

## Introduction

In 2003, Virginia Tech received an NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation grant to address gender equity in academic science and engineering careers. The university has since implemented a number of work/life balance policies, including tenure clock extension and modified duties. In addition to tracking the utilization of university work/life policies, last year Virginia Tech began a study to assess their implementation and impact.

## Methods

The study employs a mixed methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and draws from survey data and faculty interviews.

Faculty members (n=64) who used the modified duties and tenure clock extension policies between 2006 and 2013 were invited to complete a brief survey. Participants represented all 8 colleges.

A subset of faculty members who completed the survey (n=6) were selected for interviews. Also interviewed were department heads (n=4) who had experience working with the policies and promotion & tenure committee members (n=3). Of the 13 participants interviewed, six were men and seven were women. Participants represented the colleges of Engineering, Business, Science, Agriculture & Life Sciences, and Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

## AdvanceVT Work/Life Policies

### Extension of the Tenure Clock

- ❖ An extension of the probationary period for tenure-track faculty may be approved for extenuating personal or professional circumstances.
- ❖ Beginning in 2006, requests from new parents, both male and female, are automatically granted if requests are made within a year of the birth or adoption of a child.

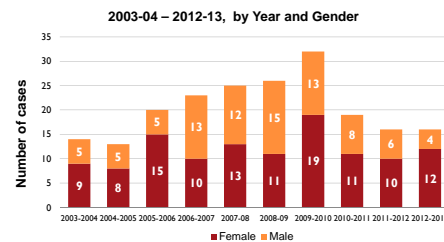
### Modified Duties

- ❖ Created in 2006, modified duties enables tenured and tenure-track faculty to request a semester of modified duties at full pay.
- ❖ The Provost's Office provides funding to hire instructors to teach courses for faculty who are on modified duties.

## Extend the Tenure Clock

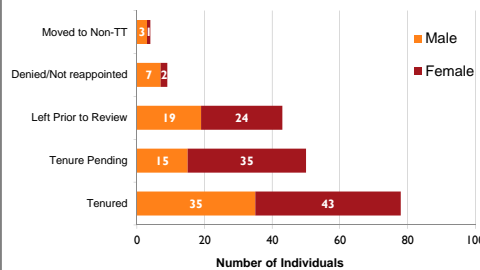
- ❖ Between 2003-2004 and 2012-2013, a total of 204 tenure clock extensions were granted for 104 female faculty and 76 male faculty (24 faculty members requested two separate tenure clock extensions during this time period).

Faculty Tenure Clock Extensions



- ❖ As the chart above demonstrates, the number of male faculty utilizing this policy has increased substantially since approval of requests for new parents become automatic in 2006.
- ❖ As the chart below illustrates, pre-tenure faculty who have stopped the tenure clock have been very successful in the promotion and tenure process to date.

Career Outcomes for Faculty who Extended the Tenure Clock, 2003-04 – 2012-13

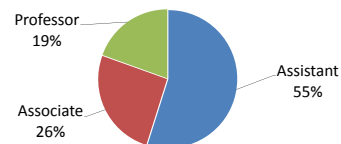


- ❖ The most common reasons for extending the tenure clock were the birth or adoption of a child (114 requests), personal issues such as a serious illness (44 requests), and professional issues such as lack of appropriate laboratory space (46 requests).

## Modified Duties

- ❖ During the first seven years of the modified duties policy (2006-2007 through 2012-2013), 82 requests for modified duties were granted involving 44 female faculty and 22 male faculty (12 female faculty members utilized the modified duties policy more than once).
- ❖ Unlike the stop the clock policy, modified duties is not being utilized consistently across Virginia Tech's 8 academic colleges. Faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (31 requests), the College of Engineering (25 requests), and the Pamplin College of Business (15 requests) account for 71 of the 82 requests.

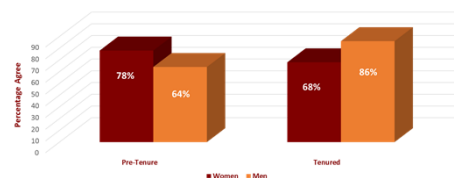
Modified Duties Use by Rank



- ❖ However, as the figure above indicates, the modified duties policy has been utilized by pre-tenure and tenured faculty members in all ranks. Approximately 55% of faculty requests have been made by assistant professors, 26% by associate professors, and 19% by professors.
- ❖ The most common reasons for requesting modified duties were childbirth/adoption (57 requests), family health/other (11 requests), and personal health (14 requests).

## Knowledge about Work/Life Policies

My department head has enough knowledge about Virginia Tech's work/life balance policies.



- ❖ The chart above illustrates findings from the faculty survey. Among pre-tenure faculty, a higher percentage of women agree that their department head has enough knowledge about the work/life policies. However, among tenured faculty, a higher percentage of men agree with this statement.



Megan Dolbin-MacNab, now an Associate Professor in Human Development, was the first faculty member to use the modified duties policy

## Improving Work/Life Policies

Faculty members and department heads interviewed had suggestions for increasing the scope and improving the implementation of work/life policies at Virginia Tech:

### Childcare at Home

*"Things for sick childcare even to say a certain number of days a year for having someone come into your home to take care of your child if your child is sick" (Department Head).*

*"My wife is disabled, she's in a wheelchair and stays home...[we] have both children and my wife doesn't drive we'd like to have somebody to help at home. It wasn't a good option just to send my child to a daycare center. There is an opportunity for the university to provide more support there" (Faculty Member).*

### More Communication

*"It's as simple as a briefing, perhaps having someone from [the provost's office] attend an occasional faculty meeting, once every two or three years, just to kind of talk about what's available might be useful" (Department Head).*

*"It would be helpful to have more training for department chairs on what policies exist and other options available to the departments. Some departments are not as supportive on the work-life policies than others, mostly because the department chair doesn't know what is out there" (Faculty Member)*

### Acknowledgments

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