



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENT PARENTS

We at the College of Liberal Arts are aware that some of our students start families while they are enrolled in graduate programs. With this letter, I wish to endorse an academic accommodation for new parents that will grant students a one-semester extension in the expected time to degree in cases of childbirth or adoption. The goal of this accommodation is to emphasize that new parents among our graduate students will not be penalized for a delay in progress toward degree, nor will their supervisor or department be asked to answer for such a delay.

This policy is an offshoot of the Provost's "Extension of the Tenure-track Probationary Period," a policy that stops the tenure clock for junior faculty that is automatically granted for reasons of childbirth and adoption. A question that often comes up in discussions with junior faculty is whether there will be negative consequences for extending the probationary period, and we imagine that graduate students have similar concerns. I would like to state, in no uncertain terms, that I endorse the academic accommodation, which is available for graduate students to utilize to their benefit and the benefit of their families. We will work with COLA chairs to raise awareness of this academic accommodation and its purpose, and our hope is that the availability of this accommodation will embolden students to stay on and complete their degrees.

I encourage you to work with your graduate advisor and graduate coordinator to establish an official record of your need for the accommodation. The College is committed to your well being and success, and I welcome all questions and comments that would help us make UT in general and COLA in particular an environment where it is possible for graduate students to maintain a healthy balance between their studies and work and their family obligations.

Randy L. Diehl
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