Establish routine methods to meet departmental teaching requirements. When a faculty member shifts to part-time status or uses leave, the department should have a plan to cover teaching.

WHAT CHAIRS CAN DO
Find out what policies exist on your campus and discuss them with your faculty, both privately and in faculty meetings.

Offer course releases in both the academic term the baby is due (bearing in mind that older women tend to have high-risk pregnancies) and the following term. Accommodate adoptive parents whenever possible.

Create funding resources which could be used to support salary, cost-share post-docs, etc.

Provide extra teaching support for the first academic term the faculty teaches after returning from leave.

Work closely with the faculty member to determine course and committee assignments that will be manageable during the academic term of her/his return.

Encourage all faculty to be supportive such as allowing infants to be brought to meetings and scheduling meetings not too early or late in the day to arrange for daycare drop-off and pickup.

Maintain ‘zero tolerance’ for discriminatory and disparaging comments and behaviors. Make it clear to all faculty that hostile comments and behaviors will not be tolerated.

Be supportive of flexibility in faculty careers. One-size does not fit all. Not all new parents desire to take leave from work. Faculty must feel safe taking a leave, modifying duties, or extending the tenure clock.

References

Work/Life Balance for Faculty: Research and Recommendations on Family-Friendly Policies and Practices

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In certain disciplines, namely science and technology, U.S. higher education cannot afford to lose any of its potential intellectual workforce and desperately needs the best talent in research and teaching” [7].

**FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES**

Universities have been implementing ‘family-friendly’ policies both formally and informally for the past few decades in an attempt to be supportive of faculty with care-giving responsibilities [12, 13]. Policies such as part-time tenure track, family leave, tenure clock extension, modified duties, and transitional support programs have been implemented at varying levels at numerous institutions [12-14].

**Part-Time Tenure Track** provides the protections and benefits of a tenured faculty position while permitting a reduced workload. In 2000, Robert Drago and Joan Williams proposed a policy model designed to accommodate faculty with caregiving responsibilities [15]. Their model prorated salary and benefits based on the reduced appointment and provided guidelines for extending the probationary period for tenure. Part-time tenure track policies can permit faculty to resume their full-time appointment after a fixed time period or require a permanent reduction in appointment.

**Family and Medical Leave** includes the federally mandated Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), as well as institution-based policies. Typically, medical leave, which covers medical and disability leave for the individual, is paid and family leave, which covers caregiving for another family member, is unpaid.

**Tenure Clock Extensions/ Stops** provide additional years in which pre-tenure faculty can meet the requirements of tenure. Some policies add years to the tenure clock, while others do not count the ‘waived’ or ‘stopped’ years as years to tenure. Eligibility varies but can include childbirth or adoption, eldercare, or caregiving for another family member, as well as work-related reasons such as lack or loss of lab space or equipment and excessive service or committee work.

**Modified Duties** provide faculty with a temporary release from a duty, typically teaching, without reducing his or her pay. Eligibility might be restricted to care for a newborn or a newly adopted young child, or tied to FMLA standards.

**Transitional Support Programs** provide temporary support to faculty members who are dealing with ‘career-threatening’ transitions, such as major illness, eldercare, or the birth or adoption of a child [16]. Types of support provided include funding for release time from teaching; research personnel, such as graduate students or postdoctoral assistants; and lab equipment. The intention is to allow faculty to maintain professional productivity while managing personal transitions.

**POLICIES AREN’T ENOUGH**

Institutional policies combined with departmental climate and culture define the environment in which faculty work [8]. Where climate and culture are not supportive of work and family balance, faculty may be reluctant to utilize family-friendly policies [8, 17-19]. Faculty are not confident that they will be seen, or rewarded, as ‘ideal workers’ if they openly integrate personal and professional responsibilities [20]. The conscious decision to hide family commitments in order to avoid discrimination is called ‘bias avoidance’ [17, 20]. In fact, “individuals who engage in bias avoidance fear if they so much as ask about the rules, they will not be considered serious players in the academic game” [17].

**THE CHAIR’S ROLE**

Chairs must work within their departments to create supportive and inclusive environments in which faculty feel comfortable utilizing family-friendly policies. A supportive academic climate permits the creation of informal flexible options even if there are no formal institutional policies [14]. Chairs must watch for bias avoidance behaviors from faculty, as well as behaviors from faculty indicating a bias against caregiving. Additionally, family-friendly policies are implemented at the department level, so chairs must see that they are implemented consistently and effectively [7].

“Individuals who engage in bias avoidance fear if they so much as ask about the rules, they will not be considered serious players in the academic game” [16].