

2010

*University of Utah
Parental Leave Policy Evaluation*



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

UTAH EDUCATION
POLICY CENTER

Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice

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Focus of Evaluation

Section VIII of University of Utah Policy 6-315 (Parental Leaves of Absence) provides the mandate for reviewing both the implementation and fiscal impacts of the University's parental leave policy. In this evaluation, implementation and interpretation of University of Utah Policy 6-315 – "Faculty Parental Leaves of Absence" from a multi-level perspective (individual, departmental, and institutional) were considered. This evaluation addressed the implementation of parental leave on the main campus and excludes evaluation of the School of Medicine. The formal evaluation of the School of Medicine Parental Leave policy (8-002) is anticipated to conclude Fall 2010.

Evaluation Design and Methods

This evaluation addressed both the implementation and impact of the parental leave policy on campus. Specifically, we addressed the following evaluation questions:

1. What are the experiences of faculty who have taken parental leave?
2. What are the perceptions of faculty and leadership of the parental leave policy?
 - a. To what degree do faculty value the current benefits provided by the parental leave policy in comparison to other benefits?
 - b. Do faculty and leadership differ in their opinions on how the parental leave policy has been utilized and implemented?
3. How has the parental leave policy been implemented?
 - c. Are there differences among subgroups of faculty in how they value benefits?
 - d. Does leadership vary in their opinions according to their actual experience with parental leave utilization and implementation?

To address questions regarding the implementation and impact of parental leave on campus, this evaluation included a mixed method design. Data collected and analyzed for this evaluation included web-based surveys from faculty (N=185) and leadership (N=15), focus groups and interviews (N=16). Of those who responded to the survey, 48 had a qualifying event in which they could have used parental leave. Thirty respondents had used parental leave. Twelve survey respondents who had taken leave had an RPT review since their reported parental leave of absence.

Actual Use of Parental Leave Benefit 2006-2009

- According to the Office of Academic Affairs, 51 tenure track faculty have formally requested and been approved for parental leave benefits (73% female; 27% male) between the policy's adoption in 2006 and December 31, 2009. During this time, 24 faculty have requested a one year extension to their tenure clock, 18 did not request a tenure clock extension (9 were tenured prior to use and 9 were pre-tenure), and 8 opted to

retain their right to extend the tenure clock.

- Actual institutional funds distributed for this purpose during the 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 academic years totals \$147,000, reflecting an average of .01% of total institutional budget per academic year.

Overview of Findings

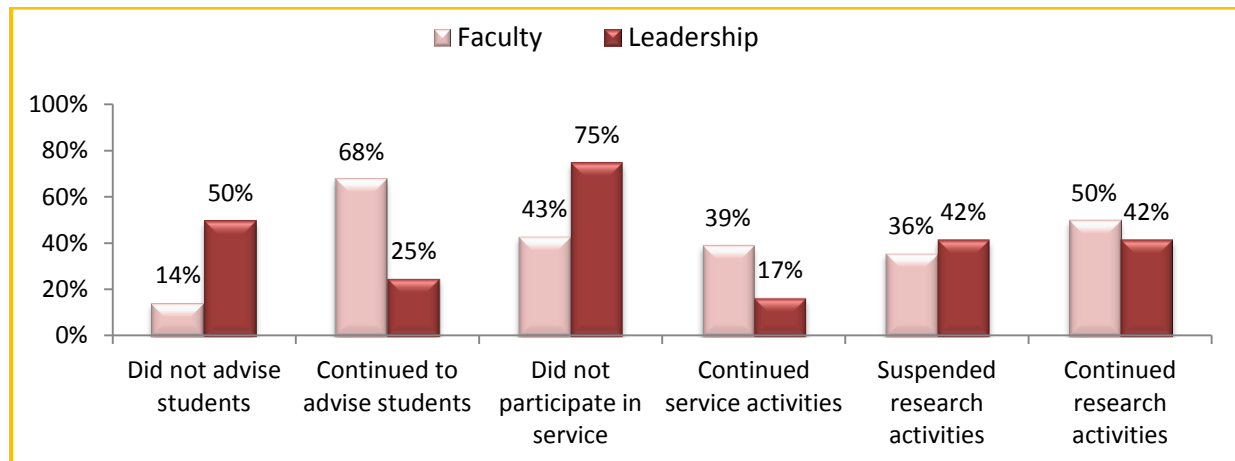
Overwhelmingly, survey respondents and interviewees recommend use of the policy to others on tenure track.

- Most participants reported that the department chair (44%) followed by a peer (37%) provided information relative to the parental leave policy upon disclosure of birth/adoption.
- 38% of faculty who reported a qualifying event indicated that they were not aware of the policy.
- Leadership who had more experience with the policy saw it as more valuable in retaining faculty, more equitably utilized, and better supported by faculty in their respective department

compared to those leaders without policy experience.

- Respondents indicate that generally their peers were highly supportive of their use of the parental leave.
- Women, assistant professors, and associate professors agreed that the parental leave policy influenced their personal decision to remain at the University.
- Teaching replacement costs are viewed as essential, but currently insufficient given average teaching loads and replacement costs.
- 70% of leadership respondents indicated that they would prefer more assistance from central administration rather than to impose additional direct costs on faculty members by reducing their salaries further during leave.
- 90% of faculty respondents who used parental leave selected the provision of modified duties.

Figure 1. Modification of Duties, as Reported by Faculty Who Used Leave and Leadership



Note. Faculty N = 28, Leadership N = 12. Percentages do not sum to 100% because respondents marked all that apply.

- The percent of faculty or leadership who report that the parental leave is referenced in offer letters (1% and 7% respectively) or formally discussed in RPT reviews (16% and 20% respectively) is minimal.
- According to the survey, both faculty and leadership agreed that parental leave helps women obtain tenure.
- Conditions that influenced the request for and use of the parental leave policy, as well as its provisions, included:
 - ❖ Communication, dissemination and accessibility of policy, and visibility of use in department
 - Formal departmental practices (e.g., department chair, recruitment, RPT, faculty retreats);
 - Informal networks (e.g., peers and colleagues); and
 - Institutional web-based policy library.
- ❖ “Negotiation” of Modification of Duties (See reported modifications in Figure 1.)
 - Individual negotiations based on circumstances arising from committee, student advising, and grant responsibilities;
 - Identified departmental needs (e.g., student course needs, replacement costs);

- Service (e.g., faculty believed there was a need or expectation to be visible and engaged).

departmental/peer expectations for “productivity” during parental leave).

❖ Tenure and Promotion Extension Considerations

- Record to date;
- Proximity to tenure; and
- Expectations for scholarly productivity (e.g., self expectations,

- Faculty were aware of and sensitive to colleagues who are at different life stages or who did not have access to similar provisions.
- Faculty raised concerns for the impact (e.g., costs, time) on the department and or college.

Recommendations

Given the findings, we provide the following recommendations. These recommendations are intended to guide continued implementation of the University of Utah's Parental Leave Policy.

1. Modify language in Parental Leave Policy 6-315 to increase clarity of intent and process.
2. Increase communication and dissemination of the parental leave policy and its provisions to faculty through formal channels (e.g., departmental retreats, recruitment offers) and informal channels (e.g., university-based networks).
3. Formalize a transparent departmental negotiation and recordkeeping process for designation of leave for faculty, modification of duties, and determination of tenure extension.
4. Embed a family-friendly culture at the departmental level, including timing of events that expect faculty participation, flexible work schedule, part-time off to care for sick/injured family members, and childcare.
5. Increase availability and access to early childcare and early childhood education on campus.
6. Develop guidelines for Departments/Colleges ability to expand the salary contribution beyond the provisions allowed for in the University's current Parental Leave Policy, including who has the authority to grant additional benefits, under what conditions, and with which resources.
7. Develop "life-stage" policies that provide comparable leave for faculty and other employees who may have other family (e.g., elderly parent, sibling, or partner care) or life circumstances that require their time and attention.





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