The sorrow and happiness of an academic career in biology

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In Taiwan, medical schools start at the undergraduate level and young men are encouraged to re-take medical school entrance exams again and again until they get in; this results in a higher number of female students starting off in basic biology-related disciplines. But as the traditional social burden on women in Taiwan still persists, the number of female students decreases sharply as women rise up the career ladder. Despite this, the larger number of female students at the beginning still results in a relatively higher number of female faculty members in biology departments in academia compared to other scientific disciplines. The higher number of women has perhaps made “breaking the glass ceiling” as well as seeking role models easier for young female biologists; however, the tradition of female subornation and the conflict between total devotion to a career in research and caring for a family still faces every woman in the field. With the “top 100 universities” frenzy currently engulfing Taiwan, money is being poured into obtaining more equipment, lab space and research personnel. Decision makers, mostly men, hardly ever consider providing better child-care facilities and bridge funds for junior faculty members during their child-bearing years as an effective and long-term way of promoting research quality. Nevertheless, things are changing, and together we can make it even better. So what can you expect to get out of an academic career in biology? We get paid to pursue our interests and curiosity - what could be a better job than that?