations (benchmarking) to see what improvements, if any, could be made to current work-life programs at JSC. They have asked me to do the benchmarking and assessment for my project. To complete this project, I benchmarked organizations that are similar to JSC in order to better understand their work-life balance programs. These are companies that are in the federal government and/or have a similar racial, gender, and age diversity composition and/or have a majority population of engineers within their organization. The benchmarking was to gain insight into new practices and ways to improve current ones. After this, practices were examined to determine which are feasible to implement based on federal government regulatory requirements and JSC culture. The Deputy Human Resources Director, Brady Pyle, was consulted to ensure that recommendations were appropriate. The HR Leadership Team will evaluate the final recommendations I presented and decide how to best implement the recommendations based on the changes currently facing Johnson Space Center with the proposed new direction for NASA outlined in the 2011 budget.

To benchmark, according to Coers, Gardner, Higgins, and Raybourn (2010), is to compare and measure an organization with other organizations to gain information on philosophies, practices, and measures that can be used to help the organization improve performance. There are a variety of types of benchmarking, such as metric, internal, process, competitive, and strategic; a benchmarking effort can use a single type or a variety of types, depending on the objectives of the benchmarking (Coers, et al., 2010). In addition, benchmarking can be conducted by the members of the organization or by an external consultant. The first phase in the benchmarking process is preparation and planning, which involves clearly defining the objectives of the benchmarking and the desired outcomes. Also important here is knowing what to measure and how to do it. The second phase includes securing appropriate resources,

including management support. For this project, because management was the one to initiate the study, this has not been the same obstacle it can be in other benchmarking efforts. The third phase, according to Coers, et al. (2010), is data collection. Benchmarking will provide both quantitative information, through metrics and measures, and qualitative information, through process information; this project's data are a combination of both qualitative and quantitative information. In addition, there could be supporting information, such as tools used during certain processes, that can be helpful as well; an example of this would be using forms. Phase four involves taking all the data and analyzing it. Phase five is measurement, which uses the results of the data analysis to make conclusions and recommendations.

### **Benchmarking Procedure**

Each organization was assessed based on a structured interview, with follow-up, format [See Appendix B] with people key to managing the Work-Life Programs at their organization. Follow-up questions generally were asking the interviewee to elaborate on how they implemented a program or about employee participation in programs. All, except for the interview with Brady Pyle, were done via phone from a private conference room; Mr. Pyle's was conducted in his office. The interviews were no longer than 45 minutes. Before interview questions began they were informed what the purpose of the interview was and why their organization was selected as part of the benchmarking study. In addition, everyone was assured that the interview was to be used for research purposes and that any information they shared was for research purposes, not for publication. Data that was publically available or volunteered by the organization was also used, when available, to measure the success of the work-life programs. I interviewed Brady Pyle because he is key to ensuring proper management of the Work-Life Programs at Johnson Space Center as well as ensuring programs meet employee

needs. The goal with these interviews was to see if programs implemented were successful – based on cost, usage, and assessments from each organization’s internal management. By benchmarking all three organizations, a comprehensive overview will be provided to evaluate JSC’s current programs and provide recommendations on how to better proceed with programs over the next five years to ensure maximum cost-benefit and usage. All recommendations take into account the legal, financial, and cultural considerations JSC has with implementing “work-life fit” programs.

The first organization benchmarked was Texas Instruments (TI). TI was chosen because it has implemented several work life programs. TI, similar to JSC, has a focus on hiring and developing engineers who are new in their careers for long term career growth with their organization. Due to this, TI should have a focus on programs that help them be competitive in recruiting and retaining their workforce. The next organization that was used for benchmarking was Georgia Power Electric Company because it has similar demographics to JSC [See Appendix C]. Georgia Power Electric Company is also favored by the JSC HR Leadership Team for its programs to increase diversity and inclusion; efforts have been made by the JSC HR Leadership Team to learn more about these programs. The final organization benchmarked was the Nuclear Regulatory Commission because, like JSC, it is also a government agency that has a large engineering population. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission was ranked as the best places to work in the federal government according to the 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. That is what makes the organization desirable to benchmark with according to the JSC HR Leadership Team. The survey, in which NASA ranked fifth, is administered by the Office of Personnel Management and completed by government employees to assess employee satisfaction. NASA’s Johnson Space Center places a lot of value in this survey to guide how to

improve worker satisfaction and morale. The companies chosen to benchmark with are a diverse group of organizations which allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how organizations with similarities to NASA operate work-life balance programs.

**Benchmarking Results**

This is a summary of information received from company officials who were interviewed.

|                                                                                                              | Johnson Space Center                                                                                             | Georgia Power (Headquarters)                                                  | Nuclear Regulatory Commission (Headquarters)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Texas Instruments (Headquarters)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2009 voluntary turnover                                                                                      | 1.6%                                                                                                             | .35%                                                                          | 1.7%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 4.9%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Employee survey data in the past year                                                                        | 76.7 out of 100 index score for overall employee satisfaction; 70.1 out of 100 index score for work-life balance | 4.3 out of 5 index score for overall workplace satisfaction                   | 81.8 out of 100 index score for overall employee satisfaction; 77.7 out of 100 index score for work-life balance                                                                                                                                                            | No company-wide survey issued                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Public recognition in the past year for work-life balance programs or relating to work-life balance programs | Universum's "Most Desired Employer by Engineering Undergraduates" in 2010                                        | None that have correlation to the organization's work-life balance activities | Silver Award of National Business Group on Health's "Best Employers for Healthy Lifestyles" in 2010<br><br>One of <i>The Washingtonian's</i> 50 Great Places to Work in 2009<br><br>#4 in <i>Women Engineer's</i> "Top 20 Government Agencies For Women Engineers" for 2010 | #65 in <i>Fortune 100</i> "Best Companies to Work For" in 2009<br><br>One of <i>Working Mother's</i> "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers" in 2010<br><br>Platinum Award of National Business Group on Health's "Best Employers for Healthy Lifestyles" in 2009<br><br>One of <i>Business</i> |

|  |  |  |  |                                                               |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  | <i>Insider's "25 Best Tech Companies to Work for" in 2010</i> |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------------------------------|

**Johnson Space Center**

When interviewing Brady Pyle about the work-life programs at JSC, he described that there has been a lot of work put into the programs in the past 10 years (personal communication, July 12, 2010). The Human Resources Office has done a lot to improve work-life balance because they understand the link between work-life balance and employee engagement, recruitment, and retention. Some things are controlled by government regulation, such as the level and type of health benefits offered, but JSC has a lot of flexibility to create a work-life program that meets the needs of employees. He feels that the focus on work-life programs is essential to ensuring we are giving employees the tools they need to have the proper work-life balance. Brady also believes that employee retention is essential and work-life balance helps. There are factors that affect retention such as spousal work relocation or an increased salary that cannot be controlled, but having valuable work-life programs is within JSC's control and he wants to ensure JSC is meeting the needs of all employees so they can be fully utilized. According the 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, which is used as one metric to assess work-life balance, Johnson Space Center had an index score of 70.1 out of 100 for its work life balance, down 2.8% from 2009. In 2010, the highest score was 72.7. Senior Management at JSC does not view these scores as satisfactory and therefore sees this as evidence that there are opportunities to improve work-life balance at Johnson Space Center.

**Georgia Power Electric Company**

Shelton Goode is the Diversity Action Manager for Georgia Power. He was interviewed due to his experience with implementing some of the work-life balance activities at Georgia Power. He explained that Georgia Power does not have a formal work-life program that is managed as one collective program (personal communication, August 31, 2010). They do, however, have different work-life balance activities that have been initiated as an attempt to retain employees and reduce costs. For example, Southern Lifestyle, their wellness program, is focused on reducing the company's health care costs by promoting a healthy lifestyle. This is important to the Senior Leaders of Georgia Power since they are a self-insured organization. The company's 2009 Employee Engagement Survey showed a 4.3 out of 5 index score for employee engagement; the company considered this a good score. Further analysis found that the work-life programs significantly contributed to this. Exit survey data for 2009 also showed that no voluntary terminations were from dissatisfaction with work-life balance. Most were due to personal reasons such as spousal work relocation.

#### **Texas Instruments**

At Texas Instruments, Kelley Shaw-Proia is the manager for the Work Life Programs. She has 22 years of experience with Texas Instruments and has been in her current role since March of 2010. During the interview she explained that the focus on work-life programs at TI is, in part, to enhance recruitment and retention (personal communication, September 8, 2010). They do a lot of college recruiting of engineers and want to remain competitive through pay, benefits, and the work environment. Because of this they put a lot of emphasis in ensuring the work-life program meets the needs of the workforce. Participation is high in work-life programs and turnover was as low as 4.9% in 2009. Exit surveys show that the turnover that did occur was not related to the lack of work-life balance employees had.



### **Nuclear Regulatory Commission**

From the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, I interviewed Jeanne Atkinson, a Senior Human Resource Specialist with the organization. A lot of their programs are similar to JSC's due to the fact that both are government agencies and operate under the same federal regulations. For three years their agency has ranked number one overall on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey for best places to work. In the category of work-life balance, they were number one with an index score of 72.7 out of 100, a 1.5% increase over 2009. Jeanne attributes the success with work-life balance to being able to understand their employees needs (personal communication, October 20, 2010). The main way they do this is with their small employee to supervisor ratios (generally 8-10) which allow more personal interaction. Feedback about employee needs and issues can be better communicated to Human Resources and Senior Leadership this way. This impacts their ability to better meet employee needs in a wide variety of areas, including work-life balance. Even though JSC cannot reduce its employee to supervisor ratio there is an understanding of a need to get the most insight possible from employees, according to Brady (personal communication, November 8, 2010).

### **Comparison to Johnson Space Center**

Overall, many of the work-life program activities that Texas Instruments, Georgia Power, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have are also ones that Johnson Space Center already has. There were no activities that Johnson Space Center had that the other organizations did not have. There were, however, some activities that the other organizations had that were not at Johnson Space Center. These activities were focused on, in order to determine if there could be a need for them at JSC. Below is a summary of these activities.

|  | <b>Johnson Space Center</b> | <b>Georgia Power (Headquarters)</b> | <b>Nuclear Regulatory</b> | <b>Texas Instruments</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|

|                                  |                                                                       |                                                                                               | Commission<br>(Headquarters)                | (Headquarters)                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Volunteering</b>              | Group focused on organizing employees to volunteer                    | Employees can use discretionary time (up to 8 hours a month) to volunteer                     | Volunteer activities throughout the year    | Community involvement program to encourage volunteering                                                                     |
| <b>Student Loan Repayment</b>    | Is available as an option under federal law but not exercised         | Not offered                                                                                   | Available                                   | Not offered                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Part Time Work Option</b>     | Available in limited situations if approved by a supervisor           | Available if approved by a supervisor                                                         | Available if approved by a supervisor       | Available if approved by a supervisor                                                                                       |
| <b>Transportation Assistance</b> | Free parking, on-site bicycles, reserved parking for senior employees | Help coordinate employee carpools, loan fuel efficient cars to employees who have work travel | Offer a public transportation reimbursement | On-site bicycles, public transportation subsidy, shuttles available for transport between airports and local train stations |

**Volunteering.** Georgia Power allows up to 8 hours per month discretionary time to volunteer. Employee volunteering and outreach is a focus at Johnson Space Center, which is why there is a volunteering committee devoted to organizing events and encouraging employee participation. Being able to use discretionary time to volunteer would help increase employee participation at JSC, but according to federal regulations it is not allowed. There is actually no reason to focus on volunteering as an area for improvement according to Brady (personal communication, November 8, 2010). Volunteer events, such as Open House, always get enough responses to appropriately staff and ensure event success.

**Student Loan Repayment.** The Nuclear Regulatory Commission offers repayment of student loans with an employment commitment. JSC has educational incentives, such as tuition reimbursement for employees currently in school, but does not offer student loan repayment for

school completed prior to employment. JSC hires on average of 117 employees a year since 2006, with 28% of the hires being recruited from the Cooperative Education Programs. These student employees have already received tuition reimbursement during their tenure in the student program. Despite the focus on student employees, there is still a need to hire from other sources. Brady Pyle notes that being competitive against the energy companies and major corporations is always a challenge (personal communication, November 8, 2010). Offering a student loan repayment option for recruits who are not from the student program could help in recruiting additional employees. According to Brady, JSC could not afford to offer full student loan repayment to all employees; with other funding priorities, this would not be feasible. I propose that JSC offer as a recruitment incentive student loan repayment for those employees hired within three years of finishing their last degree and were not part of a student employment program previously. The amount offered would be the total amount of the student loan up to but not exceeding \$10,000. This is the average reimbursement amount to students in the Cooperative Education Programs. The amount would be paid all at once directly to Direct Loans who handles student loan repayment. Employees would have to sign a 3 year service agreement upon employment to receive the benefit and if they leave NASA (voluntarily or non-voluntarily) the employee will have to repay a portion of the loan. Johnson Space Center will still focus on hiring through the student employment program, but the changes facing NASA could find Johnson Space Center needing to recruit people from outside the government. This incentive will help JSC be more competitive with other potential employers.

*Part Time Work Option.* The NRC, similar to JSC and the other organizations, has a part time work option. Jeanne Atkinson mentioned how flexible they are in allowing part time work (personal communication, October 20, 2010). She stated that they do their best with

accommodating part time work requests and in recent years they have been able to accommodate all requests. JSC has made efforts to allow part time work but Brady notes that we are not as accommodating as the NRC. He noted that JSC usually allows it only in special cases due to the complexity of reorganizing workload when someone shifts to part time. Brady mentioned that human resources and management work with the employee to see if the employee can be accommodated (personal communication, November 8, 2010). There are not a lot of part time requests so, based on this, the current system works. If more people start requesting part time work, the Human Resources Office will need to explore what changes are needed to be made so more requests can be honored.

*Transportation Assistance.* The NRC, Georgia Power, and TI all offer some form of transportation assistance. Georgia Power helps coordinate carpools and the NRC and TI have public transportation subsidies. According to Brady Pyle, a public transportation subsidy will not have a lot of impact because most employees live close to the center (personal communication, November 8, 2010). He does agree that carpools will help those who live further away from the center and be more cost-effective for all. I propose a website to help match people who would be interested in carpooling. The website could allow people to type in their address (which will remain confidential) and find other people who are within a 5 or 10 mile radius of them. The people can email, or even instant message, to form a carpool.

*Affinity Groups.* All three organizations benchmarked mentioned the use of affinity groups to gain insight into their work-life program needs. Because these groups allow people to come together and discuss work issues affecting those with a specific characteristic (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation), the organizations were able to better understand what work-life activities the groups utilized and would desire. All three organizations mentioned the groups were critical in

helping their diversity initiatives be successful. According to Brady Pyle, affinity groups could be useful at JSC due to the fact that the demographics of the workforce are changing (personal communication, November 8, 2010). Most retirements are by white males and the new hires are more diverse, representing both genders and multiple races. This is creating a workforce that is younger and more racially diverse than JSC has ever had; the demands of the newly-hired workforce are naturally different than the retiring workforce. Affinity groups would provide a forum where discussions could be had to find what the group's members value, in regard to personal beliefs, work values, and work-life balance. This insight could be used to further understand and customize the work-life programs to meet the needs of the employees. Using the groups to gain insight into work-life balance programs will ensure maximum utilization, which will ensure maximum return on investment. The insight would also help ensure employees have the work-life balance they desire, which will help in retaining employees.

Brady Pyle sees the value of implementing affinity groups but says doing so would be a challenge at Johnson Space Center (personal communication, November 8, 2010). According to him, there were a few groups in the past but they were loosely structured and not well monitored. The Senior Management Team cancelled the groups because they believed them to be ineffective and used more for people to have an excuse to get out of doing their primary job for a few hours a month and complain about issues without making an effort to find a resolution. JSC's senior management is trying to ensure that JSC is a diverse workplace that is inclusive and fair to all. Currently there has been a lot of work done with managers (such as training and focus groups) but little with employees; Brady wants to ensure that any future work done with employees is meaningful.

**What I propose is to have two affinity groups implemented over the next five years and slowly have more implemented over time. This will give everyone the ability to assess the groups and make improvements as necessary before more are introduced. Also, the groups will have a clear charter detailing their purpose and by-laws that have to be approved by Senior Management. Each meeting will be facilitated (by someone deemed appropriate by Senior Management) to ensure the meeting is to discuss meaningful issues or to collaborate on projects. Also, involvement in the group should be voluntary but limited to 15-20 members who rotate on a determined schedule to ensure that different perspectives can be represented. The first two groups I propose are a women's group and an African American group. These two groups are appropriate to start with because they already are the focus of a lot of conversation about how to overcome barriers and create a more inclusive workforce. After these two groups are implemented successfully, other groups ( e.g. for other races, males, different age groups, parents, homosexuals, and people with disabilities) can be formed.**

### **Implementation Timeline**

**On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, President Barack Obama released his proposed 2011 budget which called for significant changes to the Space Program. This budget has been met with much resistance from NASA and is being challenged by key senior leaders at NASA, as well as within Congress. Because of this debate, the budget for NASA has not been finalized, leaving everyone unaware of Johnson Space Center's future. There are several questions regarding what type of work will be done at JSC in the future and how many employees will be needed to complete this work. Depending on final plans, the new direction of NASA could result in more or fewer employees at JSC. Also, it is possible JSC may need employees that are from fields JSC has not employed in the past. As a result, the Human Resources Office Leadership Team has decided to**

wait until the new NASA direction is finalized before they craft a full implementation plan and invest resources to make revisions to the work-life program.

When changes are finalized, work will be done to reassess the work-life balance program at JSC and what specific changes are needed. It is clear that, despite the outcome for the proposed direction of NASA, the work-life balance programs will need some updates to ensure the current workforce (if JSC remains unchanged) has a program that meets their needs or to ensure that the program will meet the needs of the new workforce. This assessment will be part of a total assessment done within Human Resources to ensure that the department is able to meet the needs of employees in the future. The goal of the Human Resources office is to ensure that the change is as transparent, efficient, and as effective as possible for employees. Other factors will also be considered in the assessment, like the pending Healthcare Reform Bill and how it could impact employees. After the HR Leadership Team makes decisions about what changes needed to be made this project will be used as a reference to determine how to best use the findings and the timeline below to implement the changes. These findings include:

- The need for a carpool website
- Starting affinity groups
- Having a Student Loan Repayment Recruitment Incentive

The timeline allows for activities to be implemented and assessed accordingly. The Student Loan Repayment Recruitment Incentive will require additional funding and it will take approximately two years to submit the budget proposal and receive funding for the activity.

**Year 1**

- Launch Carpool Website
- Create a charter and get senior management approval for the Women's Affinity Group

**Year 2**

- **Start the Women's Affinity Group**

**Year 3**

- **Evaluate the affinity group to assess successes and potential improvements for future affinity groups. Get feedback from participants' direct supervisors to ensure participants' time in group is not interfering with primary job duties. Also solicit feedback from group participants about the group's strengths and weaknesses. Also, suggestions made by the group should be tracked to determine if participants are making suggestions that are useful and being considered for implementation or have been implemented. There may not be many suggestions that are fully implemented within one year of the group's formation, but for those that are fully implemented, feedback should be gained from impacted employees and, when possible, return on investment should be determined. The HR Leadership team will work to determine how they want return on investment to be measured and what they will approve as an appropriate return on investment. All of the data should be used to determine what improvements need to be made when organizing future groups so they can be successful.**
- **Create a charter and get senior management approval for the African-American Affinity Group**
- **Start the Student Loan Repayment Recruitment Incentive**

**Year 4**

- **Start the African-American Affinity Group**

**Year 5**



- **Evaluate the affinity group to assess successes and potential improvements for future affinity groups**
- **Work on charters for future affinity groups**

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Appendix A

*Summary of Work-Life Program activities*

The activities for each organization's work-life program are organized using the categories used at Johnson Space Center.

|               | Johnson Space Center                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Georgia Power (Headquarters)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Nuclear Regulatory Commission (Headquarters)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Texas Instruments (Headquarters)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Benefits      | Health Insurance, Life insurance, Retirement annuities, 401k plans, flexible Spending Accounts, Long-term Care Insurance, Adoption leave, Allowed to work from home if approved by a supervisor, Can work flexible hours throughout work if approved by a supervisor, Can work part time if approved by a supervisor in limited situations | Health Insurance, Life insurance, Retirement annuities, 401k plans, flexible Spending Accounts, Long-term Care Insurance, Adoption leave, Allowed to work from home if approved by a supervisor, Can work flexible hours throughout work if approved by a supervisor, Can work part time if approved by a supervisor, Pension plan | Health Insurance, Life insurance, Retirement annuities, 401k plans, flexible Spending Accounts, Long-term Care Insurance, Adoption leave, Allowed to work from home if approved by a supervisor, Can work flexible hours throughout work if approved by a supervisor, Can work part time if approved by a supervisor | Health Insurance, Life insurance, Retirement annuities, 401k plans, flexible Spending Accounts, Long-term Care Insurance, Adoption leave, Allowed to work from home if approved by a supervisor, Can work flexible hours throughout work if approved by a supervisor, Can work part time if approved by a supervisor, Employee Profit Sharing, |
| Food Services | 2 cafeterias (with menu options including low-calorie and vegetarian options), 2 snack bars, Starbucks coffee station, Food delivery service                                                                                                                                                                                               | 1 cafeteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2 cafeterias, 1 snack shop, 1 coffee shop                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Cafeteria with focus on health eating (no trans-fat and hormone free foods), healthy options in vending machines                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                                   |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                      |                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wellness, Sport, and Recreational Services</b> | <b>On-site Gym, Personal Training, Health Assessments, Fitness Classes, Sports Leagues, Massages, Health Education</b> | <b>On-site Gym, Personal Training, Health Assessments, Health Education</b>                          | <b>On-site Gym</b>                                                                 | <b>On-site Gym, Personal Training, Swimming Pool, Sports Leagues, Spa, Massages</b>                                                |
| <b>Occupational Health Programs</b>               | <b>On site clinic, Free physicals, Free flu shots annually</b>                                                         | <b>On site clinic, Free physicals, Nutritionist</b>                                                  | <b>On site clinic</b>                                                              | <b>Informational website focused on Occupational Health</b>                                                                        |
| <b>Safety and Health Programs</b>                 | <b>Emergency preparedness program, CPR/AED Training, Recycling program, Monthly Safety and Health Newsletter</b>       | <b>Safety program focused on workplace safety</b>                                                    | <b>Safety program focused on workplace safety, Safety presentations</b>            | <b>Safety program focused on workplace safety</b>                                                                                  |
| <b>Transportation</b>                             | <b>Free parking, on-site bicycles, reserved parking for senior employees</b>                                           | <b>Help coordinate employee carpools, loan fuel efficient cars to employees who have work travel</b> | <b>Offer a public transportation reimbursement</b>                                 | <b>on-site bicycles, public transportation subsidy, shuttles available for transport between airports and local train stations</b> |
| <b>Employee Assistance Program</b>                | <b>Counselors and on-site classes are available</b>                                                                    | <b>Counselors and on-site classes are available</b>                                                  | <b>Counselors and on-site classes are available</b>                                | <b>Counselors and on-site classes are available</b>                                                                                |
| <b>Family Assistance Programs</b>                 | <b>Child Care Center, Adoption Leave, College scholarships for employee's dependents, credit union</b>                 | <b>Child care center, credit union, Auto insurance discounts</b>                                     | <b>Child Care Center, College scholarships for employee's dependents</b>           | <b>Child care camps during breaks from school that focus on physical activity and a healthy lifestyle</b>                          |
| <b>Employee/family events</b>                     | <b>Annual picnic, new year's party, discounted tickets to Space Center Houston and other local</b>                     | <b>Employee and family events are handled by each department instead of as a company,</b>            | <b>Celebrations are scheduled yearly, Volunteer activities throughout the year</b> | <b>Celebrations are scheduled yearly, Community involvement program to encourage</b>                                               |

|                      |                                                                                                  |                                                                           |                                                                                                             |                                                                                  |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | attractions, group focused on organizing employees to volunteer                                  | Employees can use discretionary time (up to 8 hours a month) to volunteer |                                                                                                             | volunteering                                                                     |
| Employee Development | Leadership and Technical Development Programs, Employee Mentoring Program, Tuition reimbursement | Up to \$5000/year tuition reimbursement                                   | Employee Mentoring Program, Student Loan Repayment, 24 hrs of training a year required for 70% of employees | Employee Mentoring Program, Employee Development Programs, Tuition reimbursement |

Appendix B

*Interview questions for Johnson Space Center, Georgia Power, Texas Instruments, and Nuclear Regulatory Commission*

1. Can you tell me more about your organization?
2. Can you tell me more about your position?
3. What was your turnover rate in 2009?
4. What is the main source of your hiring?
5. Can you give me a general overview of your work-life balance program?
6. What kind of metrics do you use to capture satisfaction with work-life balance program?
7. What public recognition, if any, have you received for your work-life balance program or relating to work-life balance programs in the past year?
8. How do you assess usage of your work-life balance program?
9. Do you offer benefits to employees? If so, what do you provide?
10. Do you offer food services to employees? If so, what do you provide?
11. Do you offer Wellness, Sport, and Recreational Services to employees? If so, what do you provide?
12. Do you have an Occupational Health Program for employees? If so, what do you provide?
13. Do you have a Safety and Health Programs for employees? If so, what do you provide?
14. Do you offer any Transportation incentives or benefits to employees? If so, what do you provide?
15. Do you offer an Employee Assistance Program to employees? If so, what does it include?

**16. Do you offer any Family Assistance Programs or Services to employees? If so, what do you provide?**

**17. Do you offer Employee Development for employees? If so, what do you provide?**

**18. Do you have Employee/Family events sponsored by the organization? If so, what do you do?**

**19. How regular are these events?**

**20. Do you have any other work-life balance programs?**

Appendix C

*Georgia Power Company Demographic Comparison to Johnson Space Center*

All data is as of January 1, 2010.





