

Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy

SUMMARY

The purpose of the proposed policy is to establish guidelines and to protect the interests of graduate students who, while in the course of their graduate academic program, become the primary caregiver to a newborn or adopted child.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) was approached by students and faculty about the fact that there was no specific leave policy regarding childbirth or adoption at Saint Louis University for graduate students. At present, the approval and terms of a graduate student leave following childbirth or adoption are left up to the discretion of the student's mentor and department, with the only alternative being for the student to elect to take a leave of absence. Without a clear policy, there are no guidelines in place for the student, mentor, and department to follow in determining how the leave should be structured.

To establish a childbirth and adoption leave policy, a sub-committee was formed by GSA to determine the policies in place at other comparable Universities and programs, and to make recommendations to the GSA about generating a proposed policy. In conjunction with the sub-committee's recommendations, this proposal is based largely on a recently instituted childbirth and adoption leave policy for graduate students at the University of Notre Dame, in addition to the Saint Louis University Faculty Parental Leave Policy. The following summarizes the sub-committee's research on the childbirth and adoption leave policies of other universities with graduate programs. These universities were chosen either because they are Jesuit institutions, Catholic institutions, nearby schools or other universities with highly ranked graduate programs.

Universities with no explicit childbirth/adoption leave policy (as of March 2011): Boston College, Fairfield University, John Carroll University, Loyola University-Chicago, University of Missouri-Columbia, and Xavier University.

Universities where students must take a leave of absence: Creighton University and Marquette University.

Universities with a leave policy (See table on page 4).

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the benefits under this policy, a graduate student must:

- be enrolled as a full-time graduate student in either a master's or doctoral program
- be in good standing with her or his academic department
- be the primary caregiver to a newborn or adopted child

If both parents are eligible graduate students, only one parent (the primary caregiver) may apply for the parental leave.

PROCEDURE

Students must submit a Petition for Graduate Student Parental Leave to their graduate advisor at least 60 days prior to the expected start of the leave period; exceptions to the rule will only be made in cases of exceptional circumstances. Graduate students on an assistantship or fellowship must submit an additional document that details the impact of and accommodations needed for the leave. Students are required to be enrolled during a leave period in order to receive benefits.

OVERVIEW

At least 60 days prior to the expected due date or adoption, a graduate student who meets the eligibility criteria above may apply for a Graduate Student Parental Leave. Parental leaves must be approved by the student's mentor or advisor, the academic department chair, the appropriate College, School, or Center graduate education faculty administrator (e.g. Associate Dean for Graduate Education), and the Associate Vice President for Graduate Education.

The Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy will provide relief of all full-time graduate duties including research, teaching responsibilities, and comprehensive or candidacy examinations for 6 weeks following childbirth or adoption. It is mandatory for graduate students on an approved parental leave to maintain continuous enrollment during the leave period. The nature of the coursework is to be determined in consultation with the advisor.

Should a graduate student require additional relief of duties beyond the approved parental leave period, the graduate student must petition for a leave of absence, as described in the Graduate Education Catalog. Students on an approved parental leave will continue to have access to University resources (e.g., e-mail, library privileges).

Graduate Students Receiving University Funding Support

All graduate students receiving University support for health insurance will continue to receive full insurance coverage paid by the University throughout the duration of the parental leave period.

Tuition scholarships for a graduate student on an approved parental leave will be continued during the leave period as necessary.

Graduate students receiving an assistantship stipend will be guaranteed the continuation of their stipend for the first 6 weeks of the leave period, provided those weeks fall within the contracted period of the assistantship. Thereafter, continued funding during the leave period will be at the discretion of the department chair and dean, in consultation with the graduate student and his or her advisor.

Graduate students receiving a University fellowship will be guaranteed the continuation of their stipend for the 6 weeks of the leave period, provided those weeks fall within the contracted period of the fellowship. Thereafter, continued funding during the leave period will be at the discretion of the Associate Vice President for Graduate Education, in consultation with the graduate student and his or her advisor.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE MISSION AND VISION OF SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Saint Louis University is a Catholic, Jesuit University ranked among the top research institutions in the nation. Of the nine other Jesuit Universities researched, none have specific parental leave policies in place for graduate students. A comprehensive university policy on parental leaves for graduate students places Saint Louis University as a leader of national universities that have implemented comparable initiatives and also distinguishes SLU from its peer institutions. Further, this policy provides consistent guidelines and practices to support graduate students in accordance with the University's mission in that it reflects SLU's ongoing commitment to *cura personalis*, an essential aspect of its Jesuit tradition and identity.

IMPACT ON THE UNIVERSITY

Potential implications include: additional financial burden on an academic unit with respect to the cost of health insurance, tuition scholarships, and/or assistantship stipends (as applicable). Some units may need to contract temporary support to cover the duties of the graduate assistant during the parental leave period. For graduate students not receiving University funding support, we do not anticipate any adverse impact to the University.

Universities with a graduate student childcare leave policy:

University	Details of Policy
Cornell	<p>Two options</p> <p>Options 1: a 1 year stop the clock unpaid accommodation period during which students continue to have registered student status and access to all services except course enrollment</p> <p>A six-week paid leave for fully-funded students.</p> <p>The policy applies to mothers and fathers regardless of marital status or sexual orientation.</p>
MIT	<p>Paid leave for woman following childbirth, not adoption</p> <p>For one month, one and a half months or two months</p> <p>Stops the academic clock</p> <p>Have a Childbirth Accommodation Fund that supports the student while on leave</p>
Northwestern	<p>General leave policy that graduate students may withdraw from the program for one to three quarters for any personal reason, including family matters, health, or a death in the family</p> <p>Students do not receive financial support during this time, but it is normal for them to resume financial support after the leave</p>
Notre Dame	<p>Primary caregiver-mother, father, and applies to adoption</p> <p>1 semester reduced load, stops academic clock</p> <p>Maintain full funding</p> <p>Can be used twice during academic career</p>
Penn State	<p>Up to 6 weeks leave after birth or adoption</p> <p>Continued financial and insurance support</p> <p>Extends all academic deadlines and stops the academic clock</p>
Princeton University	<p>12 weeks of maternity leave are provided during which the birth mother continues to receive financial support, and teaching and other academic obligations are suspended</p> <p>Also, birth mothers or primary caregivers who are pursuing doctorates will be eligible for an extension of academic deadlines that provides for one additional term of financial support to complete their studies for each child they give birth to or adopt.</p>
Vanderbilt	<p>6 weeks of leave for primary caregiver prior to/following birth or adoption</p> <p>Financial support continued</p>
Washington University	<p>Must remain full time student by registering for 9 credit hours</p> <p>Can take off 34 working days while still receiving stipend</p>