As several women have commented, last year’s University of Iowa Women’s Faculty Development Conference was “the last ‘normal’ thing I did before COVID.” Since February 2020, we have spent more time than we ever imagined on digital platforms.

Given that reality, we have invited Dr. Christine Beckman, Price Family Chair in Social Innovation and Professor at the University of South California School of Public Policy, and Dr. Melissa Mazmanian, Associate Professor of Informatics at the University of California, Irvine School of Information and Computer Sciences, to join us. Drs. Beckman and Mazmanian’s recent work examines the organizational reaction to and individual experience of operating in a technology-enabled world where boundaries between the personal and the professional are blurred. One way they have examined that space is through deep ethnographic work examining the everyday lives of nine families in Southern California. Their book, Dreams of the Overworked: Living, Working and Parenting in the Digital Age, explores how technology has intensified the expectations of three cultural myths: the Ideal Worker, Perfect Parent, and Ultimate Body. The research was conducted prior to the pandemic; however, the insights gained through the research have important implications as we navigate an intensified digital age. We will use their work as a catalyst to process the challenges we’ve faced over the last year.

The core schedule for the day will be:

10:30 a.m. “Dreams of the Overworked” – Presentation by Christine Beckman and Melissa Mazmanian

12:00 p.m. Warm-up your lunch

12:15 p.m. Lunch and conversation – Join your colleagues from around the University of Iowa in small breakout rooms.

1:30 p.m. Book club with the authors – Rejoin the large group for an extended conversation with Christine and Melissa about their book.

Before and after the core gathering, and based on interest, we will have activities available to support our health and well-being, including digital yoga and meditation sessions as well as outdoor meet-up spots for walking with colleagues.