Resolution on Stop the Tenure Clock Policies
Spring 2014

This resolution was prepared by the Work-Life Effectiveness (WLE) Committee of the ADVANCE Grant.

We propose that Faculty Senate subcommittee consider the attached Tenure-Clock Stop Policy, which was created as a concept policy based on WLE Committee's review of policies at peer and aspirant universities as well as other ADVANCE institutions. If the policy meets the subcommittee's approval, we propose that the policy be submitted to the full Faculty Senate for discussion and approval before it is forwarded to the Provost for consideration.

In 2011, the National Science Foundation awarded the University of West Florida a grant for $598,354 to enhance the culture for recruiting, retaining, and advancing women faculty. In the first year of the grant, a culture and climate survey was conducted to identify the specific needs of faculty at the UWF. The results of the needs analysis indicate that the most sought after policy is tenure clock extensions; such a policy is particularly important for women faculty (49% of women, 21% of men). The needs analysis results indicate that tenure clock extensions were only second to additional research funding and support (a non-policy amenity). Thus, the climate survey data strongly supports a need for a tenure clock extension policy at UWF.

As background, the tenure track system is modeled based on a traditional system in which the faculty member has a spouse to provide support in the home and manage caregiving demands. This traditional model is criticized for being archaic and jeopardizing the careers of women and men faculty with caregiving demands and other non-traditional life events. In light of these criticisms, "stop-the-clock" policies have been implemented to accommodate modern life demands of faculty. Indeed, stop-the-clock policies have existed for 40 years and are now available at 90% of research institutions.

ADVANCE institutions, in particular, are likely to have family-friendly policies such as stop-the-

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clock accommodations. When UWF applied for the ADVANCE grant, President Judy Bense, the Provost, the Deans of CAS and COPS, the Dean of the Graduate School and Vice-President of Research, the Human Resources Associate Vice-President, the CUTLA Director, the School of Science and Engineering Director, and the School of Psychological and Social Sciences Director provided letters of support for the grant (President Bense support letter attached). Following through on enhancing UWF climate and culture to become an ADVANCE institution requires codifying and implementing family-friendly policies that, to date, have been informal arrangements. Formal policies will help the university to build competitive advantage as it recruits and retains diverse and talented faculty, which is congruent with UWF Strategic Priority 2.2. The strategic action associated with Priority 2.2 is:

"Develop and implement specific initiatives aimed at enhanced recruitment, retention, compensation, development, and celebration of high-quality faculty from diverse backgrounds who demonstrate a commitment to UWF values and contribute to UWF’s mission and vision."  

The tenure clock stop policy certainly meets this definition. Moreover, now that UWF has been awarded the funding, we are obligated to follow through on our cultural transformation. Doing so is critical to maintaining and building UWF’s reputation with program officers at the National Science Foundation in order to secure future research funding.

Aside from the ADVANCE funding, the time is ripe for the implementation of a tenure clock extension policy. Formal policies serve to educate the faculty regarding their options, and help ensure fair administration. Recently, a faculty member from the Division of Anthropology and Archaeology was granted a tenure clock extension for the birth of a child. It is now time to codify this practice in order to make it accessible and acceptable throughout the University. Additionally, the timing is ideal for retaining the recent burst of new junior faculty hires.

The Work-Life Effectiveness (WLE) Committee is charged with facilitating the development and implementation of policies and initiatives that support work-life balance among faculty. Unfortunately, the ADVANCE grant is a temporary structure and relies on institutionalizing permanent practices in order to have a sustainable impact. Thus, the Committee now seeks the assistance of the Faculty Senate in implementing the tenure-clock stop policy. We seek the assistance of Faculty Senate because (1) this is a tenure and promotion issue and (2) such policies require the support of other faculty to be successful. Indeed, research has shown that flexible policies are unlikely to be utilized when individuals perceive that they are not supported or fear career consequences for policy utilization.

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We recommend that this tenure clock stop policy for faculty members who take any amount of leave go through the policy review process and be made available as soon as possible. We understand that in the future, the tenure-clock stop policy for faculty members who are not in the position to take any formal leave may need to be addressed in the collective bargaining agreement.

Summary of Main Points:
- Survey data at UWF strongly supports a need for a tenure clock extension policy.
- Stop-the-clock policies promote diversity and are particularly in demand among female faculty at UWF.
- Such policies are widely available at research institutions and other ADVANCE institutions.
- Key administrative representatives have already provided letters of support for institutional change efforts of which the proposed policy is a part.
- Informal accommodations to extend the tenure timeline have been made at UWF already, but a formal policy is needed to promote fairness and accessibility.
- Timing for policy implementation is ripe given the recent burst of new hires.
- Support from the Faculty Senate is needed to formalize the policy drafted by the WLE Committee.
- The current policy applies only to tenure-track faculty who take any amount of formal leave.