

**National Leadership Workshop for SEM Department Chairs
July 21-22, 2008**

Family Leave and Tenure Clock Extension

Your university may have an official family leave and tenure clock extension policy that allows a faculty member to take a medical and/or family leave (such as leave surrounding the birth of a child). Usually, the tenure clock extension policy recognizes that faculty may be significantly distracted from their research and academic capabilities during medical or family leave. Unfortunately, many pre-tenure faculty are reluctant to use this policy, believing a bias or stigma exists. Chairs must assure faculty that the time on leave will not be unfairly evaluated. **Furthermore, it may be useful to raise the tenure clock extension topic with all faculty, regardless of gender, during the annual faculty merit review meeting. Doing so is another way to remove bias and stigma.**

Given that the tenure clock generally coincides with the biological clock, women faculty face particularly difficult timing decisions regarding this balance. To that end, departments should seek to offer supportive solutions. The best practices highlighted next could also benefit new fathers or other faculty who are experiencing major life transitions.

FAMILY LEAVE BEST PRACTICES:

Many of these practices would hold for adoptive parents as well, and could be applied to new fathers. Often when women in SEM departments become pregnant, there is no precedent for a family leave package in their departments. Some examples of best family leave practices include:

- offering course release in both the quarter the baby is due (bearing in mind that older women tend to have high-risk pregnancies) and the following quarter/semester, if possible. At some institutions, paid leave is available to women as disability leave associated with childbirth and recovery and unpaid leave is available to men and women for the purpose of care of newly born or adopted children. More information about your institution's policy's can be found at the human resources office.
- creating funding resources which could be used to support salary, cost-share post-docs, etc.
- encouraging 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)
- providing extra student teaching support for the first quarter the faculty teaches after returning from family leave
- working closely with the faculty member to determine course and committee assignments that may be more manageable during the quarter of her/his return.