



University
of Idaho

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY JOINT ATHENA WORKING GROUP AND FACULTY SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE WHITE PAPER

Executive Summary

The Paid Parental Leave Policy Athena Working Group and Faculty Senate Sub-Committee advocates for and proposes immediate implementation of a 12-week paid parental leave policy that supports University of Idaho employees' family fiscal, emotional, mental, and physical well-being, ensuring sustainable employee retention at this great institution. This proposed policy aligns directly with University of Idaho values and goals in telling a story of innovation, inclusion and transformation for all peoples engaged in U of I's mission. Paid parental leave will directly support our outstanding Vandal Family.

U of I employees shape the future through innovative thinking, community engagement and transformative education. This mission is at the heart of U of I staff and faculty's research, class instruction, and daily interaction with students. To recruit and retain productive faculty and staff, the U of I needs to align current employee leave policies with our university values: excellence, respect, integrity, perseverance, and sustainability. By improving leave policy to include 12 weeks paid parental leave, we will lead the state and our peer institutions in living our values and reaching our institutional goals of 1) scholarly and creative work with impact, 2) outreach that inspires innovation and culture, 3) educational experiences that improve lives, and 4) a valued and diverse community.

As employees, we want to tell our story in a way that highlights the well-being and tangible support of high-level decision makers through actionable policy change. This Paid Parental Leave Policy White Paper demonstrates the need for policy change, offers recommendations for this change based on a review of national and peer institutions, and shares experiences directly from our Vandal Family. As a faculty senate sub-committee, we conclude that a 12-week paid parental leave will:

1. **Increase Employee Recruitment and Retention:** Improve productive faculty and staff recruitment and retention [Goal 4] which can lead to:
 - a. Higher scholarly engagement and creative productivity. [Goal 1]
 - b. Fostering educational excellence and creating inclusive learning environments. [Goal 3]
2. **Increase Equity:** Lead and influence our state and peer institutions by addressing societal needs and global issues, specifically education and economic development for women. [Goal 2]
3. **Improve Employee Cohesion and Morale:** Foster an inclusive community by listening and acting upon diverse perspectives and needs, compete for, and retain outstanding scholars and staff, and improve efficiency and transparency of our lived values by improving policy. [Goal 4]

Executive Summary Continued

The retention of women in both faculty and staff positions is essential so that they can rise in their careers and eventually seek leadership positions. This is in alignment with the University of Idaho's commitment to the American Council of Education's goal to support greater gender diversity in university leadership (Athena Conversation of Care: ACE Idaho Women's Network, 2018). Improving the university's parental leave policy will also put us on par with our peer institutions.

Currently, U of I is the only state university without paid parental leave, falling behind Boise State, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College and our peer institutions in Washington. Many private sector employers in Idaho and the region offer paid parental leave as well, including Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories. Our university has long prided ourselves on being the land grant and flagship institution in the state – a leader in research and an excellent employer. Changing our policy is vital if we aim to be a competitive employer in both academia and the state of Idaho, as well as make strides as a leading innovative institution in the nation.

We have surveyed paid leave policies at institutions nation-wide. Major employers in the state and region, both within the public and private sector, support employees through robust parental leave packages. This is fundamental for retention of high caliber employees. We conclude that to maintain equity across gender identification, age, and employee classification, paid parental leave has become standard among competitive employers in the United States. We envision the University of Idaho being an institution that proudly tells its story by taking a lead in realizing a robust paid parental leave policy starting in January 2022.

Proposed Policy Change Summary

We propose revisions to FSH 3710 with the result that the University of Idaho offers:

- **12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave:** Provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave to benefits-eligible faculty and staff, available immediately upon hire, and offered within 12 months following the birth, adoption or foster of a child.
 - 12 weeks paid parental leave will not only support equity of faculty and staff into our semester-based academia world, but it will also lead the state and region in policy change.
- **Equitable Redistributed Work Processes:** A consistent and equitable plan for redistributed work for the semester during or following the birth, adoption or foster of a child. There are several models the U of I could adopt to transform the support provided for employees on paid parental leave and employees temporarily hired.

Working Group Committee Members and Timeline

The Paid Parental Leave Working Group is made up of interdisciplinary faculty and staff volunteers in pursuit of equitable, morale-lifting policy change that increases the recruitment and retention of productive and diverse employees. The Working Group started in 2019 and completed an environmental scan of parental leave policies nation-wide of all land-grant higher education institutions. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Working Group met consistently to discuss the recommendations addressed in this white paper. Initially sponsored by Athena, U of I's Professional Women's Organization, the Working Group became an official Faculty Senate Sub-Committee in September of 2021. Additional contributors to the White Paper came from appropriate University of Idaho departments as well as other institutions in the state and region.

Working Group Members include:

Erin Chapman

*Clinical Associate Professor, Margaret Ritchie School of Family & Consumer Sciences
Faculty Senate Sub-Committee Chair*

Jessica Martinez

*Assistant Professor, Science Librarian
Co-Vice President for Faculty, Athena*

Laurel Meyer

*Education Abroad Advisor, Outreach and Marketing Coordinator, International Programs Office
Co-Vice President for Staff, Athena*

Rebecca Scofield

Associate Professor, American History Chair, Department of History

Kathryn Schiffelbein

*Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach, College of Engineering
Co-President for Staff, Athena*

Jessica Stanley

Assistant Professor, Geography & Geological Sciences

Emily Tuschhoff

*Director of Health Promotion, Vandal Health Education
Chair, Staff Council*

Background of Current Leave Policies

Family Medical Leave Act of 1993

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 is a “United States labor law requiring covered employers to provide employees with job-protected and unpaid leave for qualified medical and family reasons” ([FMLA of 1993](#)). FMLA “entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons” ([dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla)). In short, FMLA is federal law mandating protected, yet unpaid leave. While employees can use sick and other types of leave concurrently with FMLA leave, this is significantly harder for newer employees who have not accrued much leave and are often the people seeking to take leave due to various care-giving responsibilities.

FMLA Eligibility at the University of Idaho

Currently, U of I implements minimum the requirements of federal law as directed by FMLA. U of I guarantees 12 weeks of protected leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a foster child to eligible employees that have worked at U of I for 12 months or more in compliance with the federal FMLA. The details for FMLA are outlined in the [Faculty and Staff Handbook 3710](#) section M.

For eligible employees who have been employed at U of I for 180 days or more, but who are not eligible for FMLA leave, U of I provides Parenting Leave ([FSH 3710 section E](#)). Parenting Leave also has 12 weeks of protected leave, but employees are required to use sick leave greater than 80 hours before taking unpaid leave.

These policies, while going above federal minimum requirements in allowing a shorter time frame (180 days instead of 12 months) to become eligible for non-paid, job protected leave, still depend on employees using accrued sick leave or sick leave banks for wage replacement. This creates situations in which families have little to no income for months and few hours left of sick leave for actual medical emergencies, an issue that has become all too apparent during a global pandemic.

Current University of Idaho Leave Policy Overview

The University of Idaho policies for using leave for the birth, adoption or foster of a child are as followed:

- FMLA: U of I employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave within a 12-month period if they have been employed at U of I for 12 months and have worked at least 1,250 hours within the preceding 12 months. If both parents are U of I employees, both are entitled to FMLA.
- Parenting Leave: U of I employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave within a 12-month period if they have been employed at U of I for 180 days, or after successful completion of their initial probationary period, whichever is later. If both parents are U of I employees, only one parent is entitled to Parenting Leave if both have not met FMLA requirements.
- Wage Replacement: Since paid parental leave is currently unavailable, U of I employees can use a variety of leave options for wage replacement:
 - Sick Leave: Faculty and staff can use accrued sick leave for wage replacement. However, this disadvantages many newer employees who do not have leave built up and depletes people's ability to take sick leave when they or their families are sick, need to take sick leave for bereavement or must use sick leave for other care-giving responsibilities.
 - Annual Leave: Staff can use annual leave for wage replacement. However, this disadvantages faculty, as faculty do not accrue annual leave. This also disadvantages new staff employees who have not accrued much annual leave. Annual leave is also based on type of employment (classified vs. exempt) and years of service.

- Shared Leave: Faculty and staff can apply through HR for Shared Leave. To be eligible for Shared Leave, an employee must use all other available leave such as sick and annual leave, and compensatory time. Shared Leave can be used for up to 4 working weeks within a rolling 12-month period. Shared Leave can only be donated using annual leave; therefore, staff are the only employees eligible to donate to the Shared Leave program as faculty do not accrue annual leave.
- Short-Term Disability (STD): Faculty and staff can apply through HR for STD. To be eligible for STD, the employee must have a medical reason which therefore limits this wage replacement option to birthing parents only. The university provides 50% of the employee's income, up to \$500 per week. STD payments begin on day 31 after the "event" or whenever the employee's sick leave is exhausted, whichever is later. STD payments continue until the employee is medically able to return to work, which for a typical vaginal birth is 6 weeks and for a typical caesarean birth is 8 weeks. This means that employees who have given birth would receive 2-4 weeks of STD payments depending on the type of delivery.

Past Efforts for Policy Change

University faculty and staff have worked for decades to gain better parental leave policies. Less than a decade ago, faculty were granted the right to apply for an extension to their tenure clock for childbirth and adoption (RGP II.G.6.d.iv.2.). In 2015, both parents became eligible to take unpaid leave, yet President Chuck Staben vetoed expanding unpaid leave to 16 weeks to improve equity between teaching and non-teaching employees. He also failed to allow domestic partners the same parental leave benefits as married couples. The U of I has a history of expanding benefits slowly, and this has not kept up with the peers in our industry, nor has it addressed the needs of parents at our institution.

Concerns of Current University of Idaho Leave Policy

The overarching concern as determined by this joint working group and sub-committee is the absence of a paid parental leave policy at the U of I. This puts the institution at a disadvantage for recruiting and retaining quality faculty and staff employees. Further, morale and well-being lessen without clear, consistent, and equitable policies. As a result, faculty may fear using various leave options will result in resentment by colleagues and/or result in retaliation by promotion and tenure committees. Additionally, accommodations for teaching employees are made on an ad hoc basis with little consistency. For staff, there isn't a policy for supporting leave by redistributing responsibilities consistently, clearly, and equitably through a temporary pool of hires. Last, job-protected leave is unavailable until after 6 months of employment.

Environmental Scan of Public and Private Institutions

State and Regional Institution Parental Leave Policies

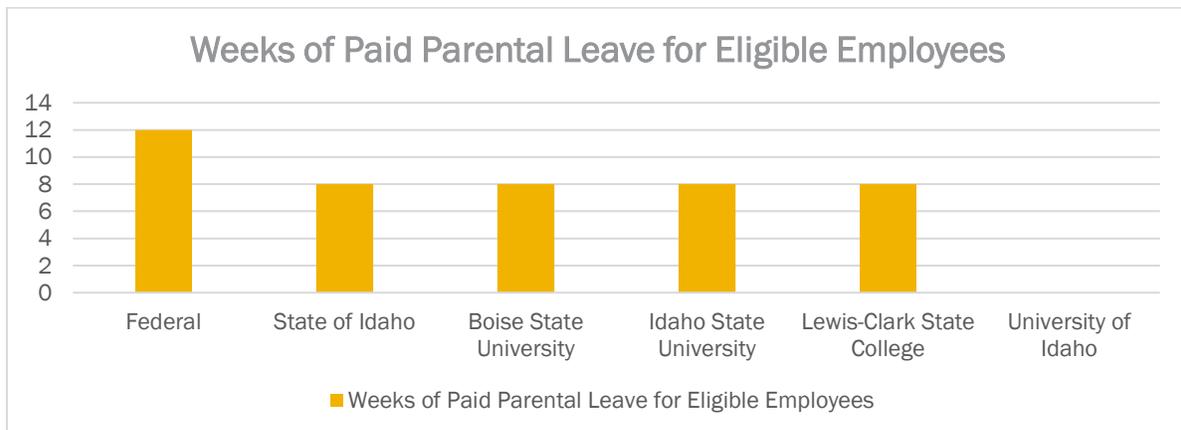
In review of our Idaho peer institutions, Boise State University, Idaho State University and Lewis-Clark State College, all three institutions comply with FMLA. Any policies going beyond FMLA are set by each institution individually.

Boise State University, Lewis-Clark State College, and Idaho State University (implemented by presidential directive) offer 8 weeks paid leave. Boise State offers course releases to faculty for any semester within a year of the birth or adoption.

State and Federal Government Parental Leave Policies

Beyond higher education, Governor Little signed the Families First Act executive order, which gives state employees in the executive branch 8 weeks of paid parental leave starting in July of 2020, although universities were exempt from the executive order. The act encourages other branches of state government to put similar policies in place for their employees.

Similarly, in October 2020, the creation of the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA) provides federal civilian employees 12 weeks paid parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child.



Regional Institutions and Industry Parental Leave Policies

In Washington, all state universities and colleges must comply with the Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program. Implemented in 2017, this is a state-wide program that provides workers up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave and up to 16 weeks for additional medical complications.

On the Palouse, employers like Schweitzer Engineering offer 12 weeks parental leave at 90% pay for most of its employees; EMSI offers 6 paid weeks for mothers and 2 paid weeks for fathers; and NRS offers 4 paid weeks parental leave. Major regional employers offer

generous parental leave packages. Companies like Amazon, Microsoft, and Facebook offer up to 20 weeks at full pay for most employees.

Summary Comparison Chart of Parental Leave Policies in Idaho and Washington Higher Education Institutions and State Government

Parental Leave Policies	University of Idaho	Boise State University	Idaho State University	Lewis-Clark State College	State of Idaho Employees	Washington State University
Months employed for Paid Parental Leave eligibility	N/A	12	12	12	12	5*
Weeks of Paid Parental Leave	0	8	8	8	8	12
Months employed for FMLA eligibility	12**	12	12	12	12	12

*Employees must have been working in the state of Washington (not exclusively WSU) for 820 hours within the last 4 or 5 quarters. Minimum amount of time for eligibility is approximately 5 months; maximum amount of time for eligibility is approximately 15 months.

**U of I offers unpaid, job protected parenting leave for non-FMLA eligible employees on or after 180 days from their date of hire.

Benefits of Paid Parental Leave at the University of Idaho

The benefits of implementing a paid parental leave policy with consistent, clear and equitable processes supports the U of I vision, values and goals as seen in the [2021 University of Idaho Annual Report](#). These reasons ultimately support members of our Vandal Family.

Benefit 1: Increase Employee Recruitment and Retention

Improve productive faculty and staff recruitment and retention [Goal 4] which can lead to:

- a. Higher scholarly engagement and creative productivity. [Goal 1]
- b. Fostering education excellence and creating inclusive learning environments. [Goal 3]

There are many benefits to offering employees paid parental leave, particularly the essential goal and component of improving recruitment and retention at the University of Idaho. As seen as a performance measure in the [2021 Annual Report](#), a major goal and objective is to enhance the U of I's ability to compete for and retain outstanding scholars and skilled staff, and improve staff turnover rates. A [2020 survey of 440,000 working parents](#) reported that

companies with parental leave and benefits have higher rates of employee retention and engagement (Ward, 2020).

Benefit 2: Increase Equity

Lead and influence our state and peer institutions by addressing societal needs and global issues, specifically education and economic development for women. [Goal 2]

A second benefit includes the essential goal of improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility on campus (Narula, 2020). It is also essential to keeping women in jobs and taking lead in policy change that are issues at both the local and global level. Paid parental leave has been shown to close the gap in workforce participation between women with young children and those without young children (Jones, 2019). From a perspective of social, cultural and racial justice, Latinx workers are 66% more likely, Black workers are 80% more likely, and Indigenous and Pacific Islander workers are 100% more likely to be unable to afford unpaid leave compared to white workers (Mason and Acosta, 2021). More and more companies are going beyond simply making statements about supporting diversity and demonstrating their commitments through policy change like parental leave (Hobson, 2021).

Benefit 3: Improve Employee Cohesion and Morale

Foster an inclusive and diverse community by listening and acting upon diverse perspectives and needs, compete for, and retain outstanding scholars and staff, and improve efficiency and transparency of our lived values by improving policy. [Goal 4]

The lack of paid parental leave has created significant hardships for our employees, especially as we have all faced more recently a global pandemic and financial cutbacks. U of I employee cohesion and morale suffers as the University of Idaho becomes the last Idaho university to act and change policy. Low morale has a trickle-down effect on holistic well-being, creative classroom impact, long-term scholarly research, grant writing and eventually retention of productive and quality faculty and staff.

Several Vandal employees offered their stories for how they managed to cover time away to bond with their child, and simultaneously, support their family without paid parental leave. Some were more fortunate than others, having support from supervisors, shared leave, or accrued sick and annual leave that could be used for wage replacement. Others, at the cost of emotional, mental, fiscal, and physical well-being, felt forced to comply with university cultural pressures “to do it all” with limited and interrupted time away from the office, classroom and laboratory.

Major themes and elements heard include:

- Employees are being negatively affected by the current eligibility requirements for U of I parental leave and FMLA.

- Employees cannot afford to take the amount of leave they deem necessary because they do not have the sick and/or annual leave available for adequate wage replacement.
- Ad hoc arrangements between supervisors and employees are often appreciated but highlight the issue that there is no congruous policy across campus for handling the complicated and nuanced situations new parents face.
- Employees who must use FMLA for sickness or other health related issues within the same calendar year are left with little to no time for the actual birth, adoption or foster placement of their child.
- Employees feel that U of I does not support work/life balance and express low morale.

We ask you to read each story and listen to the Vandal Voices (stories have been edited for length and clarity):

Julia Keleher

Director of the LGBTQA Office

I have worked at the University of Idaho for nine years. During this time, I have taken two instances of parental leave. I was the non-carrying partner for the births of our daughters.

For the first leave, I was only able to take two weeks after my partner’s c-section. My mother had passed away the year prior to my daughter’s birth and I had to use my family medical leave to travel home to the Midwest to be with my family when my mom was actively dying until after her funeral. I was out of the office for one month with my bereavement leave and additionally did not have enough leave to travel home to my stepfather’s funeral three months after my mother’s funeral. Because of this, I had only saved up enough leave for two weeks after the birth of our oldest daughter. This caused my partner to be the primary caretaker of our daughter while she was still recovering from her surgery and led to complications in her recovery. We both struggled with me having to work during that time.

I was able to take a longer parental leave for our second child. I was able to take six weeks, which allowed me to be able to take one week before my partner’s c-section and five weeks after. My second parental leave was much more satisfying than my first. I was able to take the time to help my partner and bond with my new baby.

Dr. Rebecca Scofield

Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History

I was offered a tenure track position in the department of history in May 2015 with a delayed start date of January 1, 2016. The night before my dissertation defense in late August, I found out I was pregnant. I started my job six months pregnant and delivered my son on April 26th, 2016, with no complications and finished out the semester grading finals. I was someone who had done it “right”—built in a maternity leave by lucking out and delivering “in the summer.” But as anyone who has given

birth or adopted a child will tell you, nothing is ever uncomplicated with children. The following three months were the most difficult of my life. Breastfeeding was a nightmare. I didn't sleep for months. Living away from friends and family, I felt entirely alone and desperate. I was also trying to rewrite my book manuscript, revise a journal article, and prep my fall courses so I would not fall behind my male colleagues.

I was unaware at the time that had I needed to take leave, I would not have been eligible for it.

At one-week postpartum, while still wearing the blood-soaked diaper people who have given vaginal birth are familiar with, I attended a thesis defense because I didn't want to let the student or the male committee members down. For the first year of my child's life, I gave eight talks at either academic conferences or public forums, I collected two dozen oral histories at gay rodeos, got offered a book contract, published an article and submitted another, all while teaching four courses.

I have spent five years exhausted. I have given everything I can to this job. I have been all in. I know that my colleagues have been all in, too. What could we accomplish if the university was all in, too?

Dr. Zachary Turpin

Assistant Professor for the Department of English

As a father of two elementary-age children and a faculty member at U of I, I take seriously the phrase "Vandal Family." It is at the core of U of I's branding and identity, a phrase that appears in virtually every Friday Letter from our President, Scott Green, himself a father. Far from being a meaningless platitude, U of I's commitment to "Vandal Family" is a pledge. It means that, unlike other universities with faceless or transactional relationships to students and staff, U of I maintains a holistic culture of support, respect, and care. The Vandal Family continues to grow only insofar as everyone is afforded real care, rather than lip service.

Unfortunately, the latter is primarily what U of I employees are afforded, if and when we choose to expand our own families. U of I's current parental leave policy is not just insufficient; it is practically non-existent. If my spouse and I were to have another child, something we have been discussing lately—another child to grow up in Moscow, another child likely to attend U of I, another undergraduate to see and tout the benefits of a Vandal education, another alumna/us to donate to and value U of I all their life—if we were to have another child, the best we can currently expect is to be guaranteed not to be fired for the space of twelve weeks, while likely using up all our accrued sick leave and annual leave in excess of 80 hours. That is not leave. It is the declaration of a zero-sum game: work or family? Your livelihood or your children, Vandal Family or nuclear family? I cannot believe this is a dilemma U of I truly wants its employees to be faced with.

Childbirth and early parenting are not a sickness; they are not a vacation; they are not an aberration. Caring for a new child is complex and life-upending, a central and necessary part of many faculty members', staffers', and administrators' lives. And a difficult part: new parents do backbreaking work, day and night, all while maintaining academic, administrative, and outreach commitments. Indeed, U of I's women faculty members, staffers, and administrators shoulder a disproportionate share of that work in part *because* of the university's minimal parental leave policy. If my spouse and I decide to have another child, I would like to think that U of I can commit to more than "you will not be paid, but the law prevents us from firing you." As a faculty recruitment and retention strategy, that strikes me as rather unsatisfactory.

If offered paid parental leave, on the other hand, my spouse and I could know that we are supported, respected, and cared for, not just with words but with policy. We could rest easy, knowing that our financial solvency is not on the line, that our mental and physical health is respected, and that equitable employee benefits are a priority at U of I. And we could commit even more fully to our roles as mentors, colleagues, and caregivers in the Vandal family.

Dr. Aleksandra Hollingshead

Associate Professor and Program Coordinator for Special Education

Associate Dean of Inclusion for the College of Education, Health and Human Sciences

I was hired in a tenure track position in 2013. In 2015 and 2017 I gave birth to two children. I was "lucky" with the timing—my first child was born in mid-April and I took 10 days of FMLA, and my daughter was born in July. The curveball in my situation though is that both of my kids started at NICU in Spokane, Washington. My firstborn was there for two weeks, and my second for a month. Besides the 10 days of FMLA in April 2015, I did not take any leave. I didn't want to let my program down because there is just a handful of us and I am a program coordinator. I navigated two traumatic birth experiences and ongoing medical issues of my children while working full time. I served on FAHB, on a Faculty Dismissal Committee (during a highly publicized dismissal), on UCC, and on numerous college-level and department-level committees. I am 75% faculty and 25% Associate Dean of Inclusion and Diversity. I was granted tenure and promotion in 2019. I have over 20 peer-reviewed journal articles published, national-level service at professional organizations, and more. I gave it all but somehow it still feels like not enough.

Dr. RYANNE PILGERAM

Associate Professor for the Department of Culture, Society & Justice

I started teaching at the University of Idaho in Fall 2010, my middle child, Will was born in October of 2010. It had not been my plan to begin a tenure-track job seven months pregnant. I found out I was pregnant the day I received an official job offer from U of I. I immediately informed the search chair of my "news" and ask to defer my start date either until spring or fall 2011—however, he was afraid of losing the line—so the request to defer was denied.

I have a distinct memory of loading and unloading filing cabinets from surplus in the back of our administrative assistant's truck. I felt like I had to prove that being pregnant wouldn't impact my work, so I hauled filing cabinets in my third trimester. I taught a week past my due date and went into labor at the University Curriculum Committee meeting in the basement of the Pitman Center. My course "Food, Culture, and Society" was being added to the curriculum. I sat quietly through the meeting, through contractions, because I didn't want to draw attention to myself by leaving.

Because I had arrived pregnant, I didn't qualify for FMLA which requires nearly a year of full-time employment before it applies. Essentially, I had no job protection. I decided my best protection was to act like I was a superwoman. I was back in the classroom after a 4-week "disability" break from teaching. I still graded all the assignments from students and provided all the lectures to the guest teacher. I never quit responding to emails and I never missed a faculty meeting. When I came back to campus, the first thing a supervisor said to me was, "I hope you're rested after your break!" I was still healing from the birth. I hurt. I had a tiny newborn at home who I was trying to nurse. That newborn caught a respiratory infection from me when he was about six weeks old. He developed breathing problems, essentially asthma, that has persisted and was nearly diagnosed as "failure to thrive" before we introduced interventions.

2010/2011 was one of the hardest years of my life and it need not have been that hard. U of I's policy is confusing—at best—and in many cases doesn't apply to specific women's situations. I want to sit with women who are considering joining the faculty or staff and who have confided that they want to start families and tell them U of I will have their backs—that they are worth investing 12 weeks in. As I start my 12th year at U of I, I wonder how different my life and my son's life would have been if we could have had 12 weeks to get to know each other, 12 weeks to rest.

This letter is hard for me to write because it requires me to drop a façade that I have used for protection—the superwoman façade. It posits that the women who can endure are worthy of this work. I'm tired of this narrative. I am tired for me and for my colleagues. By asking for a robust maternity leave policy, I am asking to make stories like mine stories that we don't tell about U of I anymore.

Anonymous Staff Member

I've had two children while an exempt employee at U of I since 2014. Both experiences were very different. Both were healthy pregnancies and I worked for accommodating supervisors in both instances, and it was still tough. When my first child was born, I had worked at U of I for a little over a year but hadn't accrued enough leave to cover the entire 12 weeks that I wanted and felt I needed to take. Therefore, I came back part time at six weeks postpartum as my partner and I couldn't afford a mortgage and other expenses with half our usual income. Additionally, coming back to a full-time (oftentimes more than 40 hours a week) job part-time is less than ideal as unfortunately all the work of the full-time job is still there. While on leave, there was nobody to do the work I was leaving behind. There

was the pressure, whether self-inflicted or not, to come back before 12 weeks just to avoid the piling amount of work, conduct events that I needed to coordinate, and supervise my team, etc. Even if it was self-inflicted, there was not the explicit communication (from my supervisor, HR, or otherwise) that there would be support to see that my work was covered. Moreover, I was often contacted during my protected leave hours and while I know that is a violation, I worried doing anything would cause unnecessary resentment with my supervisor or team. When I came back to work at six weeks, I felt like a zombie. I honestly do not remember most of that time period, and while others commented it was great that I was back and doing so well, looking back, I was unwell. I unfortunately do not remember much of my daughter's first six months of life.

When my second was born right before the pandemic, I had an incredibly supportive supervisor. So much so, that they went beyond U of I policy to help my leave plan work for me. And while I am very appreciative they did that, they should not have had to do that. I had barely accrued enough leave for the entire 12 weeks of unpaid FML at this point, so did take the entire 12 weeks. I came back more refreshed and ready to take on the day, but with very minimal leave available to cover the holiday breaks of our childcare and with virtually no leave left as we entered a global pandemic. I hope that paid parental leave can be a reality for all families here at U of I so we can continue to be a community known for "looking out for each other."

Anonymous Faculty Member

I have taken family medical leave three times after the birth of each of my daughters. I took 12 weeks off with all three of them. I can't remember the specifics of each one, but I did take some unpaid leave each time. With my first and third babies, I had a lot of sick leave so it wasn't as much. My second baby was less than two years after my first and I took about six weeks of unpaid leave. I know that I received some donated sick leave to get me through the first six weeks. It was financially challenging, but we were able to make it work so I could spend the time at home with them. All my babies had challenges with establishing breastfeeding and I don't think we would have successfully continued if I had gone back to work after six weeks.

Taking only six or even 12 weeks is a challenge when teaching because my courses are 16 weeks for the semester. I would have preferred to take the whole semester off (even with more unpaid leave) but was only able to take 12 weeks. We had to find someone to cover my courses for the entire semester anyway, so it felt like I was either leaving or coming back at awkward times without much to do. This was either at the very beginning or very end of the semester. I always worked up until my delivery so I could use my leave after the birth. With my third baby I really needed to stop working sooner for my own health. If I could have taken the whole semester off, this would not have been an issue.

Anonymous Staff Member

I am a staff member, and my husband is faculty at U of I. I availed of FMLA when my son was born in September 2020. As per U of I's policies, I had to use my sick leave and vacation time before I could avail of short-term disability. I also found that STD benefits would only become active after I had been unable to work for 30 continuous days; essentially, STD payments would begin on day 31 or whenever my sick leave would be exhausted (whichever is greater). According to The Standard (the company that U of I works with to provide short-term disability benefits to its employees), this time period of 30 days was decided by U of I as the waiting period for STD payments to begin and could be shorter or longer as per U of I's discretion. It would certainly be helpful if this waiting period was shorter and employees were not required to use all sick and vacation time before availing of FMLA for parental leave.

I believe it would be useful to pursue this development and explore if U of I can indeed enhance its parental leave policy to include paid leave.

I would like to recognize that everyone in my campus unit, including my supervisor and colleagues, were a great support to me before and during my maternity leave, in helping me plan for my work duties to be covered while I was away, and helping me transition back to my role once I returned from leave. I also truly appreciate the assistance I received from U of I Human Resources in my attempt to understand U of I policies and adhere to them.

To conclude, I am truly grateful for a positive experience giving birth and bonding with my new baby, and I have my family, colleagues, and U of I HR staff to thank for this. However, I also do believe that parental leave policies at U of I need to undergo an overhaul to be more accommodating of pressures new parents and caregivers face in today's times and allow them the time and financial support to manage these challenges.

Jeana Moody, M.A.

Program Coordinator for the Women's Center

I am a recent hire and I took this full-time position because I am passionate about student support and wellbeing, and I want to have a stable income for years to come. I am the primary earner in my partnership and you can't imagine how difficult it is to base your choice to have or not have children on your employer's lack of financial support. I know that I will be unable to support my family financially if I take 12 weeks unpaid leave, but on the other hand I am not willing sacrifice a necessary bonding period with a newborn just because of money. The option of using sick days is difficult being as I am new, and while sick days have always been important to use for actual health issues, they are all the more irreplaceable now because of COVID-19 in order to protect the campus and the U of I community as a whole. This leaves me, a 30-something-year-old, with no choice but to delay or indefinitely postpone my plans for pregnancy and starting a family so long as the University of Idaho does not change its policy. This should never have to be a decision a full time, potentially long-

term employee should have to make. If we want to claim our institution as a leader of innovation and inclusion, providing necessary (financial) support and accommodations to the employees that make the institution run must be a top priority.

Dr. Mary Engels

Assistant Professor for the Department of Natural Resources and Society

My daughter was born in the middle of summer 2020 after my first year as a new tenure track faculty member. I had hoped to take the fall semester off completely but ultimately ended up working half-time because I couldn't come up with any other financial support. I investigated what other options were available to me and if I had my daughter during the school year, I would have been eligible to apply for short-term disability. However, because my daughter was born during the summer while we were off contract that was not an option. I was told that I could use my sick leave to help cover costs, which I did, but as a new faculty member, my total accrued leave was less than 40 hours. My husband, who is a tenured faculty member with significantly more sick leave accrued than me explored the option of donating some of his sick leave to me. He discovered that per current U of I policy sick leave cannot be donated, only annual leave, which faculty on 9-month contracts do not accrue. Also, just before the birth of my daughter the governor signed the Families First Act, an executive order to ensure that all executive branch state employees get paid parental leave. This was supposed to go into effect on July 1, 2020, and as my daughter was born after that time I asked Human Resources how that was going to be implemented. Upon further digging it became apparent that U of I doesn't qualify as an executive branch agency, though it is still unclear to me where U of I fits within State government [see section above on "State and Federal Government Parental Leave Policies" for clarification]. Long story short, the only accommodations I received from U of I were FMLA and flexibility from my department chair. Paid parental leave would have made a huge difference to my peace of mind and my recovery and I had a blessedly uncomplicated birth experience. I am strongly in favor of U of I developing a paid parental leave policy and based on my experience I would strongly advocate for thinking about how that applies to faculty who have children in the summertime.

Anonymous Postdoctoral Fellow

While I have not taken FMLA yet, I do plan to do so in the spring. I'm currently four months pregnant and spent quite a bit of time last spring looking into the parental leave policy when we were thinking about starting a family. Luckily, I have been at U of I for over a year, so I am able to qualify for FMLA (though I haven't spoken with anyone about this yet). However, that has meant trying to save all my vacation and sick leave. I'm fortunate that I'm able to work mostly remotely for my postdoc position or else I would have had to use a lot more sick hours for those times when I just couldn't leave the couch or needed to be near a bathroom. Also, having a higher-risk pregnancy has come with more appointments, exceeding the two hours allotted each month. Having to save all your vacation and sick days is unrealistic during a

time period when you're feeling less than okay most of the time. It means that it is impossible to take time off to travel, relax, or even just catch up on sleep before the arrival of my child.

Anonymous Staff Member

I have been working full-time with the University for over 5 years. I took advantage of the employee education benefit, earning my master's degree during the first 4 years. My partner and I knew it would be undoable for us to have a child during that time. I was eager to not only earn my second degree, but also advance my career and move up whenever possible.

Now that I have my degree and vertically moved into a position with a higher wage and title, it would seem like the time to start a family. Yet, that is not what we'll be doing here. Even without the added stress of school and more job security, my partner and I don't feel we have the resources to have a child. Right now, I have 131 hours of sick leave and 72 hours of vacation leave. I know I would have to come back before the allowed time off to start earning a paycheck again, taking away important time with the new baby—which is already abysmally too short. I know colleagues who continued to work and respond to emails while on maternity leave, even after their paid leave had run out.

My partner and I have decided to move abroad to Scandinavia. A large part of the decision to leave the country was the desire to have a child. We picked a country where parental leave is 480 days, split between both parents, and is paid. Medical care and daycare are also universal, so there will be no unexpected medical bills in case of a difficult delivery, and childcare will not be a concern once both parents return to work.

I love my job at the university and am grateful to work with such an incredible group of people, but the system does not support new and growing families. As an alumna twice over, I will always feel like I'm part of the Vandal Family—I just wish the Vandal Family cared more about their employees' families.

Anonymous Faculty Member

I have been a faculty member at U of I for over ten years now. During that time, I am blessed to have welcomed two children into the world, both of whom have been lucky enough to attend the University's wonderful Children Center. We are very happy to be raising our children in Moscow and to be members of the Vandal Family.

When I first learned of my options while my wife was pregnant with our first child, however, I remember thinking there must be a mistake. I asked our administrative assistant, "You mean the only benefit I have is the assurance, if I take FMLA, that I won't lose my job?" I never thought my job was at risk! To hear that the benefit was not losing it seemed especially odd and off-putting. After my child was born, I remember during those blurry days that I often sat in our chair in the living room answering emails and building the web projects that my job required. I was lucky

enough to be able to do my job remotely back then, so I did not have to use all my leave. But that also meant I was balancing the care of a newborn while feeling the need to get hours in so as not to use all that leave up. I couldn't be entirely present at times. Thankfully, our first child had no serious medical problems.

Our second child, however, had severe allergies and difficulty gaining weight. By then, I knew better how to work in such a way as to fill hours while still being able to help my wife, but I can't tell you how much better we both would have felt if I was able to take a few weeks of paid leave during that time, especially when we were looking at increasing medical bills and an uncertain future. My second child grew out of these issues, but I really hope this effort by my colleagues will be successful so that future mothers and fathers will be able to take the time to deal with all the many, many challenges that arise with newborn children.

The U of I can afford this benefit and it should. It will be of great assistance to retain the faculty and staff members here that are very likely to be positive, long-term contributors to the University and community.

Fiscal and Morale Impact

Salary Savings

The main direct cost associated with employees taking leave is the hiring of temporary help while the employee is on leave—for example, hiring from a temporary pool of staff employees or hiring an adjunct lecturer to teach a course. The fiscal impact between unpaid leave and costs associated with paid parental leave is salary savings. With unpaid leave, the U of I accrues salary savings by not paying the employee's salary while they are on leave. With paid leave, the employee continues to receive their originally earmarked salary.

The fiscal impact of covering temporary hires is lower, however, than the cost of replacing a worker, as “the several months it would take to find a replacement, along with the cost of manpower to recruit and interview heavily, outweighs the cost of providing this benefit.” (Dishman, 2016). While there are no salary savings for implementing paid parental leave, many employers report that the benefits to morale, retention, and productivity outweigh the potential costs.

Overview of Literature

Many industry employers report that the benefits of paid family leave policies outweigh the costs. Laszlo Bock, Senior Vice President of Google's People Operations, relates in his book:

The attrition rate for women after childbirth was twice our average attrition rate. After making the change in leave, the difference in attrition rates vanished. And moms told us that they were often using the extra two months to transition slowly back to work, making them more effective and happier when the leave ended. When we eventually did the math, it turned out this program cost nothing. The cost of having a mom out

of the office for an extra couple of months was more than offset by the value of retaining her expertise and avoiding the cost of finding and training a new hire. (Bock, 2015)

Employers in states with a statewide paid family leave policy also report positive outcomes. In California, “ninety one percent (91%) of businesses surveyed by the Center for Economic and Policy Research reported neutral or positive effects on profitability and performance; eighty nine percent (89%) reported neutral or positive effects on productivity; ninety three percent (93%) reported neutral or positive effects on employee turnover; and ninety nine percent (99%) reported neutral or positive effects on employee morale” (Brusca, 2017).

In a survey of recent literature on the medical and economic impacts of paid parental leave, a 2020 study noted that 23% of mothers in the United States are forced back to work within 10 days of giving birth because of the inability to make ends meet without a paycheck. Overwhelmingly, women who can take unpaid leave make considerably higher salaries than women who cannot afford to take unpaid leave—widening socioeconomic and racial inequalities. To close these gaps, the authors point to the economic benefits of paid leave as parents who are provided a minimum of 12 weeks paid leave are more attached to their employers and are less likely to go on public assistance (Van Niel, et al., 2020).

Next Steps – Using Leave for Responsibilities Related to the Birth, Adoption, and/or Foster of a Child

This committee has met with U of I Human Resource members, Office of Civil Rights & Investigations (OCRI) and Fiscal Operations to gather data to help inform proposed changes. Employees within the Division of Finance and Administration have aggregated data to forecast fiscal scenarios for offering paid parental leave. They created a fiscal model of aggregated data from 2020 that includes:

- Estimated Cost:
 - Number of employees eligible based on age and life event.
 - Number of weeks of paid leave.
- Estimated Return on Investment (ROI):
 - Retention indicators including 30% of female employees and 10% of partners who leave the workforce due to a life event.
 - Morale indicators including productivity.
- Offset Reductions (to offset costs of paid parental leave):
 - Benefit reductions.
 - Budget reductions.

The fiscal models and comparison scenarios from regional institutions with existing paid parental leave will be shared with President Green.

This White Paper will be presented to Faculty Senate on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

Current steps for developing a future U of I paid parental leave policy include:

1. Aggregating data from Human Resources and Fiscal Operations that shares:
 - a. Average number of leave hours/days used for responsibilities related to the birth, adoption or foster of a child.
 - b. Average cost rendered for redistributing work while employees use FMLA and wage replacement leave for responsibilities related to the birth, adoption and foster of a child.
2. Gathering current practices U of I colleges and departments apply for redistributing responsibilities when employees use leave for responsibilities related to the birth, adoption and foster of a child.
 - a. Practices to cover faculty-related responsibilities.
 - b. Practices to cover staff-related responsibilities.
3. Use the aggregated and gathered data to recommend more specific changes to a Paid Parental Leave model and redistribution of responsibilities process that is consistent and equitable across U of I.

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