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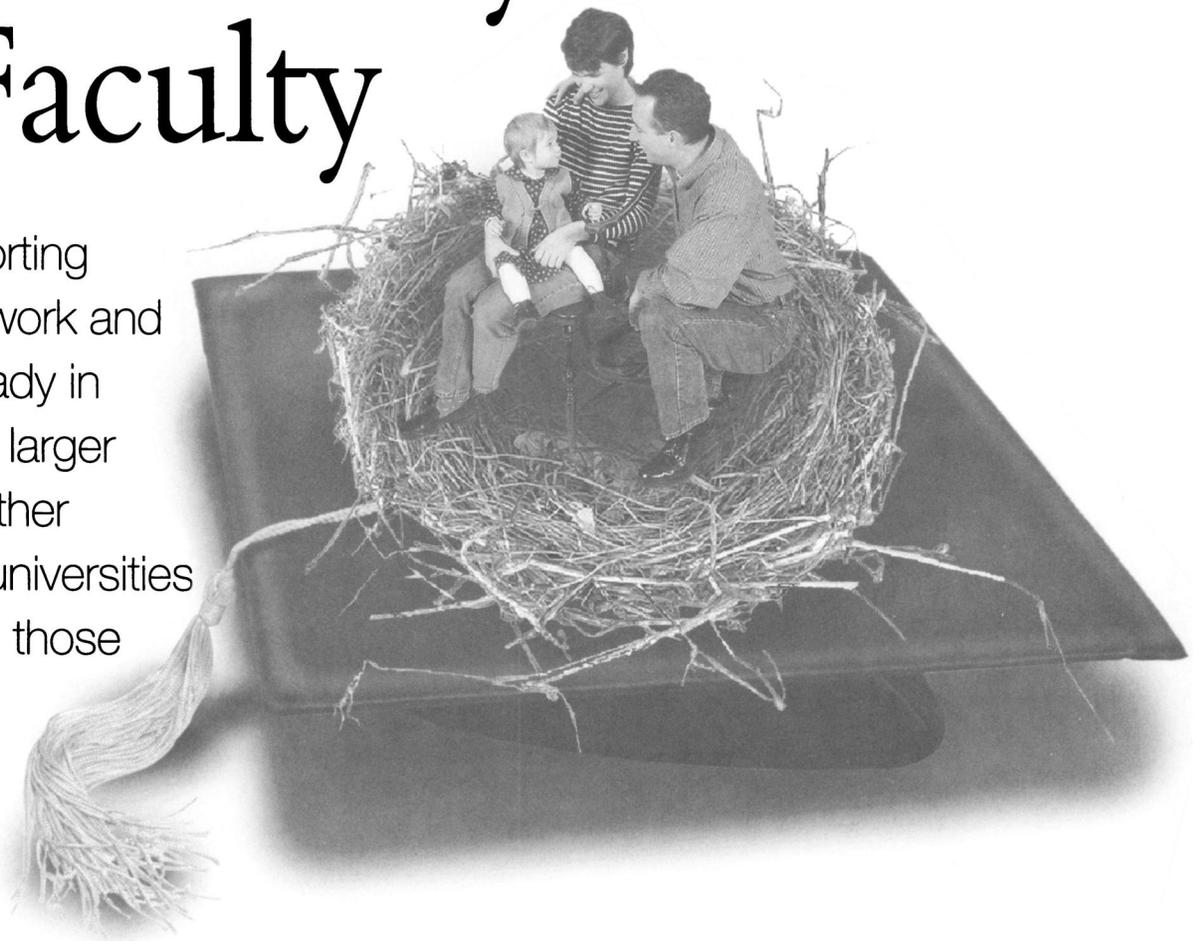


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# Developing and Implementing Work-Family Policies for Faculty

Policies supporting integration of work and family are already in place at many larger universities. Other colleges and universities can learn from those examples.



BY BETH SULLIVAN, CAROL HOLLENSHEAD, AND GILIA SMITH



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**T**oday, American families juggle many competing priorities: home, work, school, medical care, after-school activities, and other responsibilities required to raise a family and maintain a household. At the same time, more employers are developing policies that acknowledge the need for a healthy balance between work and home. These policies allow employees greater flexibility in the way they schedule their work hours, fulfill their duties, and use their leave time to deal with pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. Studies in the corporate sector have demonstrated that when employees can balance work and family responsibilities, their morale improves. Moreover, managers increasingly view these policies as cost-effective.

To what degree do institutions of higher education have such policies in place for their faculty? How are these policies administered where they exist, and how can colleges and universities without them most easily develop them? In its 2001 *Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work*, the AAUP declared that the “development and implementation of institutional policies that enable the healthy integration of work responsibilities with family life in academe requires renewed attention.” Many studies have examined the methods institutions use to help faculty balance work and family. The policies most often cited allow faculty to stop the tenure clock temporarily, work part time, or negotiate with department chairs to modify job duties during or after pregnancy. Leave to care for dependent children or elders and dual-career hiring are also frequently discussed.

Theoretical and descriptive studies link the limited availability of work-family policies to the slow pace at which women’s status within the professoriate has improved. Researchers concur that the model academic career path under the tenure system often conflicts with a faculty member’s family responsibilities. Women continue to perform most caregiving tasks in most U.S. families and are thus disproportionately affected by conflicts between the ideal academic career trajectory and family needs. It is not surprising, then, that tenured and tenure-track women are less likely to have children than are tenured and tenure-track men.

Although the number of women in academia continues to rise, much of the increase has occurred in non-tenure-track positions and at nondoctoral institutions, partly because of “mommy tracking.” The limited availability of work-family policies not only contributes to the slow progress of women in the academy; it also restricts the ability of male faculty members to participate in family caregiving responsibilities.

### **Our Center’s Study**

The Faculty Work-Family Policy Study, undertaken by the Center for the Education of Women at the University of Michigan, analyzed policies and programs from a representative sample of U.S. institutions. The study, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, used a Web-based survey to which 255 institutions, predominantly four-year universities and colleges, responded.<sup>1</sup> The Web survey was followed by a telephone interview of fifty-one of the respondents, most of which were, again, four-year institutions.

The study delved into the development, administration, and use of work-family policies for faculty to address the following

questions: Do work-family policies vary by type of institution, or are certain policies becoming the norm? Are policies based on written, formal guidelines or on informal practice? What are the eligibility and entitlement criteria for these policies? What barriers exist to the creation of family-friendly policies and what types of environments facilitate their implementation?

The study defined “faculty member” as an individual with a regular instructional appointment or anyone with a regular faculty research appointment. This definition did not include lecturers or clinical, visiting, or adjunct faculty. The term “dependent” referred to individuals such as young children; disabled adult children; elderly, ill, or disabled parents or siblings; and ill, injured, or disabled spouses or partners.

The work-family policies examined included paid leave during recovery from childbirth, paid dependent-care leave, unpaid dependent-care leave in excess of the twelve weeks mandated by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, modified duties, stopping of the tenure clock, and reduced appointments for extraordinary or ordinary dependent-care needs. The study also looked at the availability of part-time and job-share appointments, the existence of individuals or units designated to assist faculty with work-family issues, and employment assistance to spouses or partners of faculty.

### **Policies and Programs**

Institutions use a mix of policies and programs to help faculty balance work and family obligations. Among the practices included in our Web and telephone surveys, those reported to have the greatest potential benefit to faculty included stopping of the tenure clock, modified duties, paid maternity leave, paid dependent-care leave, and the existence of units or personnel dedicated to work-family issues. “Potential benefit” was determined using various data, including the existence of these practices at surveyed institutions and respondent comments explaining why faculty members’ use of certain programs was particularly high or low. Research universities were the institutional type most likely to offer family-friendly policies.

This article briefly describes the types of policies available and suggests strategies for developing successful policies on other campuses. More details about this research will be published in a *New Directions for Higher Education* volume on this topic forthcoming from Jossey-Bass in spring 2005.

### **PAUSE IN THE TENURE CLOCK**

Of the policies examined, the most common was stopping of the tenure clock. This finding was not surprising, given that this policy does not pose additional costs to an institution. Forty-three percent of institutions responding to the Web survey had a formal, institution-wide policy allowing a tenure-track faculty member to have a temporary pause in the tenure clock to accommodate special circumstances. At the end of such a pause, the clock resumes ticking with the same number of years left to tenure review as when it stopped. This policy is also sometimes referred to as a “tenure-clock extension.”

Women inevitably need this policy more than men. Because the timing of the tenure process tends to overlap with the child-bearing years, the pursuit of tenure often conflicts with a woman’s decision to have children. In their article in the November–

December 2002 issue of *Academe*, University of California, Berkeley, researchers Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden noted a gap in tenure achievement. Almost 20 percent fewer women than men in the humanities and social sciences who had children within five years of receiving their PhDs achieved tenure. For faculty in the sciences and engineering, there was an “early baby” tenure gap of 24 percent between men and women faculty. Permitting a pause in the tenure clock may better equip women faculty to recover from childbirth and adjust to the demands of a new infant without permanently derailing their careers.

### **MODIFIED DUTIES**

Policies involving modified duties allow faculty members to reduce their teaching, research, or service loads temporarily (usually for a term or two) without a commensurate reduction in pay. Eighteen percent of the institutions we surveyed online had formal, institution-wide policies permitting modified duties. Modified duties arrangements differ from decreased or part-time appointments, because a faculty member’s pay level is not reduced during the time that duties are cut back. Teaching demands often make it difficult for faculty to use traditional sick or disability leave; modified duties policies provide an alternative type of leave that allows them time to care for newborns, newly adopted or fostered children, or critically ill spouses, partners, or parents without completely removing themselves from the campus for an extended period. For women faculty members recovering from childbirth, a modified duties policy can be seen as equivalent to the six to eight weeks of paid full-time sick or disability leave for childbirth that most universities offer to women in staff positions.

### **PAID MATERNITY LEAVE**

Our study defined “maternity leave” as paid leave given to a woman to recuperate from childbirth, as distinct from sick, disability, or vacation leave. Maternity leave differs from dependent-care leave, which does not involve physical recovery of the faculty member, but rather care for another individual. Twenty-five percent of the institutions in our Web survey provided maternity leave that did not require women faculty members to dip into their allotments for sick, vacation, or disability leave. Among research and baccalaureate institutions, the percentage was higher than thirty-three.

### **DEPENDENT-CARE LEAVES**

The variety of types of dependent-care leave is more complex than one might expect. Examples of dependent-care leave for parents of infants include parental leave, maternity or paternity leave, and adoptive-parent leave. Many colleges allow leaves of absence to be taken to care for ailing parents, spouses, or partners. Unpaid leave is much more common than paid leave. Of the 255 institutions we surveyed online, only 16 percent had formal, institution-wide paid-leave policies that could be used for dependent care. The FMLA establishes that employers with fifty or more employees must provide up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for an employee to care for a newly born, adopted, or fostered child; receive

care for a serious health condition; or assist a family member who is receiving such care.

Although 40 percent of the institutions we surveyed on the Web offered unpaid dependent-care leaves longer than the twelve weeks required under the FMLA, our follow-up telephone survey found that faculty infrequently used unpaid leave. Many faculty simply cannot afford to go without pay for any length of time.

### **STAFF FOR WORK-FAMILY ISSUES**

Sixty-six percent of the institutions we surveyed on the Web had an individual or unit assigned to assist faculty with work-family issues. Among our telephone respondents, 84 percent provided such support. There was a clear, positive correlation between the degree to which an institution had a variety of formalized policies and the likelihood that it had dedicated work-family resources.

### **Successful Policy Making**

We identified five key strategies that colleges and universities use to develop and implement successful policies and programs. They (1) formalize their policies and make them entitlements; (2) continually educate faculty and administrators about the policies; (3) address issues that discourage faculty from using work-family benefits; (4) use data to promote programs that support balance between work and family; and (5) foster collaboration between champions of individual policies and relevant institutional committees.

Many institutions reported that in formalizing policy, they simply acknowledged current practice in their schools or departments. Making policies official increases goodwill among faculty, because their formal nature implies an equitable application of policy and demonstrates university support for families. Many institutions rely on their family-friendly policies as a recruitment tool for attracting new faculty.

Formalization also raises the visibility of policies so that both faculty members and administrators have a clearer understanding of the rules for using them. By outlining the circumstances under which faculty are entitled to use each policy, individual administrators no longer have to spend time making highly personal, case-by-case decisions each time a faculty member approaches with a request. Formalization increases the family-friendliness of an institution by acknowledging that most faculty members will have a family need to manage at some point over their career, whether to care for young children, a dying parent, or an ill spouse or partner. Such openness leads to a more trusting relationship between faculty and administrators. As one provost noted, because family issues “can be openly talked about, [faculty] don’t feel as if they have to manipulate the institution in order to get what they need.”

Many of the institutions we surveyed that had successful work-family programs disseminate information about their policies to all relevant constituencies. They do so through orientation sessions for new faculty members, training workshops for deans and chairs, their faculty handbooks, and their Web sites. Some institutions also use existing faculty and administrative forums to remind the campus community of

family-friendly policies and address perceptions about their costs and benefits.

Frequent sharing of policy information is critical for many reasons, including the perennial turnover among department chairs and the addition of new faculty. Furthermore, not all faculty members will need information about family-friendly policies at orientation, yet many may require it a few years later when they are expecting a child or are presented with an elder-care crisis. Periodic communication of work-family information allows faculty members and administrators to keep on top of the latest university offerings.

Many of those responding to our telephone survey reported that a "chilly climate" sometimes discourages faculty from taking advantage of work-family policies. Twenty-four percent of the respondents cited faculty members' fear of possible career repercussions as the reason policies were not used as often as they might be. Many also noted that use of these policies was not well received in traditionally male-dominated departments, such as engineering, business, and the sciences. "Women are watched more in terms of how they fit in," commented one respondent from a research university. Others referenced a culture created by "workaholic" peers, for whom a colleague's family leave might be characterized as showing a lack of professionalism or a willingness to shift burdens onto one's colleagues.

At universities at which an institutional advocate supports balance between work and family responsibilities, respondents characterized the environment as genuinely responsive to professional and personal needs. Champions were frequently the president, the provost, or the dean of a large college, as well as chairs of commissions on the status of women or of individual departments. When chairs and deans make it clear to tenure and promotion committees that faculty must not be penalized for using university policies, attitudes about the academic value of colleagues with family responsibilities begin to change.

An associate provost at one research university told us, "It's not just altruism. We do things to keep our faculty. As more women move into faculty ranks, family issues come to the fore and we respond to them. Also, male expectations about co-parenting are incredibly different [from what they were] twenty years ago. Society influences demand [for work-family policies]." Such statements, when made in departmental, faculty, or deans' meetings, can greatly affect an institution's climate.

Administrators can and should use data to measure and guide an institution's progress on work-family objectives. Our respondents said it was much easier to develop policies when they had data from surveys or other research on work and family issues to bolster their proposals. Universities would be wise to learn from the business world where "what gets measured, gets done."

One potentially helpful measure is tracking whether stopping the tenure clock affects faculty members' tenure achievement. Shockingly few institutions—only three of fifty-one in our follow-up telephone survey—actually collected these data. Yet many respondents said such information could help alleviate fear among some faculty members that using this policy might harm their chances for tenure. It is fairly simple to

regularly compare tenure achievement among policy users to that among nonusers for each cohort of entering assistant professors. Some universities also measure tenure achievement by gender, race, and college. Others take the analysis a step further by conducting exit interviews of departing faculty to determine why some faculty members leave, particularly those who leave before tenure review.

Another measure seen as valuable, but in need of formalization, is feedback on the "family friendliness" of chairs and deans as part of their annual evaluations. Many institutions said they consider the openness of administrators to their faculty members' use of work-family policies during evaluations, but only in informal ways. More formal means of assessing the work-family climate in a department or school would hold chairs and deans accountable for the important role they play in shaping the culture within their control. Regular studies of faculty members' use of policies and their perceptions about potential bias against policy users are helpful tools for measuring climate.

Our study found that most work-family policies were developed with active support from the president, provost, individual deans, and key committees. Commissions designed to address the status of women were particularly influential; they had almost as much sway as the faculty senate committees that addressed benefits, diversity, recruitment, and retention. More than a third of our telephone respondents said that individual faculty members also played important roles in spearheading policy development. One respondent described instances in which an individual or committee raised the need for new family-friendly policies as "the process of addressing the squeaky wheel." As would be expected, human resource offices were also involved in developing work-family policies.

The existence of a faculty union correlated with an increased chance of having certain types of formal policies among research, doctoral, and master's institutions. Our Web survey found that unionized master's institutions were more likely than nonunionized master's institutions to have formal policies for tenure-clock stops, modified duties, and unpaid leave going beyond the requirements of the FMLA. Similarly, unionized research and doctoral universities were also more likely than their nonunionized peers to have these policies, as well as formal policies for reduced or part-time appointments and job-sharing arrangements from the date of hire.

The results of our study offer guidance to institutions interested in recruiting and retaining faculty who have professional and family responsibilities. Although no two universities are alike, many institutions have clearly found certain strategies effective in promoting the development, implementation, and use of work-family policies for faculty. 

#### Note

1. Of the 255 responding institutions, 29 percent (73) were from Research I or II universities, based on the 1994 Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education. Six percent (16) were Doctoral I or II universities, 26 percent (66) were Masters I or II institutions, 27 percent (70) were Baccalaureate I or II colleges, and 12 percent (30) were Associate colleges.