

Hey Jane!

Advice for Departments that Give P & T Clock Extensions

Welcome to Column 31 of *Hey Jane!* This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions are generated by the committee and SWS members.

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Our institution has a relatively new policy that allows extending the tenure clock under certain circumstances (e.g., birth or adoption of a child, illness of a family member). Because versions of these policies, nationally, are quite new, my senior colleagues are not familiar with the best practices for implementation. Can you provide advice about how to move forward?

Great question! *Hey Jane!* is always looking for best (feminist) practices. As a member of the department (whether or not you are on the P & T committee right now, or otherwise a department leader) you can make a difference by bringing this topic to your colleagues' attention. P & T clock stopping, which is currently used more often by women than by men, is a great practice for departments and institutions. It helps avoid the loss of tenure track faculty members they have invested in, and it signals to job candidates an environment that values work-life balance.

Policy implementation varies widely. For example, some institutions have an opt-in policy in which individuals must take the initiative to request the tenure delay. Others have an opt-out policy in which individuals who are known to have a major life event that qualifies for tenure delay are signed up without requesting it, but are permitted not to make use of the policy. Here are a few things departments can do to help ensure the policy works as intended.

Tip One: Sometimes institutions have made changes in their policy even in the few years since its inception. One important practice is to make sure that all of your colleagues, particularly those doing formal or informal mentoring, are well-informed about the current policy.

Tip Two: New faculty members who are contemplating making use of the tenure delay are apt to want to know how the department implements it. This means as part of orientation to the department you should be clear about how the tenure review is conducted. This includes the important question of how *or even if* potential reviewers will be informed about the expectations your department has for professional participation.

Tip Three: One of the simplest things you can do is include a statement about your college's or university's policy in your letters to external reviewers for P&T candidates. Such a statement may have been developed by the central administration, or might be up to the department to develop. If you do not (yet) have one, it is important to create it in a timely fashion and to ensure it is used in letters for every candidate who has had a tenure delay. These statements enable you to clearly indicate that the department has invested in the candidate; the successful candidates' records will show that they have been productive and done good work. Here are three statements that some departments (at three different institutions) include in their letters to external reviewers.

- (X University) is proud to have a policy for the extension of the tenure clock due to family circumstances, and this case does involve such an extension. So we would appreciate if the review is done on the merits of quality and impact and not on the time taken to achieve those accomplishments.
- Please note that Dr. X received a one year interruption of his/her tenure clock by virtue of university policy. Under these circumstances, the criteria for promotion and tenure are no different than for faculty whose tenure clock has not been interrupted. We therefore request that this situation not be a factor in your letter of evaluation.
- [Candidate] has received an extension of [his/her] tenure clock by virtue of university policy. It is expected that utilization of these policies, such as part-time tenure track, tenure clock extension, or medical leave, will lead to variation in the probationary period for tenure or usual time to promotion to Professor. It is University of [X] policy that the candidate should not be penalized for utilizing our policies. Therefore, we would appreciate that in evaluating this candidate, you do not consider the number of years since PhD or years in position. Instead, your evaluation should consider the totality of the accomplishments rather than the rate or timeliness of the accomplishments.