TO:  SEAS Deans  
Department and Division Chairs  
SEAS Faculty

FROM:  James H. Aylor, Dean  
Louis T. Rader Professor  
School of Engineering and Applied Science  
University of Virginia

RE:  SEAS Maternity and Parental Leave Policy for Faculty

I. Introduction

According to the National Research Council, the number of female science and engineering Ph.D.’s in academia doubled during 1979-89. However, in the same period, the number in industry quadrupled (Lewis 1995). One possible reason is that industry is responding more quickly to the needs of its female employees. The women faculty of SEAS feel that implementing a parental policy will positively influence the attitudes of current faculty, ensure consistency across departments, and serve as a recruiting tool for female faculty. Additionally, a maternity leave may affect SEAS students the most—a six week absence and subsequent instructor change during a semester may be very disruptive to students.

The parental leave policy adopted here enables a faculty member to remain a contributing member of his/her profession without penalizing him/her for the choice to have a family in addition to an academic career. Because the childbearing years will often coincide with the probationary period, this is an important issue to address. The central theme of this parental leave policy is to allow flexibility and individual tailoring within a structured leave policy.

This policy and procedure memo discusses the SEAS parental leave policy and its relationship to current university policy.

II. University Policy

The following information summarizes the current policy on maternity and parental leaves and tenure clock extension. The majority of the information may be found in the Faculty Handbook.

Family Leave

The university provides family leave in several forms: maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption/foster care leave, modified service leave and family leave. These leaves are summarized below. Please consult the faculty handbook for the exact descriptions of these leaves.

Maternity Leave

The policy provides up to twelve weeks of maternity leave for pregnancy and childbirth. During the first six weeks, the university continues full salary and benefits; for the remainder of the leave, no salary is paid, but health and life insurance premiums are maintained. If more than six weeks of leave is required for medical reasons, the leave is covered under the temporary disability leave policy.

Paternity Leave

At the birth of a child, up to twelve weeks of leave is available to the father. During the leave, no salary is paid, but the university continues to pay their portion of allowable health and life insurance premiums.

Adoption/Foster Care Leave

For the adoption or foster care of a child, up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave is available and is to be taken within the first twelve months of placement. However, if the child is under 7, the first three weeks of leave is at full pay and allowable fringe benefits.
Modified Service Leave

A one-semester modified service leave is also available to teaching faculty. Under this leave, a primary caregiver receives a salary equivalent to the amount worked, but the effort may not be less than 50%. Allowable fringe benefits continue and the retirement benefits are prorated.

Family Leave

Family leave may be granted for up to a year when circumstances render a faculty member unable to perform assigned duties. The leave is without pay, but with continuation of allowable benefits.

Tenure Clock Extension

For tenure-track faculty, any family leave time may be excluded from the probationary period. This stated in the University Promotion and Tenure Policy as follows:

The probationary period may be extended beyond its ordinary term only if a written request by the faculty member has been approved in writing by the dean and the provost. Approval by the dean and the provost must be sought and provided in advance whenever possible. A leave of absence from the University does not extend the probationary period without such written request and approvals. Example of circumstances under which "clock stopping" may be approved include but are not limited to: (1) engagement in important public or University service, (2) maternity or family parenting, or (3) serious personal or family illness.

The university's leave policies primarily address financial points: the payment of salary and receipt of fringe benefits. This SEAS policy adheres to university policy in these regards. However, other faculty-related issues are not addressed within the framework of the university policy and are included in the SEAS maternity and parental leave policy as indicated below. Specifically, addressed in the SEAS policy are issues involving teaching schedules, service activity and tenure clock extension.

III. SEAS Maternity and Parental Policy for Faculty

The following maternity and parental leave policy for the School of Engineering and Applied Science allows for a period of modified duties for a faculty member who is the primary caregiver. It addresses the impact of childbearing and childrearing on the academic professional work of the primary caregiver and his or her colleagues and students. It is assumed that the mother is the primary caregiver unless the dean is notified otherwise.

The SEAS policy relieves a faculty member of organized teaching and service activities for one semester. The policy is in effect during the semester which encompasses the maternity leave. If the maternity leave occurs during a summer or school break, the policy applies to the semester immediately following the birth. Specifically, the modified duties while on maternity or parental leave are:

1. Relief from teaching duties for one academic semester.
2. Release from departmental and school committee assignments during the same semester.
3. Necessary computer equipment (such as a borrowed computer, modem and/or software) is to be made available to the caregiver to facilitate working from home.

These reductions are not to be accompanied by any decrease in pay or benefits and are not to be considered postponements of duties to be redressed at a later date.

During the period of modified duties, the faculty member is expected to perform all other academic activities at 100% effort except those described above. All professional service and research efforts which include writing and reviewing papers, submitting proposals, and advising graduate students are expected to be continued. These efforts do not require strict scheduling, may be accomplished from outside the office, and cannot be delegated.

It is expected that requests for maternity and parental leave be accompanied by a request for tenure clock extension.