

Policies for Family Care for Faculty Members

The goal of these policies is to help MIT faculty have productive careers and still meet their family responsibilities. Since family care takes different forms at different ages and different family constellations, the policies take these differences into account.

I. Parental Support Policy

Note: This policy makes consistent across the Institute elements of the parental support policies that already exist within each School.

Preamble

The goal of this policy is to allow a parent to spend significant time, energy, and focus on the care of and responsibility for a child during the first year of its arrival in the family. This means spending a majority of one's time with the child.

Therefore:

Using this release time for other purposes, such as to start a business or for extensive professional travel or other increased outside professional activities does not meet this goal.

Faculty requesting parental support under this policy will be asked to signify that they believe in the goal of the policy and will abide by it.

Policy

A faculty member who wishes to spend the majority of his or her time on the care of and responsibility for a newborn child or a newly adopted child, will be released from teaching and administrative duties for one semester at full pay. Nonetheless, faculty members on such release will be expected to fulfill their thesis advising responsibilities and sustain their research program. Faculty members on such release will not normally increase their usual outside professional activities, and the Institute rules on outside professional activities for fulltime faculty remain in force.

Faculty members can take advantage of this policy in any term they choose within one year after the arrival of the child. Faculty members seeking such release should notify their department heads in writing that they will spend the majority of their time on the care of the child over the period of the release. Faculty members have the responsibility to notify their department heads as far in advance of the leave as possible (normally one semester's notification is required) so that steps can be taken to cover their teaching obligations.

This policy is gender blind.

II. Extension of Tenure Clock for Childbearing

Preamble

The goal of this policy is take away the career disadvantage that women currently face from pregnancy, childbearing, and nursing an infant. For example, travel is restricted by all of these aspects of a woman's biological role just at the time that attendance at conferences may be particularly important. Or, another example, women who work in areas near hazardous material may be hampered in carrying out their research.

Rationale

The problem that this policy is meant to address is the following:

Currently, 52% of women in the School of Engineering have children: 58% of the tenured women and 42% of untenured women. In the Sloan School, 29% of the women have children: 50% of the tenured women and 9% of the untenured.

Nationally, 82.5% (US Census Bureau, 1997) of women aged 40-44 have borne a child. The final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Family and Work, 1990 showed that 82% of male faculty have children compared to 53% of female faculty who responded to the survey.

This policy is offered as an experiment for five years. It will be carefully monitored, and will be evaluated and reviewed at the end of the five-year period.

The Institute has always allowed faculty to request from the Provost an extension of the tenure clock for extraordinary circumstances. This policy allows adoptive parents, if warranted by the circumstances, to make such a request. It also recognizes that there may be occasions when a faculty member whose partner has borne a child is faced with extraordinary circumstances that justify such a request: e.g., triplets, death or incapacity of the mother, etc.

The assumption, however, is that this policy is meant to acknowledge the biological role of women and is not meant to lead to "clock creep": a slow extension of the tenure clock to 9 years.

Policy

In recognition of the effects that pregnancy and childbirth can have on a woman's ability to perform all the tasks necessary and expected to achieve tenure, a woman who bears one or more children during her tenure probationary period will have that period extended by one year. As in all tenure cases, a tenure review can take place prior to the end of the probationary period and that possibility should be assessed annually.

In recognition of the time and energy that adoption can take, adoptive parents (both male and female) may request such an extension from the Provost. The Provost will grant the extension if special circumstances warrant it.

As is generally the case, a faculty member whose partner has borne a child may make such a request to the Provost. The Provost will grant the extension if special circumstances warrant it.

III. Part-Time Appointment with Tenure for Family Care

Policy

Tenured faculty who need time for family care (children, partners, elders) normally may have a reduced time, reduced pay appointment for one semester up to five years (with possible renewal) in order to allow them the time they need for the care of family. Details of the arrangement are made with the Department Head and require the approval of the Dean of the School. This arrangement is limited to family care and does not apply to any other reasons for requesting a part-time appointment. Faculty will be asked to specify the nature of the family care that is needed.

Faculty who take advantage of this policy will reduce their outside professional activities proportionately.

The policy is gender blind.

Implementation and Oversight

The Council on Faculty Diversity (in consultation with the Faculty Chair) will appoint a committee of 6 (or 7) senior faculty to oversee the implementation of these policies. This committee would have four primary responsibilities:

1. To educate the community about the existence of these policies and ensure that orientations for new faculty and new department heads include this information.
2. To gather information on how these policies are working so as to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. Particular attention will be paid to the policy extending the tenure clock for childbearing, since it is presented as an experiment to be reviewed in 5 years.
3. To provide advice and career planning to faculty with family responsibilities and to serve as a resource as faculty with family care needs explore arrangements with their departments.
4. To act as a liaison between faculty and their department heads, so as to assure an equitable implementation of the policies.

The Committee will report annually to FPC and the Academic Council.