

## **STRATEGIC NEED FOR CHANGES IN UoL FAMILY BENEFITS POLICIES**

### **Introduction**

On behalf of UofL Faculty and Staff, the members of the Ad Hoc Total Rewards Committee in A&S ask Faculty Senate for the following initial actions in support of our four recommendations for changes to UofL's current Family Benefits policies: (1) to endorse a preliminary consideration of these recommendations; (2) to refer them to the appropriate places in HR and/or higher administration for a cost analysis; (3) to request that this cost analysis be reported back to Faculty Senate by the end of the fiscal year 2026; (4) subsequent to review of the cost analysis, to engage in their further discussion in Faculty Senate with the goal of their endorsement, in whole or in part, followed by a report and recommendations to appropriate parties in higher administration and HR.

### **Increased Family Benefits – Why Now?**

More than five years ago, then Provost Lori Gonzalez recognized the inadequacy of UofL's Family Leave Policies and appointed a Work Group to recommend changes. Only one of these changes was ever implemented, the cancellation of the mandatory waiting period for rights to Parental Leave Benefit. Two major changes were formulated and processed – 15 weeks Parental Leave and the extension of Faculty and Administrator Medical Leave Policy to include eligible family member – but their processing was never completed, reportedly, owing to instable higher administration in HR. Since then, they have been forgotten and no new initiatives to improve Family related benefits have been proposed.

It is indeed, counter-intuitive to recommend increases in Faculty and Staff Family Benefits precisely when we are moving towards the goal of \$90 million budget cuts university-wide. Yet at this particular time of budgetary austerity the University stands to gain, not lose, from the implementation of these recommendations for the following reasons. First, since the recent obliteration of COSW and other University offices that represented the needs of women and minorities and monitored their status, proactive, material support for UofL workers with family responsibilities is needed more than ever. Second, we believe that a cost analysis will show that, overall, these policies are relatively low cost since they have limited application – they are time limited and will only occur once or twice in an employee's work life with the university. While the Spousal Tuition Benefit, arguably, is less time limited than the others, policy can be created

to control its implementation to ensure cost effectiveness. Third, precisely when the ever problematic morale of UofL employees stands to be adversely affected owing to potential future changes effected by the need for budgetary savings (job loss, structural change and potential elimination and/or diminishment of academic programs and units), it behooves UofL's higher administration to show true appreciation for and support of its workforce. True appreciation is recognition of the employee as a "total person," including the effect of family obligations upon their ability to work with optimal efficiency. Ultimately, the implementation of family friendly policies will show that UofL supports its employees as "total people," with needs that involve family responsibilities beyond the workplace. Although the positive consequences of these policies – more stable work force, greater efficiency, leave equity across units – will be impossible to quantify until after the fact, this support can only generate loyalty and commitment to the University as an innovative, family friendly employer.

### **History of the Recommendations -- Total Rewards Salary Study**

The Ad Hoc Total Rewards Committee (AHTRC) was initiated by Natalie Polzer in December 2023 and voted into existence for the year 2024 by the Faculty Assembly of the College of A&S. The motivation for its creation was to ensure that the "Total Rewards" aspect of the Segal "Total Rewards" Salary Study be maintained – as the Salary Study progressed and the process of its implementation became imminent, the consideration of Benefits, promised by Segal during the initial stages of the project, was being ignored in favor of an exclusive focus on salary. To date, Segal's data, analysis and recommendations on Benefits has never been shared with Faculty Senate. Working from the assumption that Benefits, as well as salary, influence overall job satisfaction, the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee was to brainstorm ways that would improve working conditions for Faculty and Staff at the University of Louisville through non-salary benefits that would be relatively easy to put in place and of low cost to the University. As well as help U of L become a better "great place to work," these benefits would enhance research productivity and employee retention, which would offset the cost involved in their implementation.

These benefits are distinct from group insurance policies that are negotiated through HR.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Rachel Carter, A&S Theatre Arts; Elise Franklin, A&S History; Anita Hall, Benefits Design Workgroup Representative (HR); Library, Sammie Holmes, A&S

Presented by Senator Natalie C. Polzer, Chair of Former College of Arts and Sciences Ad Hoc Total Rewards Committee (created January 1, 2024; mandate complete December 31, 2024)

Staff Representative, CML; Katie Kleinkopf, A&S Comparative Humanities; Natalie Polzer, A&S, Comparative Humanities; David Swanson, A&S Mathematics; Courtney Stine, Library Representative.

## **The College of A&S Ad Hoc Total Rewards Committee Recommendations**

After research and consultation with relevant College and University personnel the Ad Hoc Committee made final recommendations to the Faculty Assembly of the College of A&S on 12/7/2024. A show of support for each recommendation was achieved through a poll, so that a short list of recommendations could be chosen in accordance with the opinions of A&S Faculty.

### **I. THE PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY RECOMMENDED BY THE FACULTY LEAVE POLICY WORK GROUP (2020-2022)**

**A&S Faculty Assembly Poll – 65 Voted: 56 In Support; 1 Not In Support; 8 Abstentions.**

#### **History of the Proposed Parental Leave Policy**

Tracy Ells first reported the recommendations of the Faculty Leave Policy Work Group, a Committee charged by then Provost Lori Gonzalez and chaired by himself and Brigid Gies, to the Senate Executive Committee in October 2020

(<https://louisville.edu/facultysenate/committees/standing-committees/executive-committee/reports/2020/xc1120>). This Work Group is no longer extant, having been disbanded after its recommendations to the Deans' Council Meeting on April 13, 2022.

The following Parental Leave changes for Faculty and Administrators were proposed by the Work Group:

- Increase paid parental leave from 6 weeks to 15 weeks (institutional base pay)
- Explicit extension to foster care
- Appropriate extension of the “tenure clock” for pre-tenure faculty
- Eligibility begins with first day of U of L employment<sup>1</sup>

Since that date, only the last item of these improvements to existing Parental Leave Policy has moved forward from recommendation to policy. Moreover, almost four years later, this proposal to extend Parental Leave from 6 to 15 paid weeks has never been made public university wide – it was only through casual conversation with individuals who had been working members of the Faculty Leave Policy Work Group that the existence of the revised Parental Leave Policy came to light. When questioned why the Policy had not moved forward, the Ad Hoc Committee was informed that this was owing to (1) fluctuating leadership in the higher administration overall; (2) the wish to include Staff as well as Faculty in the Policy, which required stable leadership in HR before the issue could even begin to be addressed.

The Parental Leave recommendations were proposed by a Work Group that was commissioned by then Provost Lori Gonzalez and composed of official U of L Faculty Affairs and HR personnel, as well as representative Faculty. This shows that in 2020 improvements to Faculty and Administrator Leave Policies were a high priority for U of L Administration and that the still

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<sup>1</sup> From powerpoint presentation to the Dean's Council Meeting April 13, 2022 graciously provided by Cherie Dawson-Edwards.

in effect 6 week paid family leave policy was considered inadequate to support and retain faculty and staff who wish to become parents.

Now that higher administration leadership is stable, including a new director of HR, I ask the Senate for a preliminary endorsement of this policy and to request a cost analysis to be executed by the appropriate parties, as stipulated at the beginning of this document.

## **II. *FAULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR MEDICAL LEAVE POLICY RECOMMENDED BY THE FACULTY LEAVE POLICY WORK GROUP (2020-2022)***

### **A&S Faculty Assembly Poll – 58 Voted: 53 In Support; 1 Not In Support; 4 Abstentions.**

The Faculty Leave Policy Work Group recognized that the medical condition of a family member has a direct impact on employee productivity and overall job satisfaction, and hence, made the following recommendations to improve the University's existing Medical Leave Policy by extending it to qualifying family members:

- **Leave with pay up to 12 weeks extends to eligible others in family with a serious health condition** for whom the employee is the primary caretaker.
- Appropriate extension of the “tenure clock” for pre-tenure faculty<sup>2</sup>

Like the 19 week paid Family Leave Policy Proposal, this proposal has languished invisible for almost three years, apparently, for the same reasons.

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## **III. EXTENSION OF BEREAVEMENT LEAVE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF**

### **A&S Faculty Assembly Poll – 62 Voted: 54 In Support; 1 Not In Support; 7 Abstentions.**

The extensions to Bereavement Leave for faculty, administrators and staff will be low cost, easily implemented, and directly result in a more humane work environment that fosters employee care. Currently, Bereavement Leave is 3 days; we recommend extending this to 5 days and the inclusion of Pregnancy Loss in the policy. The extension of 2 days Bereavement Leave would enable U of L Employees to take a whole week off, plus two weekends, to deal with issues relating to bereavement.

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<sup>2</sup> From powerpoint presentation to the Dean's Council Meeting April 13, 2022 graciously provided by Cherie Dawson-Edwardrods.

#### **IV. REINSTATEMENT OF SPOUSAL TUITION BENEFIT**

##### **A&S Faculty Assembly Poll – 57 Voted: 48 In Support; 5 Not In Support; 4 Abstentions**

This benefit was once a source of job satisfaction and indirect retention, since it mitigated relatively low salaries. A public communication of the total savings accrued by its cancellation was never disclosed when it was eliminated during a round of budget cuts. A reinstatement of the spousal tuition benefit would improve employee retention, motivation and morale and be low cost if the benefit were capped at 3 credit hours a semester.

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