GUIDANCE DOCUMENT to Accompany the Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy

Eligibility

- All enrolled and matriculated graduate students are eligible for Parental Leave
- Students must be enrolled and matriculated at the time of the request and during the leave period
- A student’s home Graduate Program can help in determining eligibility and can be the first contact for matriculation/enrollment questions or concerns. Students concerned about the confidentiality of their disclosure prior to leave approval may also consult the Leave Facilitator in the Graduate School (see Accommodations section) on questions about eligibility.
- Graduate students must have been employed for at least 2 full academic semesters (Fall and/or Spring) prior to the initiation date of the proposed Parental Leave

Notification

- The Graduate Student shall give written notice at least thirty (30) days prior to the anticipated leave, if possible, through the submission of the Request for Graduate Student Parental Leave
  - The Graduate School will notify students of the outcome of their Request with one week of receipt of the formal Request
  - The approval of this request will trigger a process where the Graduate School notifies the home Graduate Program about the approval of this request
- Graduate Students are encouraged to develop a plan and timeline for disclosure of their need for parental leave to relevant parties. Students can choose to consult the Graduate School’s Leave Facilitator on their plan.
  - There are many factors that must be considered when determining when and to whom to disclose this information; we understand that this may not be an easy conversation to have. We do suggest preparing beforehand by knowing your rights, understanding the policies that govern this leave and attempting to understand the possible different perspectives that you may encounter when discussing your leave.
  - We do suggest that if you feel uncomfortable disclosing this information to your advisor that, when possible, you should bring an advocate to the meeting. The advocate should be someone who you feel comfortable with and who will support you through the process and may be the Leave Facilitator.
  - It is possible that the student notifies their advisor first (prior to the Graduate School)
  - However, the leave request form only requires approval from the Graduate School, so it is also possible that the home Graduate Program and the advisor is notified by the Graduate School
  - Note that students can work with the Leave Facilitator (details below) to determine the timing of disclosure, however, the home program and advisor will need adequate time to find coverage, as necessary
  - When developing their timeline, students are encouraged to allow sufficient time to coordinate any accommodations (these may include identifying coverage for your scholarly activities and/or your teaching responsibilities).
- The leave approval process begins with submission to the Graduate School the Request for Graduate Student Parental Leave, which does not require graduate program or advisor approval. This form must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the requested start of leave, but can be submitted earlier.
Once leave has been approved, the Graduate School will notify the Graduate Program of the approval.

- Students are free to have communicated with their program and/or advisor in advance of this official notice according to their own disclosure plan.

- The date on which the leave period begins will be determined by the student in consultation with the student’s advisor(s), Graduate Program Director and/or Leave Facilitator.

### Accommodations

- If requested, a Leave Facilitator can be arranged to serve as a resource for advice and guidance prior to, during and after the proposed leave period.
  - The Leave Facilitator shall be chosen from one of the senior staff members of the Graduate School (to ensure equity to students amongst programs) – however, we also want to stress that the student must feel comfortable speaking with the Leave Facilitator.

- The Leave Facilitator can help to coordinate and ensure appropriate accommodations are in place (e.g. by working with SASC, OEA, and other offices on campus) and can help to ensure that: faculty, staff and other employees are not requiring the student to limit their work/studies due to the requested leave.
  - Students are entitled to reasonable accommodations (e.g. protect the health and safety of the student and/or the pregnancy, such as maintaining a safe distance from hazardous substances; modification of physical environment; mobility support; excusing medically-necessary absences and providing learning accommodations as appropriate) under Title IX and other Federal discrimination laws. Please note that students should inform themselves to the extent possible about any potential hazards that may exist in your working area. These hazards can be evaluated and mitigated in a reasonable manner by appropriate offices on campus like Environmental Health and Safety.

- The Leave Facilitator can also be the point of contact in case of an emergency change in the leave period, such that the students do not to be concerned about who to notify under these situations.
  - If requested, the Leave Facilitator can help establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between the student, the faculty advisor and the Graduate Program that should be placed on file with the Graduate Program and the Graduate School. The MOU should include provisions for if/how the scholarly activities will continue during the leave period, who completes the activity during the leave period, who the work will be attributed to, agreements regarding authorship (and similar), how the work will be anticipated to be reallocated upon the end of the leave period (which may include a transition time back in to the activity, reattribution of work and/or redistribution of work).

- The involvement of a Leave Facilitator is at the discretion of the student requesting the Parental Leave. It is imperative that the student feels comfortable discussing all possible issues of the planned leave with the Leave Facilitator.

- Breastfeeding students must be granted reasonable time and space to pump breast milk in a location that is private, clean, and reasonably accessible (refer to Student Community Development for more information).

- Students will maintain active student status throughout the leave period to not impact housing, health insurance, and/or other benefits of enrolled students.

- Students will be given an automatic one-semester extension of Graduate Program and Graduate School requirements and time-limits.
  - The requested leave period will not impact the students degree plan or plan of study.
● When applicable, the Graduate Program Director and/or Leave Facilitator will work with student, faculty and relevant staff to ensure that all academic milestones are met and that the academic transcript (e.g. removal of ‘I’ grades) reflects the work completed and submitted

● The Graduate School can help determine eligibility for students supported on external fellowships, in lieu of teaching assistant, research assistant or similar assistantships
  o Note that some external fellowships have their own policies for parental leave periods, whereas other fellowships do not have policies for parental leave. We suggest that the student familiarize themselves with the particular policies associated with their fellowship and consult their program officer where necessary.

Employee Leave Period

● Students on leave will be excused from their regular teaching, research, clinical, or other training duties during the leave period

● Financial support, for eligible students, is provided by the Graduate School during the leave period

● The leave period of funding does not count toward any Graduate Program or Graduate School time/degree limits
  o Automatic one-semester extensions of these limits will be granted

● Upon return, the Leave Facilitator can help determine continuation of teaching, research, clinical and/or other scholarly duties affected by the leave period
  o We suggest that these discussions happen prior to the leave period (as described above, and documented within an MOU) but in the case when these discussions could not occur prior to the leave, discussions should happen as close as possible to the anticipated return to work date

● Students can request to extend leave periods if deemed medically necessary; an extension of a leave will not count towards Graduate Program or Graduate School time limits; in most cases, students requesting leave extensions will follow the Graduate School Leave of Absence Policy

● If both parents are students, they are both eligible for a leave period and these leaves can be taken either concurrently or consecutively
  o It is up to the student(s) to determine how to coordinate the two leave periods and the individual Leave Facilitator can help each student plan their leave and return to work accordingly

● Upon return from the leave period the student will be reinstated at the same status as when the leave began

● Nobody can make a student work during their granted leave period, however, students can to participate in ‘lab group meetings’ or other similar mentoring activities at the student’s discretion.
  o Participation or non-participation in these or any other activities will not be weighed positively or negatively on the student

Leaf of Absence or other Leaves (in lieu of or in addition to a Stony Brook University Parental Leave)

● Instead of the described Parental Leave, a student may request a leave of absence of up to one year following the same guidelines as a medical leave of absence. During that time, students will not receive funding from the Graduate School, but may still have access to other benefits (i.e., health insurance) at the cost to the student
● The student must petition to return prior to the end of the leave of absence to be reinstated as a student
● A leave of absence does not count towards Graduate Program or Graduate School time limits
● Note that students are not eligible to take a leave of absence or other eligible leaves concurrently with the Graduate Student Leave Policy

Return from Leave

● If a student is contemplating part-time enrollment upon returning from leave, they are encouraged to seek additional consultation to ensure that implications for academic progress, visa status, funding and appointments, loan eligibility and deferment, health insurance, etc. are thoroughly understood

● It is also imperative that the student discusses their plans with all relevant parties and ensures that all accommodations are in place. Open discussions on the needs of the student should occur as early as possible so that there is sufficient time to prepare any accommodations
  o The Leave Facilitator can be engaged as necessary during this period as well