In April 2010, The Commission on Women and Gender Equity recommended to you that Colorado State University adopt a gender-neutral parental leave policy that is uniform across all university units. You responded that the President’s office was working to extend family leave and you fulfilled your commitment. We thank you for your efforts toward our mutual goal, which you stated in your response to our recommendation of “creating a more family-friendly work environment at Colorado State, both because it is important to our ability to recruit and retain top faculty and staff and because it is the right thing to do.”

Our understanding of the current policy is that faculty and staff can take up to 12 weeks of sick leave and/or annual leave for maternity leave. If there is no sick leave, then there is the option of using short-term disability. In addition, the following benefit changes are under consideration for adoption by the Board of Governors:

- Two weeks of “childbearing leave” to cover the difference between six weeks of short-term disability for normal childbirth and eight weeks of short-term disability for caesarian birth;

- One year of sick leave to give to new employees when they are hired, so that they can meet the elimination period for short-term disability.

In addition, we understand that Faculty Council approved the following effect of family medical leave on the tenure process: If a tenure-track faculty member takes family medical leave, and the accumulated amount of leave taken is at least eight (8) weeks, then the end of his or her probationary period shall be pushed back by one (1) year.

It is clear that we are making significant progress to a more comprehensive parental leave policy. We would like to offer the following recommendations for implementation as soon as possible.

1. Broadly publicize the changes that have been made and are going to be made shortly with regard to the policy, so that they are clearly known to all unit leaders, supervisors, managers and employees. Annual distribution of this information would significantly support the effort to maintain an awareness of these benefits to the campus.

2. Since faculty do not earn annual leave and are evaluated for their research, teaching and service we suggest that department chairs, when requested parental leave, will consider one or more of
the following options for the faculty involved: course cancellation, course reassignment, course banking, 8 week teaching assignment instead of 16 weeks, reduction in teaching with increases in research/service. Currently, the Checklist for chairs of Faculty Requesting Parental Leave states these options may be considered. (http://www.provost.colostate.edu/files/Chairs_Checklist.pdf)

Moreover, we would like to consider adopting a parental leave policy similar to the University of Colorado at Boulder which states on https://facultyaffairs.colorado.edu/faculty/leaves-1/faculty-leave-information/?searchterm=parental leave “As of July 1, 2007, the Boulder campus expanded the parental leave policy for tenured and tenure-track faculty. Upon notification to Faculty Affairs, a tenured or tenure-track faculty member who will be the primary caregiver for a child within 12 months of birth or adoption of the child will:
- have their tenure clock stopped automatically for one year (if not yet tenured);
- receive up to a maximum of one semester at full pay without using accrued sick leave.”

In addition, we would like to begin a conversation about your consideration of the following proposed policy:
1. Create a policy for faculty and staff members who will be the primary caregivers of a child within 12 months of his or her birth or adoption so that the faculty or staff members will receive childbearing leave, without using their accrued sick leave.

As we stated last year, the importance of having a well-defined and attractive parental leave policy is also supported by research that work family policies increase productivity (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2008) and are significant variables in attractiveness to join the organization (Bouris and Redouane Mekkaoui, 2010). In addition, studies have concluded that the very presence, not necessarily use of, such programs attracts better employees, decreases worker stress, thereby increasing productivity (Meyer & Mokryj, 2001). Moreover, in public institutions, researchers report that family and maternal leave are the most preferred work-family programs (Queneau & Marmo, 2003).

We look forward to continuing to work with you in developing a more comprehensive family leave policy. Thank you again for your continued collaboration toward creating a more family-friendly work environment at Colorado State University.

References


