



CELEBRATE PURDUE WOMEN
**SHELLEY
MACDERMID
WADSWORTH**

HOW HAS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS EVOLVED OVER TIME?

I used to think that 'success' would somehow be obvious and that there would be a specific moment where it could be declared. What I have learned is that everything that looks like a notable success today started as a very modest effort that at the beginning felt ragged, sometimes rushed, and definitely uncertain in terms of its prospects. I've come to feel that I should commit for at least 3 years to any initiative I start to give it a good try before I decide whether it truly has potential to become a success. Success is in part about durability and sustainability – even a modest effort that is able to build a sustained track record can eventually achieve meaningful impact. A really good skill to develop is the ability to make good decisions about when to persist and when to pivot.

WHAT ROLE HAS COMMUNITY PLAYED IN YOUR SUCCESS?

The word 'community' means many things to me. For some of our work, we focus on geographic communities – cities, towns and rural areas – but most of our work focuses on communities of affiliation, meaning communities defined by shared interests, issues, or roles. I think all scientists want to have impact on others, and often they want to have impact in communities beyond just the academic community. I'm very unlikely to achieve impact if I simply prepare some product and post it or send it somewhere. Meaningful impact is much more likely to be achieved when the community of interest is part of the project from the very beginning. So, the Kanter Award in the Center for Families was created in partnership from the beginning with the community of practitioners who work inside companies to manage policies, programs and policies that affect families, as well as our valued colleagues at the Boston College Center for Work and Family. Measuring Communities and Star Behavioral Health Providers at the Military Family Research Institute were created in close consultation with folks who work on the ground around the country, as well as our valued colleagues at the Purdue Center for Regional Development and the Center for Deployment Psychology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

Shelley M. MacDermid Wadsworth is a Distinguished Professor of Human Development and Family Science at Purdue University, where she directs the Military Family Research Institute, which she co-founded, and serves as Director Emerita of the Center for Families. Dr. MacDermid Wadsworth holds an M.B.A. in Management and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Human Development and Family Studies from The Pennsylvania State University. Her primary research interest is the relationship between work conditions and family life, with special focus on military families. She is an author of over 140 articles and chapters. Her research has been supported by the National Institutes of Health; the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Agriculture; state governments; and numerous private philanthropies. Dr. MacDermid Wadsworth is a recipient of the Work Life Legacy Award from the Families and Work Institute and a fellow of the National Council on Family Relations, from which she also received the Felix Berardo Scholarship Award for Mentoring (2018) and the Burgess Award for continuous and meritorious contributions to theory and research in the family field (2022). She has served on federal advisory committees for the National Academies of Science and the Department of Defense, and has testified in Congress on multiple occasions regarding military and veteran families. In 2016, Purdue University received the Kellogg Award from the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities and the Higher Education Civic Engagement Award from the Washington Center in recognition of the work of the Military Family Research Institute. Dr. MacDermid Wadsworth is a recipient of the Morrill Award, Purdue University's highest faculty honor, for outstanding career achievements that have had an impact on society, and has been named a "Top Ten Extraordinary Contributor" among work-family researchers worldwide.