

Combining Graduate School and Parenting

Birth/Adoption and Childcare Policies at the **University of Southern California**

Jean Morrison, Vice Provost for Graduate Programs

Nicole Hawkes, Director, Women in Science and Engineering Program



Types of support necessary to succeed

1. Pregnancy-related support

- Health insurance, dependent health insurance
- Special accommodations during pregnancy

2. Birth and post-natal support

- On-campus infant care
- Lactation rooms

3. Childcare

- Routine childcare
- Sick-child childcare
- Travel-related childcare

4. Support from faculty and academic staff

- Climate

2005 Provost's Family-Friendly Initiative

- Establish the Center for Work and Family Life to assist with problems of work/family life balance.
- Committee to explore ways to enhance current child care benefits and services.
- Academic Senate to endorse changes in the Faculty Handbook concerning automatic extension of the tenure deadline for birth or adoption.

Faculty and Staff entitled to various paid family leaves (PFL) to accommodate birth or adoption

No formal process for accommodating pregnancy, birth, or care of a newborn or adopted child for USC graduate students.



Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE) Program

- Established in 2000
- Gift to the endowment of \$20Million
- Goal is to increase the representation of women in science, math and engineering
- Programs developed to address “pipeline” issues at every stage of their careers.

WiSE helps to address these special considerations for the population of women grad students in STEM fields



- Fellowship to accommodate pregnancy, childbirth and adoption
- Childcare subsidies for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars
- Guidance and support

Special Considerations

- Pregnancy, birth or post-natal complications.
- Need to cease lab work due to exposure to harmful chemicals or to cease field work (before birth through lactation)



WiSE Fellowship to Accommodate Pregnancy, Birth and Adoption for PhD Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

- Program designed to help PhD students/postdocs and their advisors solve conflicts that arise between pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, nursing and infant care and the continuing research
- PhD students with 50%-time funding may apply for up to one semester of a “stipend replacement” to be used during the time of pregnancy and/or in the first year after childbirth or adoption.
- Postdocs may apply for a “stipend replacement” for one semester; half paid by WiSE half paid by the mentor.

WiSE Childcare Subsidy

- Provides child care subsidies for PhD students, postdocs or faculty with children in USC Childcare Programs.
- Supplemental Childcare awards are available each year provided 1) good standing, 2) primary childcare responsibilities for a child in the infant through pre-school age range.
- Each award will be paid in a monthly supplement which is equivalent to a \$4,000 subsidy over a 12 month time period.

2005-2006 Provost's Graduate Student Advisory Committee

New pregnancy, childbirth, adoption accommodation
policy that will take effect Spring 2007

Funded through the Graduate School

Administered by the Graduate School

Policy considered accommodation rather than leave

- Permit PhD students to maintain financial aid
- Satisfy continuous enrollment requirement
- Remove stigma associate with need for “leave of absence”
- Permit students to retain university housing, use of library and other services
- Permit continuous stipend and health insurance provision
- Permit international students to retain visa status

Policy Cost and Implications

- Students will maintain full-time status and are expected to be making progress toward their degree.
- Department continues to pay the student's tuition and health benefits, Graduate School provides the "stipend replacement".
- Guarantee from the Department of at least one semester of full stipend and health benefits following accommodation period.
- Accommodation greater than one semester not supported and student would need to file for approved leave of absence.

Summary

Development of funded programs requires leadership and support from the Provost's Office

Cultural change is necessary