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COMPILED BY: ACADEMIC SENATE FACULTY ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE (FEEC)  
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## **FEEC Final Report and Recommendations, 2019-2020**

Over the course of this academic year, the Academic Senate's Faculty Environment and Employment Committee (FEEC) primarily focused on three issues: eldercare, family leave, and faculty concerns as a result of COVID-19.

### **I. Eldercare**

#### **a) Background**

Beginning in 2018, the FEEC has discussed the growing need to support faculty who are providing (or who may find themselves needing to provide) various forms of dependent care. This year we focused primarily on eldercare. Our committee observed that eldercare responsibilities impact faculty differently than childcare, because they often happen immediately and, in some cases, the need for support can be much longer term. Eldercare responsibilities frequently fall on college-educated children, which means that university faculty may be disproportionately taking the lead on these responsibilities within their families. Often, the bulk of stress during such situations comes during this initial decision-making period as caregivers try to navigate their next steps and find resources available to them. The process of finding quality long-term care facilities, discerning insurance policies, coordinating medical care, and/or making professional or lifestyle changes to care for a dependent in one's own home can be extremely time-consuming and emotionally draining. Moreover, caregiving faculty may find themselves facing a newfound source of financial strain and hardship.

For these reasons, it is imperative that information regarding dependent-/elder-care be readily available, widely disseminated, and easy to navigate on a user-friendly, up-to-date website. There are a number of resources available at USC and in California already, including the Bright Horizons Backup Care benefit, the California Responsibilities Act, and LACRC (caregiver support available through the Davis School of Gerontology), among others, but these resources are often difficult to find. This online resource page may be supplemented with an in-person or call-in center where faculty could get further information, resources, and referrals.

#### **b) Recommendations**

We recommend that a charge of the FEEC in 2020-2021 be to explore eldercare/other dependent care resources, and to establish an informational infrastructure to support faculty who need to provide this kind of care. This should be done in concert with HR and could include:

- Reviewing resources/ information currently provided on HR and other University websites with a view to consolidating information on a user-friendly, easy to access central platform and ensuring that information is up-to-date.
- Reaching out to academic units/schools where faculty have related areas of expertise; for instance, the Elder Planning Group in the School of Gerontology or faculty with relevant expertise in the Dworak-Peck School of Social Work to curate research on the area of eldercare to be shared with faculty.

- Liaising/coordinating with the Center for Work and Family Life to prevent duplication of efforts, streamline the dissemination of information, and ensure consistency of that information across sites.
- Reviewing related passages in the Faculty Handbook to make sure information related to family and personal leave is up-to-date and faculty resources and rights with regard to dependent care are clearly articulated there.

We also recommend that the FEEC continue to be in communication with Human Resources and the consultants hired to assess the state of dependent care at USC (Bright Horizons). The FEEC provided key feedback on the dependent care survey that went out to the entire university community in Fall 2019, and had planned to serve as a focus group in the spring, but that was postponed due to COVID-19. It is imperative that faculty be a central part of planning dependent care resources moving forward.

## **II. Family Leave**

### **a) Background**

The FEEC's central charge in 2018-2019 had been to provide an assessment of inequities in family leave policies and implementation, which was submitted to the Academic Senate, Human Resources, and the Executive Vice Provost in May 2019. The key issue was the lack of flexibility for child-bearing mothers in terms of when to take the leave; child-bearing mothers are required to take the leave beginning on the day of their child's birth, whereas non-childbearing parents can take the leave at any time within their child's first year of life.

In April of 2020, the FEEC co-chair shared these concerns with Human Resources and a consultant hired to review leave policies. During that conversation, it became apparent that perhaps the easiest way to solve this problem would be to allow child-bearing parents to opt to only receive Faculty Paid Parental Leave, rather than Paid Family Leave, if they so choose. This would limit them to 10 weeks of leave at 100% pay, rather than 10 weeks of leave at 100% pay and 6 additional optional weeks of leave at 70% pay, but would allow for the flexibility that is missing in the current policy.

### **b) Recommendations**

There needs to be more discussion on this new solution, and whether the FEEC as a committee wants to formerly advise this to HR. The FEEC should also be monitoring the development of revisions to leave policies that will likely be suggested as a result of this consultant's assessment/report. We recommend that a charge of the FEEC in 2020-2021 be to work with HR to provide feedback around any revisions to leave policies and develop better ways of communication between faculty and HR around leaves.

## **III. Faculty Support During/After COVID-19**

COVID-19 has challenged all members of our community in unprecedented ways. The FEEC has been discussing how remote instruction and safer-at-home orders have impacted teaching and research productivity and ways that the university might take these particular challenges into account moving forward and provide support to faculty. We are in the process of identifying challenges, collecting and curating research, seeking out approaches by peer institutions and exploring innovative solutions to share with the larger USC community.

Some members of the FEEC will likely continue this work through the summer. Assuming that these challenges will continue at least for the next academic year in some capacity, the FEEC should be involved in conversations about issues specific to faculty employment in this unprecedented time.