

ISU POLICIES & GUIDELINES FOR FLEXIBLE FACULTY CAREERS

Resources for Chairs and Deans

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
ISU ADVANCE

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ISU ADVANCE started with a five-year grant (2006-2011) from the National Science Foundation to improve the university for women in science, technology, engineering and math. Following the initial grant, Iowa State University continues to expand the program for underrepresented persons. ISU ADVANCE is now institutionalized and the program impacts all areas of the university community. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s), not of any current or past funding organization.

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Rationale

To foster excellence in teaching, research, and outreach, universities must attract and retain the best faculty. Competition for the best faculty is intense and flexible¹ policies can make the difference in recruiting and retaining faculty (Kezar & Massey, 2015).

A key component of the faculty work experience is “ensuring flexibility in appointments, helping faculty members to construct work arrangements that maximize their contributions to the institution, to their work, and to their students, while also enabling them to maintain balance among their work and personal lives in the face of increasingly complex roles and demands in the workplace” (Kezar & Massey, 2015, p. 37).

To maintain excellence, higher education professionals must create a climate conducive to the success of all faculty members. They must develop and implement policies that address existing barriers to the entrance into and success of faculty in academia, especially among underrepresented faculty, including women and faculty of color. These Guidelines ought to assist chairs and deans in their efforts and responsibilities to facilitate the success of all faculty members².

Why ought departments be inclusive?

Departments ought to be inclusive for many reasons. These Guidelines will address two primary reasons: (1) institutional mission and strategic goals and (2) the research evidence that supports inclusivity, retention, and job satisfaction.

¹ The definition of family can mean many things. Generally, US case law has defined “family” as “a group of persons connected by blood or by affinity or through law within two or three generations,” “a group that consists of parents and their children,” or “a group of persons living together and having a shared commitment to a domestic partnership.” To some, the true meaning of family means a group of people related by blood or ancestry. For others, it has nothing to do with genes and everything to do with love, compassion, and support.

In a task-orientation definition, family is defined by how the members function or by the tasks that members perform. Family is typically viewed as at least one adult and one or more other persons who perform certain tasks of family life (e.g., socialization, nurturance, development, financial and emotional support). The tasks are inherently flexible and whoever fulfills the tasks demanded of family members is considered family, regardless of their biological or legal connection to the other members. Another consideration in defining family is how ethnic, racial, cultural, and class differences influence lifestyles and behaviors (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 2009; Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989).

² Practical information is provided here following a model developed by the University of California Family Friendly Edge Initiative (Frasch et al., 2007). The Friendly Edge Initiative is “a series of initiatives and projects designed to develop and implement a comprehensive package of innovative policies and programs for all faculty (p. X).”

Institutional Mission and Strategic Goals

Consistent with Iowa State University's commitment to improve the quality of life for all Iowans and enhance the institutional climate, it is important to support faculty well-being. More specifically, the 2022-2031 Strategic Plan, which communicates the importance Iowa State University being the university that cultivates a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where students, faculty, and staff flourish ([Iowa State University of Science and Technology 2022-2031 Strategic Plan](#)). Important success factors relate to retention and well-being.

Associate Provost for Faculty Dawn Bratsch-Prince has previously communicated, ISU's institutional commitment to faculty success and its support of work-life balance:

“We recognize that we all fulfill multiple personal and professional roles simultaneously throughout our lives. We acknowledge the importance of having a productive professional life as well as a satisfying personal life, which is really vital to our overall well-being. We understand that our individual environment, our policies and programs all contribute to balancing personal responsibilities and professional aspirations. We also know that when employees have flexibility, they experience greater job satisfaction, increased productivity, and a smoother path to career success” (Bratsch-Prince, 2020).

Common issues facing faculty in the pursuit of work-life balance include child care, elder care, health and illness, dual career challenges, and financial concerns.

Research Evidence

Over the last decade, researchers have provided compelling evidence that higher education institutions can demonstrate a strong business case for providing flexibility for their faculty. Career flexibility is especially critical to recruiting and retaining some of the most qualified faculty in academe. Acquiring the best talent is essential to an institution's ability to achieve excellence and maintain its competitive advantage in a global environment.

Faculty workload is demanding, with an average of 54 hours worked per week among ISU faculty (Board of Regents, State of Iowa, 2023). Faculty report that household responsibilities and caregiving (e.g., offspring, elder care, relative care) are unequally distributed by gender and among parents with children in the home, especially among those with children younger than 12 years of age. These concerns are magnified among faculty who are coping with unexpected and intense periods of responsibility and caregiving (Misra et al., 2012). When family and work

responsibilities conflict, this negatively impacts career satisfaction for employees (Kraimer, et al., 2019). Conversely, based on ISU's 2009-2010 Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey data, Muktar (2012) reported that "there was a significant relationship between work life balance and job satisfaction among faculty at ISU" (p. 82). Faculty communicated greater productivity (e.g., research) when they achieved balance in work and life (Flaherty, 2018; Camargo, Wood, Layne, 2015; Flaherty, 2018). These data and reports highlighted the importance of implementing flexible faculty policies to enhance department inclusiveness.

Flexible Faculty Policies and Resources

The following policies and resources are available to faculty seeking to balance their work-life responsibilities or needing to respond to life circumstances. Listed in alphabetical order, we present here a brief description of each policy and resource. Refer to the hyper-linked website for the most current information.

1. [Dual Career Resources](#)

ISU is committed to recruiting and retaining the highest quality faculty whom seek to combine a stimulating academic career with a satisfying personal life. Dual Career Resources provide partners and spouses of faculty with support in identifying employment opportunities on campus and the surrounding communities.

2. [Extension of Tenure-Clock Guidelines](#)

ISU recognizes the challenges that pre-tenure faculty face as they strive to earn tenure through achievement in teaching, research, and outreach. While the standard probationary period normally provides enough time for a faculty member to demonstrate qualifications for tenure, special circumstances may arise that interfere with a faculty member's trajectory. The extension of the tenure clock policy (Faculty Handbook Section 5.2.1.4) allows a faculty member to request an extension of the probationary period in a variety of special circumstances.

Data Point: Since 2003, more than 300 tenure-clock extensions have been granted to ISU faculty. Persons identifying as female have utilized tenure-clock extensions somewhat more than faculty who identify as male.

3. Faculty Modified Duties Assignment (FMDA)

All faculty may request a Faculty Modified Duties Assignment to rebalance their faculty duties for one semester as associated with the birth or adoption of a child or the foster care placement of a child.

4. Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Four types of FMLA leave include self, family, care for service member, and exigency.

5. Part-time appointment for faculty

Faculty may request a temporary conversion from a full-time to a part-time appointment for a determined period of time in consultation with their chair. Requests may be made for personal or professional reasons, including work-life balance. Due to the probationary nature of their appointment, pre-tenure faculty may make such a request only for reasons of balancing work and family for the arrival of a child, the care of a child with special needs, elder care, the care of a partner, or for personal circumstances related to the health of the faculty member (See Faculty Handbook Section 3.3.1.1). A part-time appointment may impact the length of a faculty member's probationary period (Faculty Handbook Section 5.2.1.3). Pre-tenure faculty who make a temporary conversion to a part-time appointment ought to work with their chair to determine mandatory review dates.

6. Position Responsibility Statement

Every ISU faculty member has a formal Position Responsibility Statement (PRS) that describes the faculty member's range of work responsibilities, in research/creative activities, teaching, institutional service, extension, outreach, professional/clinical practice, etc. (Faculty Handbook Section 3.4). The PRS is a flexible and individualized tool that may change over time to reflect changes in a faculty member's responsibilities. Percentages are often indicated to denote effort in each category of work responsibility. Faculty are encouraged to review their PRS annually with their chair to determine any modifications that may be needed. The expectation is that the PRS will remain largely unchanged during the pre-tenure period.

7. Advancement and Review

- Establish and maintain transparency in annual reviews, promotion and tenure process, and advancement
- Review the promotion and tenure process with new faculty and

annually thereafter. Refer to the Faculty Handbook, Section 5.2.4 Procedures for Promotion and Tenure Review.

8. University and community area resources to increase faculty connections and integration into the campus community

New and underrepresented faculty gain institutional knowledge, form collaborations and feel less isolated when well connected to faculty groups

9. Salary Support for Strategic Faculty Recruitment and Partner Opportunity

Recruiting a talented, innovative, and inclusive faculty remains a top university priority. To bring both flexibility and consistency to our strategic recruitment process, the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost operates a central partnership with the academic colleges for recruitment of excellent and innovative faculty. A limited amount of central funding is available to colleges to support strategic hires and partner opportunity hires.

10. Workplace Accommodations

Faculty seeking a workplace accommodation are encouraged to reach out to University Human Resources (UHR) as early as possible to engage in the accommodation process. Faculty may request an accommodation, including for disability, religious, and ergonomic reasons. Employees and applicants may request accommodation at any time during the application process or course of employment. Job candidates may also request an accommodation at any time during the application and search process.

Case Examples

To assist chairs and deans in understanding how these flexible faculty policies and programs can be put into place, we offer here a series of case examples that serve to illustrate their use³.

³ In an effort to be inclusive and counteract gender stereotypes about work-life responsibilities and relationship commitments, we use the pronouns they/them and their/theirs throughout these case examples. As highlighted in The Pronoun Project, individuals often make assumptions about others' pronouns based on how they present themselves and the way individuals perceive them. This includes matters relevant to flexible faculty policies. Further, consistent with The Pronoun Project's recommendation, individuals determine their pronouns, not others. We underscore the importance of proper use of pronouns as a gateway to cultivating a strong collegial relationship and effectively engaging with faculty about flexible policies.

Extension of Probationary Period (tenure-clock extension)

Scenario: During the fall semester, Assistant Professor A learns that they are pregnant and will have a child in the spring, which will coincide with the preparation and submission of their tenure dossier.

Proposed Response: Knowing that the arrival of their child will affect their scholarship and prospects of tenure, they meet with their department chair to share news of their pregnancy and ask for a one-year tenure-clock extension. Assistant Professor A can also submit through Workday a request for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). UHR will consult with the employee to determine eligibility. If approved, UHR will communicate with Assistant Professor A and their chair about the nature of the FMLA approved. If not eligible for FMLA, UHR will consult with the employee on additional time off options.

Extension of Probationary Period (tenure-clock extension)

Scenario: Assistant Professor B, who is on a nine-month appointment, is originally from the east coast, where their father lives. For the last three years, they spend the summers with their father, who has a very serious illness. Even though they have been alternating with their siblings to take care of their father, they feel unable to balance their scholarship productivity and be a caregiver at the same time.

Proposed Response: Knowing about the ISU Extension of Probationary Period policy, they submit the documentation about the need for care of their father to their chair, and request a one-year extension of their tenure-clock. Assistant Professor B can also submit a request for FMLA through Workday. UHR will consult with the employee to determine eligibility. If approved, UHR will communicate with Assistant Professor B and their chair about the nature of the FMLA approved. If not eligible for FMLA, UHR will consult with the employee on additional time off options.

Conversion to Part-time Appointment

Scenario: Professor C has recently learned that their mother's health is declining and she needs extra care. Professor C lives with their mother and is her primary caregiver. Professor C would like to spend more time with their mother during this critical period of time. However, their position in the

department demands a full-time schedule. Professor C would like to work only half days so that they can provide the necessary care for their mother.

Proposed Response: Professor C can discuss with their chair the option of converting to a temporary 50 percent faculty appointment for a set period of time. While this will entail a commensurate reduction in salary, Professor C sees this as their preferred option. Once the temporary reduction in appointment is approved, Professor C and their chair will develop a PRS that reflects the revised work expectations. The reduced appointment will be renewed annually and can be renewed provided that Professor C and their chair are in agreement.

Guidelines for Addressing Employees' Need to Care for Family

Scenario: Associate Professor D is struggling to maintain quality work productivity because of their family situation. Their partner struggles with depression and their three children are all under six years of age.

Proposed Response: Associate Professor D reaches out and learns that using their accumulated hours of emergency time could also be an option in this stressful situation. Another option could be requesting an adjustment to their work schedule to balance work and personal needs. Associate Professor D submits a request for FMLA through Workday. UHR will consult with the employee to determine FMLA eligibility. If approved for FMLA, UHR will communicate with Associate Professor D and their chair about the nature of the FMLA approved. The approved FMLA may entail a reduced work schedule and the use of leave time off. If not eligible for FMLA, UHR will consult with the employee on additional time off options.

Modifying the Position Responsibility Statement (PRS)

Scenario: After three years as a tenure-eligible faculty member in their department, Assistant Professor E attends a workshop about faculty work-life balance. Assistant Professor E realizes that their PRS is not current and does not reflect position responsibilities that they discussed and approved with their chair two years ago. Their chair asked Assistant Professor E to take on a higher teaching load and advise a very active departmental student organization that increased their service load. Now that their preliminary or third year review is looming, Assistant Professor E and their Chair need to adjust their PRS and accurately reflect their workload.

Proposed Response: Assistant Professor E approaches their chair with their concerns about their outdated PRS. The chair responds to the faculty member's concerns and together they draft a revised and accurate PRS that is processed and signed in Workday.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Scenario: Professor F notices a significant decline in their health over the past year. Their physician advises them of a serious health condition and recommends immediate surgery. Professor F was not aware of the seriousness or urgency of their condition prior to the medical consultation.

Proposed Response: Professor F immediately contacts UHR and learns about the availability of FMLA for this type of situation. Professor F submits a request for FMLA through Workday. UHR will consult with the faculty member to determine FMLA eligibility. If approved for FMLA, UHR will communicate with Professor F and their chair about the nature of the FMLA approved. In Professor F's case, UHR approved FMLA for two weeks to cover the surgery and recovery based on the documentation provided by their physician to UHR. When medical complications delay Professor F's recovery, they can submit updated documentation from their physician to UHR. Through the FMLA process, UHR approves a two-week extension of FMLA leave.

Planning Around Pregnancy

Scenario: During the fall semester, Associate Professor G announces to their colleagues that they are pregnant and expecting a child later in the spring. Their colleagues are excited and extend their best wishes and congratulations. When Associate Professor G shares this news with their chair, Associate Professor G notes a muted response. The next day, Associate Professor G meets with their chair to ask about the process for identifying a substitute instructor while they are out on an estimated six-week maternity leave. The chair tells Associate Professor G that they ought to not teach in the spring because their courses involve field trips. The chair thinks it will be safer for them not to travel while pregnant. The chair advises them to consider working part-time in the spring. Associate Professor G realizes that their chair had already devised a work plan for them without their input. They are unsure of next steps.

Proposed Response: Associate Professor G contacts their UHR representative to discuss the proposed work plan suggested by their chair.

UHR provides guidance to Associate Professor G to assist them in requesting an appropriate leave type (such as FMLA or pregnancy leave). UHR explains the chair ought not make unilateral decisions about the employee's abilities. If Associate Professor G has concerns about performing any of their work duties before their leave begins, the Disability Accommodation Request (DAR) process is available to them. The UHR representative tells Associate Professor G that they will reach out to the chair to provide information and education around leave and accommodations. UHR requests that Associate Professor G follow up with them if there are ongoing concerns related to their medical needs at work and/or need for leave.

Dual Career Couple

Scenario: Professor H is happy to receive a tenured job offer from ISU, but their partner is not as excited because they have a great job at their current location. Moving to central Iowa was not in their career plans. Professor H remembers that during their campus interview they were informed about ISU's flexible faculty policies, including dual career resources. They explore whether ISU's resources and options for dual career employment match their situation.

Proposed Response: Professor H contacts the chair of their future department to initiate the process for identifying career options for their partner. The chair reviews the [Dual Career Resources webpage](#) and as necessary, communicates with their dean or associate dean for academic personnel. The college office looks into the qualifications and interests of the partner and, as appropriate, communicates with the Provost's Office about resources.

First-year Assistant Professor Expecting Arrival of a Child

Scenario: Assistant Professor K has just started their first-year as a nine-month tenure-track faculty member in their department. Assistant Professor K informs their chair that the baby is due in February. They hope to be able to provide care for their newborn for several weeks following the birth. They are concerned that they will be unable to teach and continue their research next semester after their baby arrives.

Proposed Response: The chair assures Assistant Professor K that they are supportive and will work with them to develop a plan for increased flexibility to address the need to care for their family. Because Assistant Professor K has

been an ISU employee for less than a year, they are NOT eligible for time off under FMLA⁵.

Assistant Professor K has limited options for time off with pay. Although they do not qualify for FMLA, their chair can approve time off without pay (Leave With Out Pay or LWOP) following consultation with the dean and UHR. Under Iowa law, Assistant Professor K is eligible for up to 8 weeks of unpaid time off. UHR provides the employee with a notice of non-eligibility for FMLA and then provides information to them about pregnancy leave. They may be eligible for catastrophic leave donations, but the ISU Benefits Office must determine this.

Assistant Professor K's baby will arrive early in the spring semester, which makes semester-long teaching assignments difficult. Assistant Professor K may want to consider requesting an FMDA for the spring or fall semester that allows them to modify their work schedule for greater flexibility. Other options the chair can explore with Assistant Professor K for the spring semester include co- or team-teaching with a colleague or offering an eight-week half-semester course. While out on approved leave (whether paid or unpaid) Assistant Professor K cannot have any work responsibilities.

The chair ought to inform Assistant Professor K of the tenure-clock extension policy if they wish to use it. If they choose to use the extension policy, they must submit their request through Workday no later than April 1 prior to their preliminary or third-year review.

Second-year Assistant Professor Expecting Arrival of a Child

Scenario: Assistant Professor L has just begun their second year as a nine-month assistant professor in their department. Assistant Professor L informs their chair that they are due to deliver a baby in December and hopes to care for their newborn for several weeks following the birth. Assistant Professor L is concerned that they will be unable to teach and continue their research next semester after their baby arrives. What additional options are available to Assistant Professor L that were not available to Assistant Professor K?

Proposed Response: In addition to all of the options described for Assistant Professor K, Assistant Professor L may also be eligible for time off under FMLA.

⁵ Nine-month faculty benefits do not include vacation time off. As a faculty employee, they will have accrued very little sick time off by March.

Associate Professor with Family Caregiving Responsibilities

Scenario: Associate Professor M is a productive faculty member working toward promotion to professor in the next three years. They have a partner and two middle-school-age children. Associate Professor M's father lives nearby and needs an increasing amount of care. They are finding it difficult and stressful to maintain work quality, spend time with their family, and care for their father. They discuss their situation with their chair and ask about available options to alleviate some of their stress.

Proposed Response: Their chair assures Associate Professor M that they are supportive and will work with them to identify options that may alleviate their work-life stress. Some of the available options mentioned to Associate Professor M are:

- Contact UHR to discuss FMLA or initiate an FMLA request through Workday. If approved, a faculty member can use accumulated vacation or sick leave during this period of protected time off
- Use accrued emergency time off to care for a family member following consultation with UHR.
- Consider a conversion to a temporary part-time appointment (see Conversion to Part-Time Appointment above)

LEAVE GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES

BIRTH/CARE OF CHILD. ADOPTION. PLACEMENT OF FOSTER CHILD.

FMLA ELIGIBILITY

Employed by ISU for 12 months, and worked at least 1,250 hours prior to start of FMLA leave.

WHAT FMLA COVERS

Job-protected leave, continuation of health insurance benefits, and return to employment upon completion of leave.

AMOUNT OF FMLA LEAVE

Up to 12 work weeks of family leave per rolling 12 month period.

	PREGNANCY LEAVE	BIRTHING PARENT	NON-BIRTHING PARENT	ADOPTION (BOTH PARENTS)	PLACEMENT OF FOSTER CHILD (BOTH PARENTS)
UPTO 12 WEEKS FMLA LEAVE	If not FMLA eligible, Iowa law require up to 8 weeks of unpaid leave.	✓	✓	✓	✓
ABILITY TO USE VACATION CONCURRENTLY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ABILITY TO USE SICK TIME OFF CONCURRENTLY	For medical recovery of birth parent.	For medical recovery of birth parent.	Up to 80 hours of emergency time off if accrued.	Up to 5 days of paid time off from sick & up to 80 hours of emergency time off if accrued.	Up to 80 hours of emergency time off if accrued.

(Figure by Leslie Ginder and Brooke Vonnahme, Iowa State University Human Resources)

Taking Action

1. Make an inclusive culture a major department and college goal.

Deans and chairs are pivotal to establishing family-friendly climates and career flexibility within their departments and colleges. Several proactive steps can create such an environment in which flexibility is both available and regularly utilized, enabling the success of all faculty members.

2. Proactively recruit and hire excellent and innovative faculty.

[See Search Committee Training and Resources on the ISU ADVANCE site for more information.](#)

3. Actively support and advertise flexible policies for all faculty.

- Operationalize the processes for utilizing ISU's flexible policies. This can be accomplished by incorporating them into the relevant department and college governance documents or manuals to promote transparency and consistency in access and implementation.
- Develop guidance at the college level that outlines uniform flexible faculty policies in response to caregiving and work responsibilities. As noted in the University of Wisconsin's Caregiving Task Force Report, "Leaving this decision up to individual chairs and supervisors can leave faculty vulnerable to implicit bias, including sexism, racism, ableism, and class-based prejudice" (p. 2).
- Encourage a culture in which faculty are actively supportive of their colleagues utilizing flexibility policies.
- Ensure that new faculty, chairs, and deans receive training about these policies in their onboarding.
- Foster a department-wide recognition of diversity in family circumstances and needs.
- Discuss these flexible policies in faculty meetings. Faculty can not utilize policies of which they are unaware. Make policy use the norm and not the exception.
- Promote a family-friendly culture of inclusion by scheduling meetings to address competing needs of work and family. Faculty with caregiving responsibilities may need to arrive late or leave early to address daycare hours (typically 8 am-5 pm)

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- Dispel myths⁴ that associate family caregiving with a lack of seriousness in faculty development or the use of flexible policies as a special privilege.
 - Make every effort to see that policy users are not penalized. Faculty may be reluctant to utilize flexibility policies for fear of negative repercussions particularly associated with promotion and tenure. For faculty who utilize tenure clock extensions, direct both internal and external reviewers to focus on scholarship achieved in the accepted probationary period and not the time since hire (see Faculty Handbook, Section 5.2.1.4). Include such direction in requests for external review letters. Example language for such requests can be found in [Sample Letters to External Evaluators](#).

4. Maintain zero tolerance for a negative climate.

Discriminatory comments and behaviors can quickly erode the departmental climate. Such conduct is unacceptable and prohibited by ISU's [Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy](#) and ISU's Faculty Conduct Policy ([Faculty Handbook, Chapter 7](#)). Consult with ISU's Ombuds or with ISU's Office of Equal Opportunity for guidance, support, and best practices in navigating climate issues in the department or college.

⁴ Develop a department-wide awareness of implicit bias. Bias literacy: a review of concepts in research on discrimination offers a thorough treatment of the forms of unconscious gender and racial bias (Isaac, et al., 2016; Sevo & Chubin, 2010)

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