

FAMILY FRIENDLY INITIATIVES AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
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Working in collaboration with the President's Commission on the Status of Women, a Family Leave Policy for faculty at the University of Rhode Island was created that includes 6 weeks of paid leave, tenure stops, and full- and part-time modified duties provisions. The process by which this policy was developed and adopted was applauded by the President, who recommended that this process model be used in presenting future requests.

The process included:

- developing a compelling *philosophical framework* that set the stage and served as a grounding document when roadblocks were presented
- developing a *recommendations document*, presenting national and URI data to support the adoption of each aspect of the proposal
- breaking the *proposed policy* into sections based on ease and cost of implementation
- acquiring endorsement from both ADVANCE and the President's Commission, the Provost, the AAUP, Human Resources and Affirmative Action prior to submission to the President.
- Having the President, rather than the union, present the policy to the Board of Governor's for approval

We feel strongly that the work of ADVANCE will have an impact on climate campus-wide, and that including the needs of non-STEM women whenever possible will promote widespread support for the program. Our challenges in this regard include how to include staff provisions in policy development. For example, the Family Leave policy has not yet been adapted for staff, since many unions are involved. The President's Commission will continue these efforts. In the meantime, advertising the availability of the policy to faculty has been limited because of issues related to faculty/staff tension. We look forward to discussion on this topic.

URI climate survey data and faculty interviews have yielded important information about the issues facing dual career partners at URI. In March 2005, ADVANCE convened a summit meeting with the top Administration and the chairs and deans of the 4 STEM colleges. The purpose was to discuss issues identified in the ADVANCE departmental climate workshops as needing attention and to propose solutions. It was agreed that developing a dual career policy is critically needed. We have a policy now under review, following a process similar to the one described. We are also contacting other universities in south eastern New England in an attempt to create a regional referral network. Our challenges include the same issue relating to inclusiveness of staff in the policy, and developing creative hiring strategies, such as some hard support for soft money researchers, given very limited resources for faculty hires.

We are developing a virtual Work-Life office that will serve as a clearinghouse for resources at URI. Our hope is that the physical space the ADVANCE project occupies will be converted to a permanent Work-Life office that will incorporate a Dual Career office, a Family Friendly policies expert, lactation facilities, work equity advisors, child/elder care and other resources for balancing work, life, and family.