

UNR Faculty Senate Salaries and Benefits Committee
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Proposal for a Parental Leave Policy

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1. Background

The Faculty Senate Salary and Benefits Committee was charged during the 2007/2008 academic year with drafting a parental leave policy. The purpose of the policy would be to provide guidance regarding the consistent and fair treatment of all faculty newly adding a child to their family while employed at the University and to continue to keep UNR viable in its quest to recruit and retain quality faculty.

The Salary and Benefits Committee initially addressed this charge by reviewing current approaches to parental leave used by UNR. The relevant passages from various codes are provided in Appendix A. An anonymous survey of deans about current administrative practices was conducted. Questions as well as a summary of the responses are provided in Appendix B. A focus group of academic and administrative faculty was convened to gather information and experiences from faculty. Results are summarized in Appendix C. In addition, current parental leave policies at several representative colleges and universities were reviewed and evaluated.

2. Review of Current Policy

When academic or administrative faculty at the University of Nevada, Reno need to take parental leave, they currently rely on sick leave, annual vacation leave, and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), but not child-rearing leave. (Please refer to Appendix A for FMLA's shaping of UNR policy.) Holidays and, for B contract faculty, semester breaks provide additional time for parental leave. Teaching faculty (on B contracts) do not have annual leave and so must rely on sick leave, the FMLA, semester breaks, and holidays alone, although these forms of release time are compensated and benefits are covered. When taking leave under the FMLA, the faculty member is not compensated, although health, retirement, and other benefits still accrue.

As there is currently no university-wide parental leave policy, department chairs and deans make parental leave decisions on a case-by-case basis. We found that parental leave experiences vary depending on the size of and resources within the department as well as the willingness of the dean/department chair to accommodate the faculty member's specific needs. Some colleagues who added children to their families reported that they experienced the process of getting a leave as opaque and inequitable, hence demoralizing. The only male colleague we interviewed had a particularly negative experience. These conclusions are based on the results of both the dean survey and the focus groups conducted. Please refer to Appendices B and C.

The current UNR policies related to parental leave can be found in the Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 3 and are provided in Appendix A of this proposal.

3. Reasons for and against a Parental Leave Policy

3.1 *Reasons for a Parental Leave Policy*

3.1.1 Offsetting of competitive disadvantages

A parental leave policy will help level the playing field for affected faculty. First, a professor who is active in his or her chosen field will by necessity be in a competitive situation in respect to colleagues nationwide. Since the decision to have a child may negatively affect research output not only for the time period surrounding the addition of the child to the family, but for a number of years to come, an attractive parental leave policy will help the professor remain competitive. In addition, since many faculty members decide to start a family upon having won a tenure-track appointment, a parental leave policy should substantially mitigate the negative effect on research, teaching, and service that must be expected upon the arrival of a child.

Second, a faculty member who decides to add a child to the family will by necessity be at a disadvantage in the quest for tenure and promotion over colleagues who choose to remain childless. Therefore, an attractive parental leave policy will go a long way toward ensuring that new parents will not be disadvantaged in the tenure and promotion process. In addition, since female faculty members usually need a larger share of time in parental child care, such a policy will help substantially in neutralizing the disadvantage in the tenure and promotion process which female colleagues who choose to become mothers generally face.

3.1.2 University growth and reputation

A parental leave policy will increase UNR's profile as a research university. UNR needs as many recruitment tools as possible in order to bolster its reputation; both female and male job candidates may be enticed to choose UNR over a competitor because of an attractive parental leave policy. Particularly in disciplines that require fair amounts of space such as labs, UNR is for the foreseeable future at a recruiting disadvantage. Since these disciplines are often male-dominated and since an attractive parental leave policy would be particularly important to women, such a policy could do much in helping to recruit top women to such fields. In addition, considering the current practices at other universities, especially in fields such as the humanities, education, social work etc., many candidates would expect a good parental leave policy to be in place. For these reasons, an attractive parental leave policy might be instrumental in achieving true gender balance among UNR faculty, thus furthering the University's reputation.

3.1.3 The need for a uniform policy

By proposing a parental leave policy, we are seeking to ensure that throughout the University a uniform set of policies is applied. Faculty members expect to be treated fairly and equitably across the University. As our focus group results have shown, reliance on an ad-hoc decision-making process is likely to result in inequity. Chairs and deans need clear guidance in the decision-making process. Administrators must have the confidence that they are making the best decision in such a complex situation. An explicit policy will also give faculty members consistent expectations and information helpful in planning for the birth/arrival of a child. When a faculty member has such information, research agendas, teaching, and service loads can be

designed optimally.

A uniform parental leave policy will build morale. A policy designed to meet employees' needs and preferences will be greeted with gratitude by those able to take advantage of it and should result in considerable good will and loyalty toward the University. The results of research in Management and Human Resource Management consistently supports the positive effects of parental leave policies that expand beyond FMLA. Being able to plan on taking time off for parental responsibilities, after the addition of a child to the family, is of great importance to today's employees. The effects on job satisfaction, employee turnover and retention, as well as recruitment are well documented. Good insights into this research can be found in Steven K. Wisensale (2001), *Family Leave Policy*, Mindy Fried (1998), *Taking Time: Parental Leave Policy and Corporate Culture*, and Lou Ellen Crawford (1990), *Employee Benefits Package: Human Resource Strategies*. Furthermore, incoming junior faculty tend to be members of Generations X and Y. Research on values and preferences of Generation X and Y employees provides evidence of the increasing importance of work-life balance to employees from those generations. For example, Don Edgar (2005) in *The War Over Work: The Future of Work and Family*, as well as Mainiero and Sullivan (2006) in *The Opt-Out Revolt: Why People are Leaving Companies to Create Kaleidoscope Careers* discuss the importance of parental leave and flexible work policies to employees from Generations X and Y.

3.2 Reasons against a Parental Leave Policy

3.2.1 Impact on Colleagues

Any attractive policy will have to involve a substantial reduction in duties by the faculty member claiming the benefit. Other people will have to be compensated directly for performing these duties instead. Some colleagues who take on increased responsibilities to cover for a colleague who is on leave will not be compensated directly. They need to be recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

3.2.2 Financial Impact

Since in any given year a non-negligible number of faculty members can be expected to claim this benefit, a university-wide use of this policy will have a non-trivial financial impact on the University.

3.2.3 Possible Inequities

Faculty members who choose not to become parents may perceive an inequity as they will never benefit from a parental leave policy. In addition, they may feel that extra burden may be placed on them when colleagues take parental leave and may resent that. Careful consideration must be given to this issue.

3.3 Conclusion

When weighing the pro and con arguments, the committee found that the reasons for the policy substantially outweigh the reasons against. In addition, some negative consequences might be

cancelled out by an adjustment of policy: for example the impact on colleagues could be much diminished if they are properly recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

4 Proposed Policy

4.1 Purpose and Philosophy

The purpose of the parental leave policy is to foster an environment that supports a healthy work-life balance for faculty members.

During the application for and administration of the parental leave policy the following philosophy shall govern: all faculty shall be treated equitably and department chairs and faculty as well as deans shall look favorably upon the request and the needs of the applicant. In particular, department chairs and deans shall not be prejudiced against the applicant by assuming that by choosing to apply for parental leave a faculty member is showing insufficient zeal for the duties of, and the necessary sacrifices for, a successful career as a top researcher, teacher, or administrator. This philosophy shall be of particular importance during the process of tenure and promotion.

4.2 Eligibility and Time Frame

Who is eligible?

All faculty members on A and B contracts who

- give birth to a child, or
 - whose spouse or partner is giving birth to a child, or
 - who adopt or otherwise add a child as a legal dependent into their household
- independent of gender, sexual orientation, and/or marital status.

When is this person eligible?

- A faculty member is eligible to apply for a parental leave if s/he is eligible to apply for FMLA.
- *B contract faculty*: either for the semester surrounding or the semester following the beginning of caring for a new child. This means that even if a child was born in one semester, the parental leave benefit can be claimed in the following semester.
- *A contract faculty*: for a period surrounding or closely following the beginning of caring for a new child.

For how long is this person eligible?

- *B contract faculty*: for the duration of one semester. If any time is taken off under FMLA in the semester in which the child was added to the family but for which no parental leave was asked for, this time will be subtracted from the leave semester; in other words, the faculty member will then go unpaid, with benefits, for part of the leave semester.
- *A contract faculty*: for the duration of the equivalent of one semester, i.e., 18 weeks. If any time off is taken under FMLA, it will be subtracted from these 18 weeks.

4.3 *Policy for A Contracts as Primary Caregivers*

Faculty on A contracts who qualify as primary caregivers and give birth, become a father, or adopt or otherwise newly add a child to their family shall be granted, upon request, a leave of absence with pay and continuation of all benefits for the duration of 18 weeks surrounding the addition of the child into the family. In return, the faculty member

- shall inform his or her chair or dean in the timeliest manner possible.
- shall forfeit all sick leave above 12 days accrued up to the beginning of the parental leave.

4.4 *Policy for A Contracts as Secondary Caregivers*

Faculty on A contracts who qualify as secondary caregivers and give birth, become a father, or adopt or otherwise newly add a child to their family shall be granted, upon request, for the duration of 18 weeks surrounding the addition of the child to the family a workload reduction of 20%, or, on average, one day per week. The reduction in workload will be properly recorded in the role statement. The faculty member will forfeit half of the sick leave above 12 days accrued up to the beginning of the parental leave.

Justification for this number: If a B contract faculty who qualifies as a secondary caregiver is supposed to receive a teaching release, it has to be a release of at least one class. In the case of a semester with a 2-class load, this constitutes a release of 50% of teaching duties. Since teaching in the faculty member's role statement usually amounts to 40% of a B contract faculty member's workload, it is the equivalent of a 20% reduction in workload.

4.5 *Policy for B Contracts as Primary Caregivers*

B contract faculty who qualify as primary caregivers and give birth, become a father, or adopt or otherwise newly add a child to their family shall be granted, upon request, a leave of absence with pay and continuation of all benefits for the duration of one semester, either the semester surrounding or the semester following the addition of the child to the family. This leave will have the following features:

- Complete relief from all classroom teaching and other scheduled teaching duties. However, the faculty member may be expected to continue training activities that can be flexibly scheduled, such as supervising research, theses, and the like.
- Relief from all regular service duties. However, the faculty member can still be expected to participate in activities where his or her expertise is deemed essential to the functioning of the unit (e.g., search or examination committees).
- Relief from all advising duties where students are advised "in bulk" (e.g., undergraduate advising). However, the faculty member can still be expected to advise students on research projects, theses, and the like.

In return, the faculty member

- shall inform his or her chair or dean in the timeliest manner possible.
- shall forfeit all sick leave above 12 days accrued up to the beginning of the parental leave.

4.6 *Policy for B Contracts as Secondary Caregivers*

B contract faculty who qualify as secondary caregivers and give birth, become a father, or adopt or otherwise newly add a child to their family shall be granted, upon request, a reduction of their professional responsibilities by 20% for the semester surrounding or immediately following the addition of the child to the family. For example, if their role statement provides for 40% for teaching, 40% for research, and 20 % for service, B contract faculty could choose to completely forgo service for the semester, or have their teaching load reduced by half, or be expected to produce half the research output expected for the semester. The reduction in workload will be properly recorded in the role statement. The faculty member will forfeit half of the sick leave above 12 days accrued up to the beginning of the parental leave.

4.7 *Policy Regarding Tenure and Promotion for A/B Contract Primary Caregivers*

Becoming the primary caregiver for a child can have a noticeable impact on a faculty member's ability to keep up with direct job duties such as teaching and service, and a severe impact on the ability to maintain a rigorous research agenda, not just for a few months following the addition of the child to the family, but for a number of years to come. In effect, chances are that a faculty member who is the primary caregiver will have to trade diminished research productivity for the joys of having a child. This is unavoidable, but should at least not imperil the faculty member's ability to be a life-long researcher and earning tenure. Therefore, this state of affairs should be reflected in the tenure and promotion process.

The following rule shall hold for primary care givers: The faculty member serving as the primary caregiver shall have the right to apply for tenure one year later than the previously valid last possible date for each child that has been added to the family. In the case of the application for promotion, the promoting agents (committees, supervisors, provost, etc.) shall take into account the fact that the faculty member was unable to perform the same work as could otherwise be expected in the time frame in question.

The tenure clock will not be stopped for secondary caregivers. However, committees and administrators ruling in respect to tenure and promotion should take the faculty member's caretaking responsibilities into account if they are relevant to the member's performance.

4.8 *Administration of Leave*

4.8.1 *A contract faculty*

The parental leave of A contract faculty shall be covered through the postponement of projects, the reassignment of work to colleagues, and the hiring of temporary replacements who are charged with either doing the work of the faculty member on leave or of faculty members who cover the work of the colleague on leave. However, the faculty member on parental leave can still be expected to participate in activities or projects where his or her expertise are essential and where non-participation will make the success of the activity or project impossible.

For senior A contract faculty whose discharge of duties cannot feasibly be distributed to colleagues, the provost shall name an interim holder of the position whose responsibilities in turn shall be covered by the method just mentioned.

4.8.2 B contract faculty

Teaching:

- If the faculty member has different teaching loads in different semesters (e.g., 3-2), teaching loads in other semesters will be assigned in such a way that the low teaching load will be assigned to the semester for which the parental leave benefit is being claimed. If, for example, the parental leave benefit is being claimed for a semester preceded by a semester for which the teaching load had been assigned as low because at that time the pregnancy or the possibility to adopt were still unknown, the two semesters following the semester for which the parental leave benefit is being claimed will be assigned as high (e.g., should there be a 2-2, there would then follow a 3-3).
- Here are some suggestions how the department chair and the dean could provide for the coverage of the classes going untaught:
 - ▶ have the classes taught by temporary faculty (e.g., LOAs)
 - ▶ have the classes taught by other faculty whose classes in turn will be taught by temporary faculty
 - ▶ if necessary, skip a class which at that moment is not essential to the curriculum of the program, i.e, the skipping of which does not substantially affect students' graduation schedules.

Service:

- If release from service duties (e.g., on committees) is likely to impair the functioning of the department or unit, a colleague shall take over the duties for the duration of the parental leave. However, the faculty member on parental leave can still be expected to participate in activities where his or her expertise is deemed essential (e.g., search committees).

Advising:

- For the duration of the parental leave, a colleague shall voluntarily and as specified in his/her role statement take over all duties where students are advised "in bulk" (e.g., undergraduate advising). However, the faculty member on parental leave can be expected to continue in the role of adviser to individual students on research projects, theses, and the like. During the annual evaluation, the additional service by the colleague taking over the advising duties shall be rated as particularly meritorious.

5. Funding

We believe that overall the benefits of the proposed policy will more than outweigh its cost. The positive effects on employee attitudes and behaviors of benefits that meet employee needs are well documented. References are provided in Section 4 (Arguments) of this proposal.

How much would the policy cost?

It is difficult to determine how many faculty members would claim this benefit in a given year. Even if it were possible to determine how many female faculty members on average gave birth in previous years, this would not give reliable information for planning the cost of the benefit to the institution. To get a complete picture, it would be necessary to have data on how many adoptions there were or how many men would claim the benefit if it became available. In addition, we can only "guess" how the duties of the faculty on parental leave would be covered and how much expenses would be associated with different types of coverage.

However, it seems clear that the expenses associated with the parental leave benefit would not be prohibitive:

B contract:

In response to our survey, the deans indicated that they generally expect to be able to cover for the loss in teaching by hiring LOAs. Since for most B contract faculty only 6 credits have to be covered if the benefit is being claimed, the cost to the institution would be well under \$ 5,000 per claim. Given modern family sizes, it is unlikely that the benefit would be claimed more than twice, which would mean that an expense of less than \$ 10,000 could yield a powerful recruiting tool that is much cheaper than other expenses incurred by the university in the attempt to attract superior faculty. Additionally the leave will provide a faculty member with important assistance in accomplishing the research needed to gain tenure or a promotion as well as national recognition.

A contract:

If the benefit requires that a replacement is being hired, i.e., can not be covered through the postponement of projects and the reassignment of work to colleagues inside of the unit, the granting of the benefit would certainly be more expensive than for B contract faculty. However, two factors may lower the cost:

- replacements hired would presumably be of a lower rank and therefore less expensive
- A contract faculty who have major responsibilities will command a high salary and are therefore expensive to cover. However, their numbers are likely to be small, since in general they are older and already with children or not interested in having them.

How should the funding be administered?

To make the benefit reliable for both administrators and affected faculty members, we propose that a special, well-stocked fund be created which has no other purpose than to defray the cost of the benefit. Deans can only be expected to grant the benefit swiftly, fairly, and willingly if they do not have to worry about how to pay for it. Not having funding was the primary reason given by deans in our survey for not providing paid time off for parental leave. Within a few years of

the fund's existence there would be enough data available to allow financial officers to determine needs and approximate the amount in the fund.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix A: Current University Policies

From the Human Resources Web page (www.unr.edu/vpaf/hr/benefits/leave.html) on policies guiding faculty leave:

Child-Rearing Leave

Unpaid leave relating to the birth, placement of a child with a faculty member for adoption or foster care, or child rearing of a child who is a member of the faculty member's household may be granted. The University will not maintain the faculty member's health insurance coverage unless the unpaid leave is approved under FMLA.

See Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 3, Section 14, number 6.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 entitles an employee to a total of 12 weeks of leave during a rolling 12-month period. To qualify the faculty member must have been employed at a minimum of 60% FTE for at least 12 months. FMLA may be used for the birth of a child, and to care for the newborn child; for placement of a child with the faculty member for adoption or foster care; to care for the faculty member's spouse, parent or child with a serious health condition; or because the faculty member is unable to work due to a serious health condition.

See Board of Regents Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 3, Section 14, number 6, Section 16 and Appendix and the State of Nevada (Overview Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, revised August 18, 2000).

From BOR Handbook Title 4, Chapter 3

Section 14. Sick Leave

1. Full-time professional staff members on an "A" or "B" contract shall be granted sick leave as required, up to 30 working days at full salary, available at any time during the initial 12 months of service. Part-time professional staff members on an "A" or "B" contract shall be granted a pro rata amount as required.

2. Beginning one year after the starting date of his or her initial contract, each full-time staff member will begin to accrue additional sick leave at the rate of two days for each full month of paid service, to be added to any remaining balance of unused sick leave from the first 12 months of service. Sick leave may be accrued from year to year not to exceed 96 working days.

Part-time staff members will earn a pro rata amount of sick leave for each calendar month worked. Paid sick leave shall not be granted in excess of sick leave earned except as provided in the paragraph 7. The employee shall not be paid for any unused sick leave upon termination of employment.

3. A professional staff member is entitled to use accumulated sick leave for personal illness; disability; medical, optometry, or dental service or examinations; child bearing or temporary disability, upon approval of the appointing authority. The appointing authority may require a staff member to provide medical certification from a medical practitioner for absences of more than five consecutive days or if abuse is suspected.

If an eligible employee is using leave, with or without pay, in a manner which would qualify under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the appointing authority shall designate the leave as FMLA and shall provide written notice to the employee which details the obligations of the employee and the effects of using the leave. While in FMLA status, all available paid leave must be used before leave without pay.

4. Up to fifteen days of earned sick leave per contract year may be used by the professional staff member to care for or assist family members, in-laws, or step relatives within the third degree of consanguinity or relationship, or members of the professional staff member's household for the following events: illness; injury, or medical, optometry or dental service or examination. Requests for use of additional earned sick leave days beyond the fifteen-day limitation may be made in writing to the appropriate appointing authority. Approval is at the discretion of the appropriate appointing authority. The fifteen-day limitation does not apply if the leave is approved under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

5. A professional staff member may take up to ten working days of employee's earned sick leave, in the event of the death of a person listed in Paragraph 4 above. Requests for use of additional earned sick leave days beyond the ten-day limitation may be made in writing to the appropriate authority. Approval is at the discretion of the appropriate appointing authority.

Reorganization (2008) Title 4, Chapter 3, Page 16

6. A professional staff member who qualifies under The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) is entitled to a total of 12 work weeks of leave during a "rolling" 12-month period. The period is measured backward from the date an employees uses a qualifying Family and Medical Leave. To qualify, a staff member must have been employed by the NSHE for at least 12 months and have been in a paid status or a minimum of 60% FTE averaged over the 12-month period preceding the leave. While in FMLA status, all available paid leave must be used before leave without pay. A staff member may use FMLA leave for the birth of a child, and to care for a newborn child; for placement of a child with the staff member for adoption or foster care; to care for the staff member's spouse, parent or child with a serious health condition; or because the staff member is unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of his/her job due to a serious health condition. If a staff member must take unpaid leave under FMLA, the employer is required to maintain the staff member's health insurance coverage for the timeframe represented by the FMLA leave.

Additional unpaid leave directly related to the birth, the placement of a child with the staff member for adoption or foster care, or child rearing of a child who is a member of the professional employee's household shall be granted to either parent, upon request, up to a

maximum of one year. During any unpaid leave the employer will not maintain the staff member health insurance coverage, unless the unpaid leave is approved under the FMLA. The NSHE guarantees that the professional staff member will return to his or her original position, or if the original position no longer exists, to a comparable position, without loss of seniority or other benefits.

7. After 12 continuous months employment, where a physician certifies that a professional staff member is unable to resume duties after exhausting all accumulated sick and annual leave, the professional staff member may petition for, and may be granted, with the approval of the President extended salaried sick leave. Approval may be given only if the funding source permits payment of extended salaried sick leave. An additional three calendar months may be granted to employees continuously employed for more than twelve months and up to twenty-four months; an additional six calendar months may be granted to employees continuously employed for more than twenty-four months and up to thirty six months; and an additional twelve calendar months plus one calendar month for each full year of employment with the NSHE may be granted to employees continuously employed for more than thirty-six months. An eligible employee may initially request less extended salaried sick leave than authorized under this policy, or may be granted less than the maximum amount of time authorized. The lifetime maximum, which may be granted to an employee, is twelve calendar months plus one calendar month for each full year of employment with the NSHE. During extended salaried sick leave, no annual or sick leave shall be earned. If at the end of the extension period a physician certifies that the professional staff member is still unable to resume duties, the appointment shall be terminated. Where employment shall be terminated under these circumstances, the provision of Title 2 of the Board of Regent's handbook shall not apply.

8. If an employee has been employed for less than 12 consecutive months, the president may approve an employee request for unpaid sick leave not to exceed three months duration. If the employee is unable to return to employment after the expiration of this unpaid leave of absence, the appointment shall be terminated. Where employment shall be terminated under these circumstances, the provisions of Title 2, Chapter 6, of the Board of Regents' handbook shall not apply. Reorganization (2008) Title 4, Chapter 3, Page 17

6.2 Appendix B: Anonymous Survey of Deans

Survey of Parental Leave Practices at UNR: Questionnaire for Deans – November 2007

1) Does your college have a written policy that addresses the granting of parental leave?

NO – all 5 responses

a. If yes, could you be so kind as to send us a copy?

b. If no, please describe in general terms how your college has handled parental leave issues and requests. What criteria for the granting of parental leaves have you used in the past or would you use once a request were made?

- *FMLA*

- *Child Rearing Leave – Administrative Manual (unpaid leave - if FMLA with benefits)*
- *Dean approves unit chairs' recommendation*
- *Don't know*

2) Please consider the following scenario:

A female member of your teaching faculty is due to give birth at the very beginning of the spring semester. She has met the eligibility criteria for the 12 weeks FMLA leave. Since 12 weeks are not sufficient to cover the entire spring semester, she would have to return before the end of the semester, sometime late April. What do you think would be the best way to deal with this case?

- *3 respondents - same answer*
 - *Hire LOA*
 - *Adjust role statement*
 - *Leave for entire semester*
- *Use annual plus sick leave plus unpaid*
- *Does not apply – all faculty on A contract*

3) Do you have any experience with a male faculty member asking for parental leave?

- *5 NO, male faculty members have never asked for parental leave*

a. If yes, how did you respond?

b. If no, how would you respond?

- *Same as for female faculty*
- *Same coverage under FMLA*

4) We understand that in larger units the semester-long absence of a faculty member as a result of a parental leave may not greatly disrupt the operations in that unit since the teaching of certain classes could be postponed and colleagues may pick up a class. In a small unit, however, operations may in fact be disrupted. In your opinion, what should be done in such a case?

- *Four responses: special fund should be there to cover LOAs for this purpose*
- *All that can be done to offer the classes*
- *Can plan ahead – rearrange schedules*
- *All five – hire temporary replacement*

5) Given your interest in attracting the best possible faculty to your college, how important would a codified parental leave policy to be for your recruitment efforts?

- *Might be important*
- *Important as a “benefit” – should be neutral, such as “paid research leave”*
- *Parental leave attractive to younger cohort and their lifestyle*
- *Explicit policy would help*
- *Very helpful*
- *Increasingly important – especially for younger faculty hired each year*

6.3 *Appendix C: Report on Focus Group*

On April 24, 2008 a focus group was held to discuss the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Maternity/Paternity Leave on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. The focus group was facilitated by Russ Meyer, Aaron Dewart, and Chris Williams. There were eight participants: seven women and one man; six administrative faculty and two academic faculty. Comments received from two other female academic faculty members received via email are incorporated.

1. Do you know whether or not your college/division has a written policy that addresses the granting of parental leave?

Five people were not aware of a policy, and three people were. In general there was some awareness of a university policy but not departmental ones.

2. & 3. How was parental leave handled in your particular case? Do you think the process was more difficult than necessary?

There was wide agreement that the process was more difficult than necessary. All but one person, whose departmental administrative assistant handled the process, thought the forms were hard to find. Required information was difficult to obtain, e.g. the correct procedure for calculating the number of leave days. Human Resources (HR) told individuals to go on-line to get information and provided support only when pressed to do so. Most people got more information from colleagues than through “official” channels. There was a feeling of being “on my own”. The process was “demoralizing”.

Of particular interest was the story of a male colleague, whose supervisor was planning the leave so badly that he had to work a lot during the leave and to whom several colleagues “showed disdain for taking leave as a husband.”

4. Do you think your personal and professional concerns were considered in the process?

Responses varied depending upon the individual situation. In one case the employee’s supervisor made no effort to prepare for the employee’s leave and the employee ended up working from home. Other employees commented on the “refusal” to discuss the matter until just before leave was to begin. In another case the department’s director was “incredibly supportive” and made adjustments to schedules. One department “found” funds for a Graduate Assistant. An individual was hired on a Letter of Appointment to cover the last month of the semester for one academic faculty member, however, students complained about changing instructors (grading criteria) in mid-semester. One person video taped lectures in advance of taking leave, although there was no budget for this (a frequent comment), worked all the way up to her due date, and later found out another faculty member was given the entire semester off for maternity leave. Two other individuals said they were expected to work up to their due date as well, and one of them was asked why she needed to take her due date off. Several people felt they “pushed too hard” up to the last day. There

was consensus that once leave was over the employee was expected to be back to work 100%. Little accommodation was made for dealing with issues surrounding infant care.

5. Do you think you were treated fairly both personally and professionally?

In general people thought they were treated fairly, however, not necessarily equitably as in the case where another faculty member was given the entire semester off. There was a perceived difference in the treatment of mothers vs. fathers and between different levels within the organization.

6. Was anything in the process unexpected? Positively or negatively?

One employee was surprised that, despite having planned ahead with the supervisor, the employee still ended up working from home. One individual was afforded “favors” to accommodate child care after returning but felt as if those favors needed to be “earned”. There was general “surprise” at the lack of information available and the need for the employee to figure it out on their own.

7. What suggestions do you have about how the handling of your situation could have been improved? Why would you suggest these changes?

- Make information easier to obtain.
- Improve HR web site.
- State what benefits are available and what are not. State what is allowed and what is not.
- Rules, policies, and practices should be in place and consistent.
- Educate administrators about the rules.
- Take the burden of “covering” the absence off of the employee. There was a consensus that an employee who was on medical leave for an emergency was relieved of any responsibility for their job, while an employee on or about to go on parental leave was not.
- Make funding available for temporary replacements or other necessary resources.
- The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics has a program for student athletes who have babies but not one for staff. Perhaps that could program could serve as a model.
- There should be a transition program for when the employee returns to work. Supervisors expect that things will be the same as before the employee had a baby, but that isn't the case.
- Classified staff can “share” leave days with colleagues; why can't faculty?
- “Pushing back the tenure clock” should be a priority and a policy. It should not be the employee's responsibility to ask for this.
- Sequential leave would be helpful, i.e. first one parent than the other.
- This should apply to adoption as well.

- A statement and policy establishing a “family friendly campus” should come from the president.
- More day care is needed.

8 If the following were to occur how do you think it would be handled in your college/division? A female member (or the spouse of a faculty member) is due to give birth part way through the fall or spring semester. This individual meets the criteria for the twelve weeks FMLA leave. If this person could not fulfill their position responsibility, e.g. could not teach for the entire semester, how do you think the case would/should be handled. Would/should it make a difference if there are other faculty within the college/division who could perform those duties?

This has been addressed in some of the responses above. The consensus was that there should be guidelines instead of definite procedures to allow for the necessary flexibility individual cases require.

9. In the context of attracting the best possible faculty to UNR how important do you think a codified parental leave policy would be in recruitment?

- It would be important.
- It would be good to know you were supported.
- The pushing back of the tenure clock would be helpful.
- The ability to use sick leave upon employment is important.

10. Are you familiar with a parental leave program at another university? If so, where?

- Harvard University: paid semester off for either parent for birth or adoption.
- University of California – Berkeley: “reduced assignment” for faculty member for one year at full pay.