

Women in Family Business—A conversation with Professor Maura McAdam

*Professor of Management and Director of Entrepreneurship in DCU, **Maura McAdam** became affiliated with the CFB in May 2016.*

*She aims to explore the role of females in family business and is currently investigating the father to daughter succession process. Maura will lead the **Women in Family Business & Leadership** workshop on **October 27th 2016**.*

Below Maura explains her research interests and how she hopes to continue her contribution to the family business field.



Q. Could you give some background to your research interests?

A. I worked in industry before I embarked on my academic career which is over 16 years ago now. My main motivation for entering academia was to work closely with entrepreneurs and to conduct research that would support their endeavours. As a result my research interests focus on incubators/accelerators, networks and how gender intersects with entrepreneurship. So the idea of conducting research that translates and has relevance for entrepreneurial firms and those that support them has been, and still is, the driving force behind all my research to date.

Q. Why did the family business space appeal to you?

A. The family business space appeals to me as family firms are positioned at the intersection of family considerations, which typically involve emotions and feelings, and business considerations, which are typically driven by merit and economics. This juxtaposition of sentimental and financial concerns can make family firms a complex space but so fascinating for us researchers!

Q. How does female entrepreneurship crossover with family business?

A. Family business is such an interesting context in which to investigate female entrepreneurship due to the complexity of issues such as role conflict, family loyalties, sibling rivalry and the traditional “male line”. Historically, women have always played significant roles in family businesses albeit not visible ones. Indeed, women have been seen as the family glue—the chief emotional officer responsible for preserving “*familiness*” i.e. core values and traditions. However, women are now assuming important leadership positions in family businesses all around the world including Ireland—another sign that family businesses continue to be wonderful engines for social change.



Q. How do you see your involvement in terms of the development and growth of the centre?

A. I am excited to be part of the DCU Centre for Family Business, which is the first of its kind on the island of Ireland. One of the most significant trends that the Centre is witnessing is the increased prominence of women in more public and visible leadership roles in the family business. Therefore, as a result of my interest and expertise in gender and entrepreneurship, I hope to add value to CFB by conducting new and novel research in this area which will have impact for those operating within the family business domain. I will also be leading a series of workshops aimed at supporting **Women in Family Business**, with the first of its kind planned for **October 27th 2016**.

Q. What have you learned while part of the DCU Centre for Family Business?

A. I have witnessed first-hand the significance and importance of family firms to the Irish economy. I have also had the pleasure of meeting some fantastic exemplars of family firms. Indeed, I have personally observed not only the entrepreneurial drive of these families but also their support for the CFB. The success of any centre is contingent on the active engagement of its members and this active engagement is particularly evident amongst CFB membership.

Q. Which one of the CFB's three pillars (engagement, research and education) intrigues you the most and why?

A. I am going to be greedy and say all three! These three pillars actually reflect the themes which underpin my own career path to date. In fact, my research which is impact based, not only translates into practice but also cascades into my teaching. So my research and teaching philosophies are underpinned by "academic excellence with purpose". To this end, I am currently conducting research into the father-daughter succession process, I will be teaching family business at the postgraduate level in the upcoming academic year and I will be leading the first ever women in family business workshop in October.

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Q. Tell us about the thought and motivation behind the Women in Family Business & Leadership workshop?

A. Given the close relationships that the CFB has developed with its membership, they are constantly asking their members to identify issues pertinent to them. One such issue is women in family business. Thus, first and foremost, this is being driven by the CFB membership. However, it also reflects significant trends demonstrating that women are now assuming important leadership positions in family businesses all around the world. We are very excited about this workshop and we hope it will be the first in a series of workshops aimed at the specific challenges faced by women in leadership positions within family firms.

So we are hoping to start important conversations in this area and in so doing, bolster aspirations and bust gender stereotypes.

Professor Maura McAdam is widely published with her research featuring in top rated North American and UK journals including Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice; R&D Management; Journal of Small Business Management; and Regional Studies.

In addition, she has authored a book with Routledge publishing entitled 'Female Entrepreneurship'. She has presented her work at international conferences and is a member of Diana International Project, a regular speaker at Ulster Bank Business Women Can Events, and advisory panel member of the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) and Gender and Enterprise Network (GEN).