

### **RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF A FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE**

Work-life balance has been defined as, "The notion that simultaneously engaging in multiple work and family roles is beneficial for the physical, mental, and relationship health of individuals." (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003). Accommodating family obligations in the short or long term leads to increased levels of job satisfaction, better health and lower rates of employee turnover (Hammer, et. al., (2011). UNL has made significant strides in recent years in facilitating work-life balance by establishing specific programs as detailed below and by allowing for adjustments in workload and/or work hours during periods of illness or critical life transitions. Faculty have a right to use these policies; any discouragement leaves the faculty open for a lawsuit.

### **ACCOMMODATING WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

Most faculty members will experience family events that require adjustments to their academic obligations. Normal life events include, for example, childbirth or adoption, parenting and child care obligations, a faculty members' own health or the health of a loved one, elder-care, death of a family member or other life events that impact one's ability to work. Support for workplace flexibility and balance is a major factor for hiring, retention and productivity of faculty. Therefore, faculty work-life concerns must be anticipated and accepted. Dissemination of information on university programs, resources and policies designed to support faculty work-life balance should be easily accessed and available within academic departments and colleges, as well as a key focus of the faculty orientation process.

### **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**

All regular academic/administrative employees of the University with an FTE of 0.50 or greater, are eligible for family medical leaves of absence. Family and medical leave under the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the (federal) Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) may be used for the following reasons:

- To address a serious health condition of the employee's child, parent, or spouse.

- To address a serious health condition of the employee, which prevents the employee from performing the essential functions of the job
- To address maternal/paternal concerns associated with the birth of a child or the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care
- In association with a death in the immediate family

### **BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE:**

- Distribute UNL leave policies to all faculty
- Incorporate UNL leave dissemination policies into the department handbook
- Post links to UNL and college leave policies on the department website
- In accordance with FMLA and UNL policies and bylaws COMMA offer appropriate course releases, redistribution of research obligations and committee assignments
- Beyond providing information about UNL leave policies, ask the faculty member what help she/he needs and assist her/him in finding the needed resources
- Make an effort to continue to include the absent faculty member in major work-related communications

### **EXTENSION OF TIMELINES FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION DECISIONS**

According to UN executive memorandum No. 18, "in cases of absence because of maternity, disability or family and medical leave, the seven year limitation on the period of full-time service prior to acquisition of a Continuous Appointment [may be] extended to allow a faculty member additional full-time service to make up for full-time service lost because of maternity, disability or family/medical leave."

- Distribute UNL policies on interruption of the tenure decision timeline or extension of the probationary period to all faculty

- Flexibility is instrumental in accommodating unanticipated family and personal responsibilities that may compromise the ability of tenure-track or tenured faculty members to fulfill all obligations of their positions for a period of time
- Educate faculty who participate in performance evaluation of faculty who have taken family and/or medical leave about the allowances that should be made regarding extension of the tenure or promotion decisions

[http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/faculty/policies/work\\_life\\_integration.shtml](http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/faculty/policies/work_life_integration.shtml)

- Child care services
  - UNL Children's Center (6 weeks – 5 years), provides a full-time year round child care facility on campus.
  - Ruth Staples Child Development Lab (18 mos – 5 years), provides child development curriculum late August – first week of June

### **BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING DUAL-CAREER SITUATIONS:**

Addressing dual career situations can be vital to the recruitment and retention of UNL faculty.

- Wide distribution of UNL's dual career policies facilitates their implementation
- Provide situation-based assistance to faculty both as part of the initial hire process or as subsequent need develops

- Faculty/Staff Disability Services – Provides accommodations necessary to allow individuals with disabilities to effectively and safely function in the work environment
- Health and Wellness:
  - UNL Employee Assistance Program – Free, confidential, professional counseling and consultation services to faculty and dependents.
  - Campus Recreation, Health and Wellness – Fitness, nutrition, injury prevention and care, personal training, massage therapy.
  - Barkley Memorial Center, for children and adults with speech and hearing disabilities

### **RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT UNL**

- Human Resources Policies – FMLA  
<http://hr.unl.edu/policies/familymedical-leave-absence>
- UNL Children's Center: <http://childcare.unl.edu/>
- Ruth Staples Child Development Lab  
<http://cehs.unl.edu/cyaf/outreach/staplesLab.shtml>
- Faculty/Staff Disability Services  
<http://www.unl.edu/equity/dservices.shtml>
- Employee Assistance Program  
<http://hr.unl.edu/eap>
- Advance Dual Career  
<http://advance.unl.edu/dualcareer/>
- UNL Campus Recreation, Wellness:  
<http://crec.unl.edu/healthwell>
- Barkley Memorial Center  
<http://cehs.unl.edu/barkley/Barkley.shtml>
- Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs – Faculty Policies

### **REFERENCES**

- Greenhaus, J. & Singh, R. (2003, February 25). *Work-Family Linkages, A Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia Entry*. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.
- Hammer, L.B., Kossek, E.E., Anger, W.K., Bodner, T., & Zimmerman, K.L. (2011). Clarifying Work-Family Intervention Processes: The Roles of Work-Family Conflict and Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96(1): 134–150.
- Powell, G.N., & Greenhaus, J.H. (2010). Sex, Gender, and the work-to-family interface: Exploring negative and positive interdependencies. *Academy of Management Journal* 53(3), 513–534.