A Motion to Allow Extension of the Probationary Period for Tenure Under Special Circumstances

Referred by the Faculty Issues Committee

Motion:

The Faculty Senate Recommends that the following paragraphs be added to the Faculty Handbook as a new part of Section 1.7 on Tenure policies and labeled *Section 1.7.4.: Extending the Tenure Clock*. This information shall be made available as part of a package explaining benefits to individuals considering faculty positions at Radford University and again during orientation of new faculty.

**Extending the Tenure Clock**

Any non-tenured member of the faculty shall be eligible for extension of the tenure probationary period for life events that can reasonably be expected to have a marked impact on scholarly productivity. If requested, a one-year probationary period extension will *automatically* be granted to either parent (or both, if both parents are tenure-track faculty members) in recognition of the demands of caring for a newborn child or having accepted responsibility for the long-term care of a child (through adoption or other reasons).

In other cases where a probationary faculty member believes that an extension of the tenure clock will be beneficial, an application must be made to the immediate chair or department head, and then proceed through all higher levels as would be the case if making a request for personal leave. These cases may include, but are not limited to, serious personal illness or major illness of a member of the immediate family; significant elder care obligations; death of a parent, child, spouse, or domestic partner; non-medical emergencies such as catastrophic property loss; or professional opportunities to pursue research or grants that require significant commitments of time away from campus. In either situation – whether automatic or requested – extension of the tenure clock is not contingent on taking personal leave.

Probationary period extensions are granted in one-year increments. A cumulative total of two years is normally the maximum probationary period extension for any combination of reasons. All requests must be made within a year of the qualifying event or extenuating circumstance.

All requests for a probationary extension must be submitted in writing to the department head or chair, along with documentation of medical or other reasons (when appropriate). If the request is denied at any level, the faculty member may appeal the decision to the next higher level.

It is very important that all individuals and committees participating in tenure reviews understand that any individual who receives a probationary period extension must be held to the same standard—not a higher or more stringent one—to which other candidates without such an extension are held.

**Rationale**

It is no understatement to say that the quality of both family and work life is an important issue in attracting and retaining excellent and diverse faculty at Radford University. Factors affecting the quality of life during the probationary period may include conflicts between childbearing or the sustained care of a family member with special needs and the time-sensitive goal of preparing a portfolio for tenure.

At present, Radford University does not have a policy related to extending the tenure clock in such extenuating circumstances. However, the potential for extending the tenure clock is a component of the 2001 AAUP [*Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work*](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/workfam-stmt.htm) and is practiced at many universities. Such a policy should therefore be a component of the package that Radford University offers to all faculty. Doing so will bring Radford University into alignment with the best practices of other universities. With this motion, we therefore propose that upon request, a faculty member should be allowed to extend the probationary period, with or without taking a full or partial leave of absence.