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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Economics Tenured and Tenure-Seeking Faculty

FROM: William Neilson, Head 

SUBJECT: Economics Department Head Policy on Extending the Probationary Period due to Family Leave

The University of Tennessee allows for the possibility of a tenure-track faculty member extending the probationary period for reasons of childbirth, adoption, or commencement of foster care. This policy applies to either parent, but it does have some provisions. The best source of information on this right now is from the family-care policy section of the Provost's website (<http://provost.utk.edu/policies/family-care/>) and is the overriding authority for the department.

The policy says that the primary care-giver for pre-school-aged children may receive a modification of duties for one semester within 12 months of the child's arrival. These modified duties include such considerations as:

- Complete teaching release for one semester
- Complete release from on-campus schedule meeting and obligations (although remote attendance may be desirable),
- Research obligations/opportunities to be negotiated.
- Other desirable and negotiated accommodations.

The policy also explicitly states that in the event of modified duties due to childbirth, adoption, or commencement of foster care, a one-year extension of the probationary period will be granted. Such probationary period extensions can be granted a maximum of two times, and in each case the faculty member must apply for the extension through the department head.

Unfortunately, neither the Provost's website, nor the *Faculty Handbook*, nor the *Manual for Faculty Evaluation* provide guidelines for evaluating a tenure and promotion case when the faculty member has extended the probationary period by a year. The purpose of this document is to state the guidelines that will be used by me when performing the Department Head's evaluation of tenure-track faculty.

Unless otherwise stated in the letter granting the extension of the probationary period, the following rules will apply for both retention reviews prior to the promotion and tenure decision and to the promotion and tenure decision itself.

- All research performed during the probationary period will be used for evaluation regardless of whether the activities were performed during a period of modified duties. However, the research record will be evaluated according to criteria consistent with the length of time on tenure track at the University of Tennessee less one year for each year of extension of family care.
- All courses taught during the probationary period will be used for evaluation for both retention reviews prior to the promotion and tenure decision and to the promotion and tenure decision itself.
- All service activities performed during the probationary period will be used for evaluation regardless of whether the activities were performed during a period of modified duties. However, the service record will be evaluated according to criteria consistent with the length of time on tenure track at the University of Tennessee less one year for each year of extension of family care.

My position on faculty members taking advantage of this policy is that they should do so. The policy allows for the possibility of either spouse having primary care responsibilities.

University policy holds that an extension of the probationary period is an option to extend, not a commitment to extend. The faculty member who was granted an extension may choose to go up for promotion and tenure at the normal time, and this will be considered a regular promotion and tenure decision rather than an early tenure decision. Under such a scenario all activities will be evaluated according to the standards for a normal probationary period.

University policy also allows modified faculty duty for a faculty member in cases where the faculty member becomes seriously ill or becomes the primary care-giver for a family member who becomes seriously ill. If one of these should occur to a tenure-track faculty member, and if this results in an extension of the probationary period, then all of the above rules will apply.