

Recommendations for Well-Being- and Family-Friendly Academic Practices

Guidance for Faculty and Academic Leaders

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I. Purpose and Scope

Faculty and academic appointees balance teaching, research, service, and mentorship alongside caregiving responsibilities and personal life events that may fluctuate over time. These responsibilities may include caring for children, elders, partners, family members, or others who depend on them, as well as managing one's own health and well-being.

UC Davis is committed to fostering an academic environment that enables scholars at all career stages to thrive professionally while sustaining meaningful lives beyond work. Consistent with the mission of UC Davis, this document integrates guidance on family-friendly practices and instructional continuity to support well-being, equity, and academic excellence.

The following guidance is intended primarily for department chairs, deans, and other academic leaders, while also serving as a shared reference for faculty and academics. It emphasizes practical implementation, consistency across units, and shared responsibility for sustaining the University's core missions.

II. Core Principles

Departments are encouraged to ground decisions and practices in the following principles:

- **Equity, inclusivity and consistency:** Apply flexibility proactively and consistently to reduce reliance on individual advocacy.
 - **Compassion and professionalism:** Recognize caregiving and health-related needs as normal aspects of academic life.
 - **Shared responsibility:** Supporting colleagues during periods of heightened need strengthens departments and protects instructional quality.
 - **Flexibility within policy:** Many meaningful adjustments can be implemented locally without additional cost or policy change.
 - **Well-being as foundational:** Faculty well-being supports retention, engagement, and long-term academic success.
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III. Implementation Checklists

Implementation Checklist for Department Chairs and Academic Leaders

When you learn that a faculty member or academic appointee is navigating family care responsibilities, health-related needs, or a significant life event, consider the following steps:

Initial Steps

- Schedule a confidential, supportive conversation as early as possible to determine how you may support your colleagues and their needs
- Share relevant points of contact ([Academic Affairs](#), [Faculty Work Life Advisors](#), departmental resources or shared service staff);

Planning and Coordination

- Discuss anticipated needs related to teaching, service, research, and scheduling
- Explore options for needs related to teaching, service, research, and scheduling, or temporary flexibility, as appropriate
- Coordinate with staff and leadership to ensure smooth and timely implementation.

Teaching and Service Adjustments

- Prioritize instructional continuity while minimizing unnecessary burden on the faculty member;
- Avoid assigning courses new to the faculty member or leadership-intensive or high-intensity assignments when feasible;
- Consider temporary reductions or deferrals of service and other duties as appropriate.

Ongoing Support

- Establish check-in points after the faculty member returns to work or during extended caregiving periods to continue supporting the faculty member, particularly if family care needs have changed;
- Normalize adjustments as time-limited and revisitable;
- Document informal agreements to support continuity across leadership transitions.

Implementation Checklist for Faculty Seeking Support

The following suggestions are offered as optional guidance for faculty members who may be navigating family care responsibilities, health-related needs, or significant life events. These are not expectations.

Considering Support

- Recognize that caregiving, health needs, and life events are common across academic careers and may warrant temporary or permanent flexibility;
- Consider whether upcoming responsibilities may affect teaching, service, research, scheduling, or evaluation timelines.

Seeking Information and Advice

- Consult Academic Affairs or a Faculty Work Life Advisor to learn about available programs and options. Reach out to the Faculty Relations and Development team in Academic Affairs at vpaa_frd@ucdavis.edu for individual consultations;
- Seek guidance from trusted colleagues, mentors, or advisors, as needed.

Communicating with Leadership

- Consider reaching out to your department chair, program director, or another trusted academic leader;
- Communicate your preferences and constraints regarding your family care needs to the extent you are comfortable doing so;
- Discuss possible adjustments as provisional and revisitable, recognizing that needs may change.

Using Available Options

- Use approved leave, Active Service Modified Duties (ASMD), or flexibility options when needed. Consult with [Academic Affairs Faculty Relations and Development](#) to review work life options and maximize use of the [Academic Work Life Program](#)
- Request adjustments to teaching, service, or timelines as needed.

Faculty are not expected to navigate these processes alone, and requesting support should not carry stigma or career penalty.

IV. Situations That May Require Support

Faculty may seek or benefit from support during a range of circumstances, including but not limited to:

Starting or Expanding a Family

This may include pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, foster placement, surrogacy, or assuming new caregiving responsibilities for a child. Needs may arise before, during, or after a leave period.

Caregiving for Family Members or Dependents

Faculty may be supporting elders, adults with disabilities, or others who require ongoing or intermittent care. These responsibilities may be unpredictable and long-term.

Managing One's Own Health or Disability

Health conditions, disabilities, recovery periods, or episodic health needs may affect workload, scheduling, or capacity temporarily or intermittently. Using time for one's own health

Periods of Emergency or Disruption

Unexpected events (such as public health emergencies, natural disasters, labor actions, or sudden caregiving crises) may significantly disrupt usual work and caregiving arrangements.

These situations are common across academic careers and should be approached with flexibility and understanding. They may affect teaching, service, research activity, or some combination of these, depending on the individual and the nature of the circumstances.

V. Departmental Practices That Support Faculty and Instruction

Teaching Responsibilities and Scheduling

Departments are encouraged to implement teaching practices that balance instructional quality with realistic workload expectations during periods described above:

- Assign courses previously taught whenever possible;
- Avoid requiring development of new courses during periods of reduced capacity;
- Consider course formats or schedules that offer greater flexibility;
- Engage mid-career and senior faculty in supporting newer, larger, or more demanding instructional needs.

When scheduling courses, meetings, and events:

- Default to standard working hours;
 - Offer remote or hybrid participation when feasible;
 - Avoid creating expectations that require evening or weekend participation.
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Service, Research, and Administrative Expectations

Service and research expectations should be reviewed with care during periods of heightened need, recognizing that caregiving responsibilities, health conditions, or significant disruptions may affect different aspects of academic work in different ways.

Departments and academic leaders are encouraged to:

- Temporarily reduce or defer service commitments when appropriate;
- Avoid assigning leadership-intensive or time-sensitive service roles during high-demand periods;
- Offer alternative or lower-intensity forms of service when feasible;
- Discuss, at a high level, whether short-term flexibility in research expectations or timelines may be appropriate, recognizing that research activities vary widely across disciplines and individuals.

The goal is not to standardize research accommodations, but to signal openness to conversation and to avoid compounding stress through inflexible expectations.

Instructional Continuity and Contingency Planning

Departments are encouraged to plan proactively for continuity of instruction during periods of disruption or reduced availability:

- Maintain shared plans for instructional backup and coverage;
- Identify potential short-term instructional support in advance;
- Encourage collaborative teaching models, guest lectures, or team-based approaches;
- Share effective problem-solving strategies across the unit.

Continuity planning should be understood as a collective responsibility rather than an individual burden.

Career Evaluation and Advancement

UC Davis policies allow flexibility in evaluation timelines for a range of circumstances, including caregiving, health conditions, and significant life events.

Academic leaders are encouraged to:

- Proactively communicate available options;
- Support postponement or adjustment requests without stigma;

- Evaluate productivity and contributions in appropriate context.

Equitable evaluation requires understanding that faculty contributions may vary over time.

Fostering an Inclusive Department Culture

Beyond formal adjustments, departmental climate plays a critical role in faculty success. Leaders are encouraged to:

- Normalize conversations about work-life integration;
- Check in with colleagues returning from leave or managing ongoing care;
- Recognize that caregiving and health needs take many forms across cultures and life stages.

Visible support and inclusive practices contribute meaningfully to well-being, engagement, and retention.

VI. Closing

Family-friendly academic practices and attention to well-being are essential to sustaining excellence in teaching, research, and service. When approached thoughtfully, flexibility and continuity reinforce one another, strengthening departments and supporting faculty success across career stages.

This document is intended as a living set of recommendations and should be revisited periodically to reflect evolving practices, policies, and community needs.

VII. Additional Resources

Academic Work Life and Faculty Support

- Academic Work Life Program (including information on leave, ASMD, clock extensions, etc.): <https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/work-life>
- Faculty Advisors for Work Life: <https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/faculty-advisors-work-life>
- Faculty Parent Support Group: <https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/faculty-support-group-new-parents>
 - One-on-one consultation with Professor Emerita Diane Wolf
- Academic Cooler Bag Program: <https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/academic-cooler-bag-program>

Lactation and Parenting Support

- Lactation Support Program (including lactation consults): <https://hr.ucdavis.edu/departments/worklife-wellness/lactation>

Family Care and Childcare

- Adult and Elder Care resources: <https://worklife-wellness.ucdavis.edu/departments/worklife-wellness/family-care/adults-elders>
 - Childcare options at UC Davis: <https://worklife-wellness.ucdavis.edu/departments/worklife-wellness/family-care/children/child-care>
 - Family Care Resources (including Sitter City): <https://worklife-wellness.ucdavis.edu/departments/worklife-wellness/family-care>
 - Dependent Care for Faculty Travel: <https://supplychain.ucdavis.edu/traveldepcare>
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