

## ***Family Benefits at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst: An Assessment Executive Summary***

Jennifer Lundquist, Joya Misra, Elissa Holmes, Abby Templer and Stephanie Agiomavritis

During the 2008-2009 year, the Joint Administration-Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP) Work-Life Committee designed a campus-wide study to shed light on the ways in which faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst negotiate the boundaries between work and life. The MSP, the Provost's Office, and the Office of Faculty Development funded the study. The study included a survey of all faculty, who were not serving in administrative roles, and focus groups. New family benefits have been in effect on campus for almost a decade, and this report details who does and does not use parental benefits, how benefit eligibility status differentially impacts faculty, and what the possible consequences are of these benefits for faculty and for the university at large.

### ***Key findings from this report include:***

- University of Massachusetts is well ahead of most universities in its paid parental leave, automatic tenure clock adjustment, and subsidized childcare benefits for new faculty. However, its availability for faculty and librarians for on-campus childcare facility is weaker than at many comparable institutions.
- Many faculty, who need available family-friendly benefits, do not use them:
  - Close to half of eligible UMass faculty do not take paid family leave, despite the fact that many are in dual career marriages and take on significant caregiving responsibilities for their children. Overall, men are less likely to take leaves, and women faculty in the sciences are less likely than other women to take parental leave.
  - Paid parental leave remains a privilege predominantly for tenure line faculty and librarians; staff and most contract faculty do not qualify for the benefit. Senior contract faculty who do qualify are, on average, beyond their (biological) childbearing years.
  - Less than half of eligible tenure line faculty slow their tenure clock to adjust for having children.
- Faculty parents who had children at UMass after family-friendly benefits were introduced are more satisfied than those who had children prior to eligibility.
- Most faculty parents want to use the University childcare program but have been unable to because of severely limited availability, its lack of infant care and/or its expense.

### ***Recommendations requiring financial investment include:***

- (1) *Extend paid parental leave to all faculty, not just tenure line faculty and senior lecturers, and extend tenure delays.* Extending leave would increase unity and satisfaction and cost little because many contract faculty are past childbearing age when hired at UMass.
- (2) *Develop a Flexible Tenure-Track System* so that faculty with intense caregiving duties or young children could step on and off the tenure track or take part-time appointments.
- (3) *Offer a second semester of paid leave or modified duties to lactating mothers.*
- (4) *Expand on-campus childcare services and facilities to include infant care, additional toddler care, and additional hours of operation.* On-site childcare would help remedy work-life balance issues, which could narrow the gender gap in research productivity.

### ***Recommendations requiring cultural change include:***

- (5) *Educate Deans, Chairs and Personnel Committees about family friendly policies to increase institutional and departmental support for family friendly policies.* UMass should systematically and regularly communicate family policy options to faculty members.
- (6) *Publicly recognize departments with a good track record of benefit usage.*
- (7) *Extend automated tenure adjustment to all assistant professors who become parents.* A mechanism for automatic tenure delay needs to be developed because parents, who feel uncomfortable taking a parental leave, are not utilizing the tenure clock delay either.
- (8) *Add a family leave category to the standard Annual Faculty Review form.* It would normalize paid leave and allow faculty to explain decreased productivity due to a leave.
- (9) *Make family friendly policies a major component of faculty recruitment efforts.*