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Proposed Policy: Stopping the Tenure-Clock

Background

In fall 2005 the Sloan Foundation published a report on family-friendly policies in higher education. The report found that 86 percent of Research I Institutions offer a formal tenure-clock delay policy upon the birth or adoption of a child. During summer 2005 Princeton University announced that it was implementing a new tenure-clock delay policy: one that would automatically extend the tenure-clock for probationary faculty upon the birth or adoption of a child. Princeton's policy prior had functioned as all other policies do: on a request-only basis. An institutional study revealed that most faculty do not take advantage of the policy, fearing that the delay of time will be held against them during their tenure and promotion review. Other internal studies performed by Research I institutions (University of California System, University of Michigan) reveal similar findings. Thus, Princeton concluded that to make the policy as effective and universal as possible it must be granted automatically. Furthermore, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) recommends that the stopping of the tenure clock should be in the form of a clear entitlement under institutional policies, rather than in the form of an individually negotiated agreement or informal practice.

University of Kentucky Position

Presently, the University of Kentucky does not offer a policy to stop the tenure-clock, yet both the University's Top 20 Business Plan and the Dream, Challenge, and Succeed Strategic Plan state that UK must recruit and retain the most talented faculty. Providing competitive benefits to faculty is key to accomplishing the University's goals. UK is at a competitive disadvantage given how widespread tenure-clock extension policies are among Research I institutions. As a result we propose that the University adopt a tenure-clock extension policy for probationary Regular, Special and Extension Title Series faculty effective AY 2007. The implementation costs are relatively low, and the potential benefits are significant: more competitive recruiting, higher faculty morale, and stronger tenure/promotion dossiers. This policy has been written in the spirit of the data and the AAUP recommendation as cited above. If approved, the University of Kentucky's would move from being one of the least competitive to one of the most competitive Research I institutions in regards to stopping the tenure-clock.

Proposed Policy for University of Kentucky

A probationary regular, extension or special title series faculty member who becomes the parent of a child by birth, adoption or guardianship will automatically be granted one-year delay of term by the dean of the respective college, upon notification by the professor's department to the college dean; unless the faculty member provides a written request not to stop the tenure clock. This provision is available to all regular, extension and special title series probationary faculty upon their official start date and up until September 15th in the year in which their tenure review is scheduled to occur. Notifications of all extensions should be made by the faculty member's department in writing to the dean of the respective college as soon as possible after the birth, adoption and/or guardianship but in no case later than 6 months from the time of the qualifying event (i.e., birth, adoption, or guardianship) or September 15th of the year in which a recommendation on the faculty member's promotion to tenure must be made; whichever comes first. This provision would allow delaying the tenure clock only twice, resulting in no more than two one-year extensions of the probationary period regardless of whether or not the faculty member was on leave. This provision requires that the candidate is reviewed under the same academic standards as a candidate who has not extended the probationary period. The delay of the tenure period should not penalize or adversely affect the faculty member in the tenure review.