

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 23-16 (revised 03-07-16)

(Voting Units: Full Senate)

“Proposal to Move to a University Parental Leave Policy”

I. Introduction

In keeping with Michigan Tech’s recognition “of the need to support *employees* as they balance career, childbirth, and family obligations” [emphasis added] ([Paid Maternity Leave Policy, 01/01/2012](#)) this proposal would extend the current policy concerning paid time off after the birth or adoption of a child to *all parents* regardless of sex or gender; reflecting the need to support all members of the Michigan Tech community as we build a family-friendly campus that will aid in recruitment and retention, while promoting increased employee performance and job satisfaction. Currently Michigan Tech lags far behind our peer benchmark institutions in providing competitive *paid parental leave* benefits.

II. Proposal

This proposal will change the current [Paid Maternity Leave Policy](#) to a [Paid Parental Leave Policy](#), extending similar rights and benefits to all parents, including natural parents, same-sex partners, or new adoptive parents. This updated policy will provide paid leave for employees eligible for full benefits who give birth to a child or who serve as a caregiver to a child within 12 months of the child’s birth or adoption. In the case of dual-career couples at Michigan Tech, parents may elect to take the individual allotted paid leave time sequentially, in accordance with the parameters outlined for each parent’s individual employee status, at any time within the allotted 12 month period. All other aspects of the current paid maternal leave policy related to eligibility, employee status, and the application process will remain as defined by that policy. Funding associated with the cost of paid parental leave for eligible employees will continue to be covered by the Michigan Tech retirement and insurance fund.

III. Comparison of Family Leave Policies at Michigan Tech and Benchmark Institutions

At a minimum, all employers covered by the [Federal Family Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#) must provide unpaid leave to all employees (regardless of gender) for purposes of childbirth, newborn care, adoption, or foster placement for up to 12 weeks. This Federal law is the minimum on which the policies of Michigan Tech and each of our self-identified benchmark institutions ([NCA Accreditation Self Study, 1997](#)) are based.

While the current Michigan Tech [Paid Maternity Leave Policy](#) compares favorably with other major public universities in the state of Michigan, our policy lags far behind those offered by our benchmark institutions. Of the major public universities in the state of Michigan (U. of Michigan, Michigan State, Michigan Tech, E. Michigan, W. Michigan, Central Michigan, N. Michigan,

Ferris State, Grand Valley State, Lake Superior State, Oakland, and Wayne State) only Michigan Tech and Michigan State offer some form of paid family leave for employees. Michigan State offers *paid parental leave*, i.e. for women and men, for 6 weeks for all faculty and staff.

As the table in Addendum A demonstrates, **7 of 8 Michigan Tech benchmark institutions offer some form of paid parental leave for faculty and staff, i.e. leave for both women and men** (the lone exception being the Georgia Institute of Technology). Of those 7 offering parental leave, **5 offer at least 12 weeks of paid parental leave for faculty**, including Carnegie Mellon, Clarkson, Lehigh, the University of Missouri, and Rensselaer. Of these 5 institutions, Carnegie Mellon and Clarkson offer full semester, total releases, i.e. no teaching, advising, or service; Lehigh and the University of Missouri offer semester-long leave with work reductions beyond the initial 12 week total release, i.e. 3-4 weeks of advising or service at the conclusion of the semester; while Rensselaer offers a full-semester release with the continuation of “reasonable” non-teaching duties. Rensselaer offers the most comprehensive parental leave policy, at least in terms of paid leave time off, offering one semester at full pay and a second semester at half pay for all faculty.

Within the context of our benchmark institutions, and more broadly when compared to elite research universities (Anderson and Solomon, 2015; Hollenshead, Sullivan, Smith, August, and Hamilton, 2005), **Michigan Tech’s current policy concerning paid maternity leave is not competitive** when it comes to issues of recruitment (including dual-career recruitment) and retention, as well as employee performance, morale, and overall workplace satisfaction. If Michigan Tech continues to promote itself as a family-friendly campus as a point of recruitment and as a basis for retention, policies that promote a healthy work-family balance, e.g. a *paid parental leave policy*, are critically important.

IV. Rationale and Benefits for Adopting a Parental Leave Policy

Research on work-family concerns in academe has become of increasing concern in recent decades as the composition, characteristics, and attitudes of faculty and staff have continued to change; especially as more traditional attitudes concerning the standards of success in academia and the overall societal expectations concerning parental involvement evolve away from the traditional “gendered model of sole devotion to work and a lack of family responsibilities” associated with the academic life (Anderson and Solomon, 2015). From a faculty perspective, the consequences of this traditional understanding of expectations related to work-family obligations have especially impacted the participation and role of women in academia, e.g. dramatically lower numbers of women in full-time positions (tenure and non-tenure track), increased conflict between home and work commitments due to greater “second shift” obligations, greater obstacles and reduced chances of attaining tenure (a 25% reduction in the chance of obtaining tenure when having a child pre-tenure), not to mention an increased likelihood of having to sacrifice family life, e.g. marriage, children, or number of children, when compared to their male counterparts (Anderson and Solomon, 2015; Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden 2013; Mason and Goulden, 2004).

Current research is also beginning to recognize and emphasize the changing nature of attitudes and work-family pressures that men increasingly feel in academe. This research is in no way meant to diminish the endemic and disproportionate burden and impact experienced by women related to these issues, but rather represents a more holistic view of the changing nature of gendered expectations and understandings of work-family balance in our contemporary society. Research in this area shows that, increasingly, men are dealing with similar challenges related to career and

family (Solomon, 2010) at comparable levels (Anderson and Solomon, 2015; O’Laughlin and Bischoff 2005; Solomon, 2010), as more and more men report pressure to integrate their personal and professional lives as a result of an identified need to be more active caregivers, especially early on in the lives of their children (Harrington et al., 2014). There are myriad societal reasons for this change, including the increased likelihood of male faculty members to have spouses who are also employed in the workforce (Anderson and Solomon, 2015; Jacobs and Gerson, 2004) and increasing societal expectations related to gender equity in the home and in the workplace (Anderson and Solomon, 2015; Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie, 2006; Sandberg and Hofferth, 2001; Solomon 2014; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Keen, and Hofferth, 2001).

Increasingly, institutions of higher education, including Michigan Tech, are acknowledging the importance of creating family-friendly policies that recognize the importance “to help create an effective and supportive work environment that also develops healthy and productive employees, while being considerate of their personal life obligations” ([Michigan Tech WorkLife Connections](#)). This broader change in institutional culture recognizes the increasing work-family conflict being experienced by all faculty and staff, regardless of gender. Family-friendly policies, such as paid leave for all parents, reduction in teaching commitments, tenure-clock suspension, and childcare options and benefits, affirm institutional support for maintaining a healthy work-family balance.

In the past several decades there has been an increasing recognition among employees, and by employers that family and work “do not reside in separate spheres” (Reis, 2008), but are, in fact, overlapping spheres (Sallee and Lester, 2009; Barnett, 1999). Acknowledging the inherent overlap between family-work spheres promotes a *work-life systems framework* that focuses on the systemic nature of these issues where policy “decisions are no longer seen as pitting one person's needs against another's; rather, decisions are made to optimize the well-being of the system” (Barnett, 1999). Under this model “workers now become central to the operation of the system. Rather than expecting employees to conform to predefined norms, the organization is expected to work with employees to create mutually beneficial practices” (Reis, 2008; Lester and Sallee, 2009). This acknowledgement has led many institutions, including leading academic institutions, to adopt a:

work-life integration model, which operates on the assumption that *both male and female employees* perform their best when they are involved in multiple spheres. Unlike the separate spheres model, which assumed that women's roles as mothers necessarily conflicted with their roles as employees, the work-life integration model recognizes the interdependence of employees' multiple spheres. An individual's experiences in the home will necessarily impact his or her performance in the office, and vice versa. [emphasis added](Reis, 2008).

Ultimately, “achieving a work-family balance [i]s an issue for both mothers and fathers,” a point that must be recognized at an institutional policy level (Reis, 2008). Paid parental leave policies are a critical part of the family-friendly policies and programs that “elite research universities” are now offering not only to attract the “best and brightest,” but also to “retain the best faculty by helping them manage their work and family responsibilities” (Anderson and Solomon, 2015; Hollenshead, Sullivan, Smith, August, and Hamilton, 2005). Recognizing and accommodating the mutually reinforcing interdependence of family and work helps to alleviate conflict between these overlapping spheres, aiding in recruitment and increasing employee satisfaction, performance, and retention rates (Sallee and Lester, 2009), elements critical to creating a healthy university community.

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Addendum A:

Benchmark Institution	Policy Creation Date	Policy Beneficiaries	Period of Leave	Pay Structure	Notes
California Polytechnic	> 09/18/2012	Faculty / Staff – Paternal, including adoption & foster placement	6 Weeks - Reduced workload over full semester	Full Pay for Faculty & Staff	Leave Sharing; Reduced Workload in lieu of leave by agreement
Carnegie Mellon	Faculty 01/01/2002	Regular Faculty (tenure-track, teaching-track, librarian and archivist-track and research-track) – Parental, including pre-school age adoption Staff – FMLA	Faculty - 1 Semester Staff - Up to 12 weeks	Full for Faculty Unpaid for Staff	Tenure/Reappointment/Promotion extension for faculty
Clarkson	Faculty 03/2008; Editorial Revisions 07/2011 & 07/2012 Staff 06/2012	Faculty (continuing appointment) – Parental leave, including adoption Staff – Maternity (Primary) 8 weeks full pay; Paternity (Secondary) 4 weeks full pay; both include adoption	Faculty - 1 Semester Staff – 8 or 4 wks. depending on primary or secondary status	Full Pay for Faculty & Staff	Faculty must be primary care giver, i.e. at least 20 hours of care per week.

Benchmark Institution	Policy Creation Date	Policy Beneficiaries	Period of Leave	Pay Structure	Notes
Colorado School of Mines	Faculty > 11/2010	Faculty – Parental leave, including adoption Staff – FMLA	Faculty – 6 weeks Staff - 13 weeks (CO state law)	Full Pay for Faculty Unpaid for Staff	Faculty member may request relief from teaching while continuing non-teaching duties at full pay; Tenure clock extension
Georgia Institute of Technology	FMLA 1993	Faculty & Staff – Parental leave, including adoption and foster care	Faculty & Staff – 12 weeks unpaid / must use sick leave and/or vacation days first	Unpaid for both Faculty & Staff	Meets Federal FMLA policy
Lehigh	Ca. 2001	Faculty (Full-Time) – Parental leave, including adoption and foster placement Staff – Min. FMLA?	Faculty – 1 Semester (12 wks. + 3 wks advising, research, scholarship, etc.)	Full Pay for Faculty	Leave also available on an intermittent basis (release from teaching service, but not advising and research); tenure clock extension (automatic one year extension, up to 2 years total)
University of Missouri	Faculty 01/31/08; 02/06/09; 12/10/10; 07/27/12	Faculty (tenured, tenure-track, ranked non-tenure track) – Parental leave, including adoption and foster placement Staff – FMLA	Faculty – 12 weeks with differentiated work load for remainder of semester Staff - 12 weeks in accordance with FMLA	Full pay for Faculty (12 wks. w/ remainder of semester negotiable) Unpaid for Staff (must use sick leave and vacation for at least 6 weeks if available)	Tenure-track faculty may request one year extension on probationary period (up to two one year extensions) if leave is in excess of six weeks

Benchmark Institution	Policy Creation Date	Policy Beneficiaries	Period of Leave	Pay Structure	Notes
Rensselaer	Faculty > 01/18/2006 Staff > 03/2014	Faculty – Parental leave, including adoption Staff – Parental, including adoption	Faculty – 1 semester (full pay), plus 1 semester (half pay) Staff – Work half time, plus half time unpaid for up to 8 weeks or unpaid FMLA	Full pay for faculty first semester, half pay for second semester Unpaid for staff with option of working half time during 8 week period	Faculty members granted relief from teaching are expected to continue reasonable non-teaching duties; Faculty may extend tenure clock by one year