West Virginia University is committed to helping its employees achieve an appropriate work-life balance. The often conflicting demands between, on the one hand, experiencing and recovering from childbirth and caring for and bonding with a newly born child, an adopted child, or a child placed in guardianship, and, on the other, one’s professional responsibilities, is recognized as a challenge. It is the intent of this recommendation to provide consistency throughout the University community in addressing this matter, by granting workload options to address certain parental needs.

It is important to note that the work-life balance we seek for all members of the university community is principally found in, and inextricably linked to, the historically cherished and vibrant concept of collegiality: free thinking, hard working, and intellectually keen people existing in the academic environment together in a holistic and cooperative spirit. Collegiality is fundamentally irreplaceable, particularly in the faculty ranks. Successful implementation of this recommendation will always lie squarely upon the shoulders of those members of the faculty, staff, and administration who honor and work within the notions of collegiality.

SCOPE
For purposes of this document, it is recognized that within the university community there are at least four distinct constituency groups, each of which may require specific attention to address the issue at hand: full-time faculty with 12-month contracts, who accrue medical and annual leave; full-time faculty with contracts of less than twelve months, who accrue neither medical leave nor annual leave; staff (classified and non-classified), who accrue medical and annual leave; and faculty at the WV Tech and Potomac State campuses, who have different expectations than faculty on the WVU Morgantown campus. The focus of the present recommendation, as the first of several phases, is to provide paid Parental Work Assignments for full-time faculty who do not accrue medical or annual leave (at this time, specifically tenured and tenure-track faculty on nine-month contracts). Adoption of the recommendation can provide release from teaching and other responsibilities for such faculty members following the birth of a child or the placement of a child for adoption or in guardianship with the faculty member. After phases to address full-time faculty who do not accrue medical or annual leave are initiated, plans for subsequent phases for staff and full-time twelve-month faculty who accrue medical and annual leave, as well as other employees who do not, nor faculty who are at the divisions, will be developed.

DEFINITIONS
“Parent” is defined as a person or persons assuming responsibility for the new child, normally a biological parent, an adoptive parent, or a guardian. “First parent” is normally the parent that either gives birth to the child or who takes primary responsibility for the child shortly after birth or in the event of an adoption. For a parent who is not the birth mother, appropriate evidence of status as “first” or “second” parent would be expected. Such evidence could take a variety of forms.
“Parental Work Assignment” is defined as the period of time, normally within the basic contract period, during which an employee’s traditional assignment may be changed without salary modification to accommodate new parental responsibilities. The Parental Work Assignment will often result in a release from or modification of traditional teaching duties. A Parental Work Assignment, if requested, will be granted upon the birth of a child or the adoption or guardianship of a child. Both male and female faculty members are eligible to request such an assignment. A faculty member with a Parental Work Assignment will be expected to complete her/his assignment during the contract period.

DURATION OF A PARENTAL WORK ASSIGNMENT
During the first phase, the duration of a Parental Work Assignment available to faculty members who do not accrue leave may be dependent upon a variety of factors, many of which are referenced below. This document states the minimum length of the Parental Work Assignment available to the faculty member following the birth, adoption, or assumption of guardianship of a child in order to support the family needs of the faculty member. It is understood that a faculty member may wish to request a Parental Work Assignment less than the minimum for which she or he is eligible.

Parental Work Assignment Due to the Birth of a Child
Upon request, a Parental Work Assignment shall be granted in recognition of the birth of a child. During such part of the contract period, adjustment of one’s assignment shall include release from traditional teaching responsibilities:

- Normally, the release from the faculty member’s traditional teaching duties will extend for the semester in which the birth occurs, although the release is expected to be for a minimum of 6 weeks (30 working days) for a vaginal child birth or 8 weeks (40 working days) for a c-section immediately following the birth of the child. In special circumstances, including but not limited to the timing of the birth, the semester in which the release is provided might follow the one in which the actual birth occurs.

- Normally, the release from teaching for a faculty member who is the second parent will be for 2 weeks (10 working days), within three months of the birth of the child.

- Situations that require extended release are to be handled in the current collegial manner, by discussion and arrangement with the faculty member’s supervisor.

Parental Work Assignment Following the Adoption of a Child or Assumption of the Guardianship of a Child
Upon request, a Parental Work Assignment shall be granted following the placement of a child with the faculty member for adoption or the assumption of the guardianship of a child. Such assignment during the contract period may include release from traditional teaching responsibilities:
• Normally, the release from traditional teaching duties will extend for the semester in which the placement of the child with the faculty member occurs, although the release is expected to be for a minimum of 6 weeks (30 working days) immediately following such placement. In special circumstances, including but not limited to the timing of the placement of the child, the semester in which the release is provided might follow the one in which the placement of the child occurs.

• Normally, the release from teaching for a faculty member who is the second parent will normally be for 2 weeks (10 working days) within three months of the placement of the child.

**Expectations**

Full-time faculty members who receive a Parental Work Assignment are expected to pursue scholarly work, student advising, research and other professional service, including departmental and University service, as appropriate and in keeping with reasonable expectations for flexibility, for the period of the semester in which they were given a release from traditional teaching. Addressing the teaching needs of the department is the responsibility of the department chair or equivalent academic administrator.

The University and its colleges and schools expect that faculty members eligible for a Parental Work Assignment will routinely use this benefit. Such use shall not adversely affect the faculty member's standing or salary in any manner. A reduction in one’s teaching assignment is not meant to be made up at a later date. Likewise, a faculty member is not expected to engage in more research or service than is assigned during the contract period. The funding for the teaching coverage is provided by the college.

**PROCEDURE**

Any Parental Work Assignment must allow for flexibility in its implementation. Department chairs or the equivalent should be mindful of this when working out individual arrangements and should consult with their deans as appropriate. They must be familiar with the policies and options for faculty requesting a Parental Work Assignment and need to ensure that this information is provided to all faculty members in the department.

The faculty member should make her or his request for a Parental Work Assignment as soon as possible after the date of the anticipated birth or other action is known.

Arrangements for a Parental Work Assignment are to be made between a faculty member and her or his unit supervisor and reported simultaneously to the Dean. If the faculty member and the administrative head cannot reach a mutually satisfactory agreement regarding a Parental Work Assignment, the advice and guidance of the Provost, Chancellor or his/her designee should be sought.

The supervisor of the unit involved should consult with members of the unit as soon as possible about coverage of duties during the period of a Parental Work Assignment if such duties are to be distributed among others in the unit. While a Parental Work Assignment for faculty is not
identical to sabbatical leave, the manner in which coverage of duties is distributed can be drawn from sabbatical leave examples. Creative solutions may be called for in small departments or when a very specialized course needs to be taught.

A faculty member in the tenure track period may apply for an extension of the critical year as described in West Virginia University Board of Governors Policy 51, Extension of the Tenure Clock. Such an application is not in any way connected to these Parental Work Assignment guidelines. Further useful information may be found in “Family Friendly Practices for Faculty Members,” available at http://provost.wvu.edu/r/download/35947.

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Each individual situation will be unique, and each department will face specific challenges placed on it by a faculty member’s absence; therefore flexibility is needed in order to exercise appropriate professional judgment. A number of guiding principles can expedite the process and assist the faculty member and the department in addressing the conditions of the Parental Work Assignment. These might include, but are not limited to, the following assumptions:

1. The faculty member will agree to a modified assignment in which she/he continues to help the department with certain duties that are feasible, given the particular needs of the assignment.

2. Department chairs will treat pregnancy, childbirth, and reasonable recovery/parenting/bonding time as they might treat a short-term reassignment for other purposes.

3. Faculty members will address likely arrangements for a Parental Work Assignment well in advance of the assignment, to the extent possible, in order to arrive at generally accepted practices to help address the assignment.

4. A Parental Work Assignment should be fair to the faculty member and to the department without undue pressure being placed on either party (e.g., the faculty member should not have to “pay back” the assignment with extra teaching; on the other hand, depending on the circumstances, the faculty member should not expect a full semester release without an assignment or other departmental duty).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Provost’s Office will provide guidance about faculty assignments, including those in which traditional teaching is not present.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR INTERPRETATION

The responsibility for interpretation of this document rests with the Provost at West Virginia University.

Provost’s Office, May 26, 2011