Family Leave Policy Proposal for
UNH Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Members

In 2001, the American Association of University Professors adopted a Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work, which stated that: Transforming the academic workplace into one that supports family life requires substantial changes in policy and, more significantly, changes in academic culture. These changes require a thorough commitment from the leaders of educational institutions as well as from the faculty. No template of policies fits every institution, but it is essential that the priorities, workloads, rewards structure, and values of the academy permit and support the integration of family and work. Without such support, the commitment to gender equity, for both women and men, will be seriously compromised.¹

The UNH ADVANCE IT program is committed to this principle, and especially the goal of transforming UNH’s academic culture to further advance gender equity. The effective integration of family and work for both women and men is integral to these goals. To evaluate the current status of UNH’s family-friendly policies, the UNH ADVANCE Career-Life Balance Committee informally gathered evidence about the implementation of UNH’s parental leave policy, adopted by UNH-AAUP faculty in 2003. Through multiple conversations with committee members and faculty from various areas throughout the University, we found that the guarantee of 12-weeks paid leave has been applied inconsistently to faculty members across Departments and Colleges over the past decade. We also found that there has been no clear precedent for support offered to faculty negotiating work demands while dealing with FMLA-qualifying events other than new parenthood.

The UNH ADVANCE Career-Life Balance Committee researched and analyzed the family-friendly policies adopted by many of our peer universities over the last decade (including AAUP Comparator Institutions and AAUP Universities that also have ADVANCE IT programs). We found that many of those institutions have expanded or revised their policies in recent years in order to provide an even more inclusive and family-friendly workplace environment (see Appendix A). Further, in a review of family-friendly policies at more than 50 major universities nation-wide, we found that a number of public research

¹ AAUP Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work Available at: http://www.aaup.org/report/statement-principles-family-responsibilities-and-academic-work
universities and most of the nationally-ranked private research universities have moved to a semester of paid leave for faculty members who have given birth or adopted a child. A large number of universities also have instituted an active service and modified support duties plan to aid faculty in navigating complex family responsibilities (see Appendix A &A Appendix B).

RATIONALE:

There are many benefits to expanding the range of family-friendly initiatives at the University of New Hampshire. When consistently applied, policies such as paid family leave, simultaneous parental leave for dual career couples, and modified support duties provide faculty more autonomy, flexibility, accessibility, and creativity in meeting their career and life obligations. By instituting new and improved family-friendly policies and extending to faculty similar opportunities for autonomy and enrichment that the university has committed to offer to its students, UNH can lead the nation as an academic employer of choice and strengthen its profile as the University of Choice.²

A number of recent studies have shown that “greater support and understanding of family issues in academia could significantly lessen the work/family stress experienced by academician parents and thereby improve job performance and job satisfaction.”³ Other scholars have focused on the changing sociocultural context of the latest generations of faculty members, including both men and women, who report that “having a work schedule which allows for family time ranks as their most important priority.”⁴

Improved family-friendly policies would strengthen UNH’s commitment to sustainability by offering short-term faculty support in order to foster their long-term success. As researchers at Stanford University have shown, “faculty today are a new breed determined more than ever to strike a sustainable balance between working and private lives” and “faculty may be more productive and more loyal if universities are committed to their success as whole persons.”⁵ Modest adjustments to work arrangements aimed at retaining

² Similarly, the U.S. Department of Labor has begun a new campaign, “It’s Time to Lead on Leave,” to urge Americans’ to support a state-based paid family leave program. See: http://social.dol.gov/blog/guess-whos-leading-on-paid-leave-hint-not-us/
talented and valuable faculty are key to protecting UNH’s major investments in recruiting hiring, and providing start-up and pre-tenure support for faculty. By adopting new policies and revising others, UNH could be even better positioned to both recruit and retain a world-class faculty, especially women in the STEM disciplines and dual career couples.  

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The policy recommendations are as follows:

a.) A semester of paid leave should be made available to all faculty members with a qualifying FMLA event.

b.) The semester of paid leave should be extended to both parents if they are both employees of the University of New Hampshire. However, to ease the burden on departments that house both faculty members, we recommend that the parental leaves should then be taken sequentially rather than simultaneously within a 12-month period.

c.) The semester of paid leave may begin within a period of 3-months before or up to 9-months after the qualifying FMLA event, including the birth/adoption of a child.

d.) An Active Service and Modified Duties policy (defined below) also should be made available to faculty members dealing with personal-life situations, including new parenthood, foster care of children, care for an elderly parent, illness of the faculty member or someone in his/her immediate family, death of a spouse or child, or other identified catastrophic situation.

Over the course of a long career, many faculty members will encounter personal responsibilities or challenges that make meeting work and family obligations much more difficult. In the past, informal arrangements have been made that vary according to an individual’s ability to negotiate or a decision maker’s whim. But fairness dictates that every member of the UNH faculty must have the same opportunity to utilize paid family leave and access to modified duty arrangements. The proposed policies aim for transparency and consistency across Departments and Colleges, while also expanding access to assistance for employees experiencing any acute family care situation including serious health conditions, care-giving responsibilities, or new parenthood.

The 12-week paid parental leave policy instituted in 2003 is generous and has eased the burden of new parenthood for many faculty members. However, the 12-week leave is incompatible with an academic calendar consisting of two 16-week semesters, one five-week “winter break”, and a three-month period of unpaid employment from June through August. Consequently, the policy is applied inconsistently with some faculty members having been granted an extension on their leave through the remainder of the semester if

Stanford University. Available at:
http://gender.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/DualCareerFinal_0.pdf

6 For a recent study on the economics of paid versus unpaid leave for businesses, see the Council of Economic Advisors June 2014 report:
the leave should end in mid-semester, while others have been required to take their leave during the "unpaid" summer months (often interfering with their research productivity). Other faculty members have had their leave end four or five weeks into the semester and been responsible for arranging for part-time fulfillment of their course instruction until they can return to the classroom. When a faculty member’s leave either ends or begins in mid-semester, this causes additional stress for the faculty member anticipating a leave or return to teaching. Finding suitable replacements for faculty members can be challenging given the specialized nature of some academic courses, especially upper-level/seminar courses for undergraduates and courses at the grad level. Consequently, Department Chairs, faculty colleagues (typically lecturers), and staff are all called upon to implement a plan that would minimize the disruption to students and while keeping course instruction consistent during a mid-term instructor transition. Providing more agency and flexible options to the faculty members facing difficult work-life circumstances will lessen the unfair burdens placed on colleagues and staff.

By extending the period in which a faculty member can take paid leave to 3 months prior to or 9 months after birth or adoption, faculty members and Department Chairs will be better able to accommodate an individual’s particular circumstances. For example, a biological mother will not be able to anticipate at the beginning of a pregnancy whether she will require bed rest, have a premature birth, have her baby arrive on its due date or two weeks overdue, or whether she will experience complications postpartum. Similarly, the process of adopting a child is often a long, anguishing, and complicated journey without fixed procedural deadlines or dates. The flexibility of this revised arrangement would offer all new parents greater flexibility in applying their leave time to a period when it is most pertinent and results in the least amount of complications for the department and classroom teaching.

Extending the eligibility of parental leave and/or a Modified Duties and Family Support Plan to both parents, if they are UNH faculty, would benefit rather than penalize dual career couples, and also serve as a powerful tool for faculty recruitment. In this way, parental leave becomes an employee benefit applied equitably as opposed to a “family benefit” in which dual career couples must choose which new parent will take a leave to assume full-time primary caregiver responsibilities.

**POLICY GUIDELINES:**

To receive the benefits of these policies, a faculty member must have an FMLA event as determined by the Office of Human Resources.

Faculty members utilizing the paid family leave would receive a tenure clock extension as per the current parental leave policy guidelines in the UNH-AAUP contract.

**Active Service and Modified Duties:**
These terms refer to activities that foster teaching and learning in settings outside the classroom, or activities that continue service or research obligations during a period of course reduction. Modified duties plans also allow faculty members to serve the teaching
dimensions of their appointment through duties that support departmental curriculum needs and innovation and/or student support services (such as teaching an existing online course, developing a new online course module, fulfilling requirements for new course approvals, writing intensives, or Discovery courses, working with honors students, etc.). Modified duties may also include innovation of assignments that substitute for classroom teaching, but address other unmet needs, such as administrative needs, department branding/marketing issues, and/or development or revision of departmental policies and procedures (such as P&T Guidelines, department by-laws, accreditation procedures, or external review). Expanded effort on research cannot substitute for a reduced effort in teaching. In lieu of teaching, faculty members are expected to work on projects for the department in which there is a deliverable project. The faculty member is expected to deliver the agreed upon project/projects even if the project extends beyond the period for which the workload modification was made.

The provision of modification of assigned duties is not leave; a faculty member granted this status will remain fully employed and fully paid. Modification of duties requires full-time work assignments that simply alter the usual mix of teaching, research, and service for a designated period of time either before or after (or for some cases, in lieu of) paid family leave. Faculty members who have been assigned modified duties should not be penalized in annual reviews; rather, those members should be evaluated on the performance of duties assigned. Faculty who utilize this policy also should not be expected to make-up teaching assignments at a later date. We recommend that faculty utilizing this policy also should be granted an extension of the tenure clock if warranted.

Active service and modified duties would be made available to both faculty parents who have recently had a biological child or adopted a child, on a sequential basis, provided the faculty member is the child’s primary caregiver. In such situations, the faculty member would take paid family leave for a period of time and then subsequently begin Active Service and Modified Duties for the remainder of the academic semester.

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

Faculty members must submit a formal request for paid family leave or active service with modified duties at the earliest possible date. The Department Chair, the College Dean, and the Provost will review the request and decide whether to support the request. If the request is denied, the reasons for denial shall be provided in writing. If the request is approved, final decisions about the nature of the modified duties are made by the Department Chair in consultation with the Dean and Provost. All approved requests would then be registered with Human Resources.

The request process should address the following:

1. explanation and documentation of the reason for the request
2. dates for the intended period of family leave or active service with modified duties
3. a request for leave application if applying for paid family leave (available through Human Resources)
4. a detailed description of work to be done in place of normal teaching responsibilities (if requesting modified duties)
5. a proposed method for evaluation of the work by the Department Chair or Dean during the semester modified duties is utilized

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