



# ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

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## **Kathleen Christensen to Join Stanford Center on Longevity**

*Return to Academe Ends 25-Year Career as Program Director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation*

(New York, NY) – The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation announces that Dr. Kathleen Christensen will leave the Foundation on April 30 to assume an appointment at Stanford University’s Center on Longevity. During Dr. Christensen’s twenty-five-year tenure as Program Director at the Sloan Foundation, she has been an influential thought leader and grant maker, helping to advance our understanding of the changing structure of the U.S. workforce and the institutional adjustments needed to accommodate those changes.

“Kathleen’s impact over the course of her career has been broad and substantial,” said Sloan Foundation President Adam Falk. “She has served as an important leader across a number of fields.”

Christensen joined the Sloan Foundation in 1995—the first woman ever to serve as a program director—where she focused the first phase of her strategic grantmaking on examining the growing societal mismatch between the traditional work week and the changing structure of the American family. “The modern American workplace was created during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the average family was composed of a breadwinner and a homemaker,” said Christensen, “But by the 1980s, that was no longer the case. Women had entered the workforce in large numbers. The two-earner family was the norm, not the exception. And yet the structure of work was not responding accordingly.” Under Christensen’s leadership, the Foundation’s Workplace, Workforce and Working Families program made more than 353 grants totaling some \$128,000,000 from 1995 to 2010 to understand this mismatch and how society might restructure work in ways that serve the needs of both businesses and workers. Over these fifteen years, Christensen funded the work of many researchers who would become seminal voices in the emerging field of work-family scholarship, including Rosalind Barnett, Suzanne Bianchi, Kathleen Gerson, Arlie Hochschild, Ellen Ernst Kossek, Phyllis Moen, Deborah Tannen, and Joan Williams. A 2019 study of extraordinary work family scholars dubbed Christensen “the mother of work and family research.” The Work and Family Researchers Network – the first and

only professional network for work family scholars and one that she played a pivotal role in founding—named a dissertation scholarship in her honor in 2018.

In response to the findings of this research, Christensen designed and launched the first national initiative to advance workplace flexibility, bringing together stakeholders from academia, business, organized labor, and policy to make workplace flexibility a compelling national issue and the standard of the American workplace. The initiative received widespread attention in the popular press, in industry circles, and in Washington, culminating in a 2014 White House Summit on Working Families hosted by President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. “Every social scientist hopes that their research finds its way to decision-makers,” said President Falk. “There is no question that Kathleen and Sloan’s grantees in the Working Families program changed the national discourse around work and family.”

In 2010, Christensen shifted her focus to another segment of the population poorly served by existing institutions: older workers. The Sloan Foundation’s Working Longer program produced a better understanding of the labor market for older workers, particularly the social, legal and institutional structures that impede those who want or need to work past traditional retirement age. Researchers funded through the program have made a number of important findings, including the inadequacy of retirement as a frame for understanding the work-life cycle (many workers continue to work after “retirement”), the prevalence of bias in hiring older workers, and the ability of work at older ages to slow cognitive decline. As head of a major grant making program aimed at studying issues at the intersection of aging and work, Christensen is well positioned to join the Stanford Center on Longevity, a multidisciplinary research center that aims to foster social, cultural, and technological innovation based on increasing lifespans. Having been a full professor of psychology at the Graduate Center of City University of New York prior to joining Sloan, Christensen said, “My first passion was scholarship and I am thrilled that after 25 years of supporting the work of others, I now have the opportunity to return to that passion, pursue my own research, and write and speak in my own voice. I am honored to join the Stanford Center in advancing their important work.”

Reflecting on her career as a grant maker, Christensen is grateful. “I have been lucky in my career to work on issues I care deeply about, as well as to have had the opportunity to work with so many incredible, gifted researchers and such wonderful, supportive colleagues at the Sloan Foundation. I am so proud of what we have been able to accomplish together.”

“On behalf of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, I want to thank Kathleen for her 25 years of service,” said President Falk. “She has been an impactful grant maker, a sage advisor, and a trusted friend. She will be sorely missed.”

Dr. Christensen’s last day at the Sloan Foundation will be April 30, 2020. Her appointment at Stanford will begin in late spring.

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**Photo of Dr. Christensen:** [https://sloan.org/storage/app/media/staff/KathleenChristensen\\_headshot.jpg](https://sloan.org/storage/app/media/staff/KathleenChristensen_headshot.jpg)

**Bio of Dr. Christensen:** <https://sloan.org/about/staff/kathleen-e-christensen>

The **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation** is a not-for-profit, mission-driven grantmaking institution dedicated to improving the welfare of all through the advancement of scientific knowledge. Founded in 1934 by industrialist Alfred P. Sloan Jr., the Foundation makes grants each year in three broad areas: direct support of research in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and economics; initiatives to increase the quality and diversity of scientific institutions; and efforts to enhance and deepen public engagement with science and scientists. Sloan Foundation grantmaking helped create some of the country's most prestigious and enduring scientific institutions, including Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the MIT Sloan School of Management, and the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. Sloan support has also played a critical role in the early development of many scientific fields, including cognitive science, behavioral economics, and indoor microbial ecology. The Foundation strives to be guided in all its actions by the values of the scientific enterprise: impartiality, empiricism, curiosity, rigor, and the conviction that a reasoned, systematic understanding of the forces of nature and society, when applied inventively and wisely, can lead to a better world for all.