West Virginia University is committed to helping its employees achieve an appropriate work-life balance. The often conflicting demands between, on the one hand, illness of the faculty member or a member of the immediate family; care of an elderly parent; or some other serious but unforeseen circumstance; 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 personal needs. This procedure is complemented by the Parental Work Assignment Procedure, which addresses matters related to experiencing and recovering from childbirth and caring for and bonding with a newly born child, an adopted child, or a child placed in guardianship.

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 distinct constituency groups which may require specific attention to address the issue at hand. These include full-time faculty with contracts of less than twelve months, who accrue neither medical leave nor annual leave and faculty at the WVU Tech and Potomac State campuses, who have different expectations than faculty on the WVU Morgantown campus. The focus of the present recommendation is to provide Alternate Work Assignments for full-time faculty who do not accrue medical or annual leave (at this time, specifically those faculty who are tenured or tenure-track and term faculty on nine-month contracts). Adoption of the recommendation can provide release from teaching and other responsibilities for such faculty members under the circumstances identified above.

DEFINITIONS

“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 to accommodate serious unforeseen circumstances without salary modification. Similar to the Parental Work Assignment Procedure (PWAP) already in operation, the Alternate Work Assignment Procedure (AWAP) will often result in a release from or modification of traditional teaching duties. An Alternate Work Assignment, if requested, will be granted upon the occurrence of a situation referenced above.
A faculty member with an Alternate Work Assignment will be expected to complete her/his assignment during the contract period.

**DURATION OF AN ALTERNATE WORK ASSIGNMENT**

The duration of an Alternate 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 identifies the normal length of the Alternate Work Assignment available to the faculty member upon the occurrence of a serious illness of the faculty member or other qualifying individual, the need to care for an elderly parent, or other serious and unforeseen circumstances in order to support the family needs of the faculty member. It is understood that a faculty member may wish to request an Alternate Work Assignment less than the minimum for which she or he is eligible.

**Alternate Work Assignment**

Upon request, an Alternate Work Assignment shall be granted in recognition of the occurrence of an event described above. 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 event occurs. In special circumstances, including but not limited to the timing of the event, the semester in which the release is provided might follow the one in which the actual event occurs.

- Situations that require extended release are to be handled in the current collegial manner, by discussion and arrangement with the faculty member’s supervisor. The faculty member might also consider the traditional leave of absence without pay and the option of temporarily converting to a part-time assignment at reduced pay.

**Expectations**

Full-time faculty members who receive an Alternate Work Assignment are normally 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 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 an Alternate 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 or school.
PROCEDURE

Any Alternate 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 an Alternate 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 an Alternate Work Assignment as soon as possible after the date of the event.

Arrangements for an Alternate 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 an Alternate Work Assignment, the advice and guidance of the Dean, and subsequently the approval 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 an Alternate Work Assignment if such duties are to be distributed among others in the unit. While an Alternate 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 Alternate 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 Alternate 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 the events covered in this document as they might treat a short-term reassignment for other purposes.
3. Faculty members, when possible, should address likely arrangements for an Alternate Work Assignment well in advance of the assignment, to the extent that they can, in order to arrive at generally accepted practices to help address the assignment.

4. An Alternate 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 normally should not expect a full semester release without an assignment or other departmental duty of some kind).

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The Office of the Provost or the Chancellor of Health Sciences 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 or the Chancellor of Health Sciences at West Virginia University.

Provost’s Office, May 2013