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Dear Faculty Senate and President Green,

We are honored to submit this letter of support of Athena and the faculty senate working group's proposed policy for 12 weeks paid parental leave for UI employees. Paid parental leave is essential for the retention of high-quality faculty and staff and makes the University of Idaho a competitive empower both regionally and nationally. It aligns with the university's values and is a source of essential support for our vandal family.

Currently the University of Idaho provides the minimum legal support for parents as outlined in Parental the Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) program. Employees are guaranteed up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave following the birth or adoption of a child during which their jobs and benefits are protected.¹ While employers may provide some paid leave options or extended time, these expanded leave programs are predominately only available to people in high income earning jobs.

The University of Idaho is not a leader on this issue. Rather, we lag behind our peer institutions both in Idaho and nationally. Boise State, Idaho State, Lewis-Clark State College, and the state of Idaho government provide eight weeks of paid leave for new parents. By passing this policy, the University of Idaho would join institutions such as the University of Kentucky and Brown University, both of which offer full semester, paid parental leave to parent employees.

Providing paid leave for employees makes our university stronger. Faculty and staff returning from significant leave following the birth of a child or time with a new adopted child will be better prepared to offer high quality service to students and the public and classroom engagement and creative pedagogy. They are better prepared to engage mindfully and gracefully with students in all areas of the University. In addition, economic research is quite clear "universities with the best maternity leave policies [are] better able to retain qualified women" and could not only "help universities crack the glass ceiling for women academics" but could also have implications for the "economy as a whole by accessing 'untapped female talent'."²

The University of Idaho prides itself as being a "vandal family." Paid parental leave supports valued members of the "vandal family" and has clear, positive outcomes for new children. Research demonstrates that paid leave has positive outcomes for child development (future Vandals!), the health of birth parents, and increases the opportunity for involvement from non-birth parents. Paid leave is also associated with improved health incomes for infants and an associated reduction in infant mortality³. Paid leave also helps new parents. For example, when forced to return to work immediately following childbirth, birth parents lack the time to heal both physically and mentally from just the physical effects of childbirth.

The United States is shamed by the parental leave policies of other nations. In the face of this national shortcoming, it is essential that places like the University of Idaho support their employees as they become parents. Paid leave is not important for the institution's reputation and ability to recruit a robust work force, it is also the ethical thing to do. Parental leave broadens the ability for employees' households to be supported, which would benefit the University of Idaho in a number of ways: enhancing employee work performance, serving as an employee recruitment and retention tool, and - importantly - demonstrating that we are a university family.

Sincerely,



Department of Culture, Society, and Justice
Dr. Brian Wolf, Chair

Approved unanimously by the CSJ Department Oct 29, 2021

ⁱ “Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)”. United States Department of Labor. Accessed November 5th, 2020.
<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla>

ⁱⁱ “Better maternity leave could help universities retain women—study” Accessed October 6, 2021.
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/news/22-01-18-better-maternity-leave-could-help-universities-retain-women-study/>

ⁱⁱⁱ M. Rossin-Slader and L. Uniat. “Paid Family Leave Policies and Population Health.” *Health Affairs*. 2019; National Partnership for Women & Families, “The Child Development Case for a National Paid Family and Medical Leave Program.” 2018; M. Rossin-Slader et al, “Did California Paid Family Leave Impact Infant Health?” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 2018.