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March 13, 2015

Dr. Don Webster
Chair, University Senate
124 Wye Narrows Drive, POB 169
Queenstown, MD 21658

Dear Dr. Webster,

I am writing today on behalf of the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) to bring the committee's recent discussions on faculty leave policies to the attention of the Senate Executive Committee (SEC), and to formally request a charge to examine faculty leave policies in more depth.

Over the past few years, the University of Maryland has instituted and revised various University policies related to paid leave for faculty. These policies were created and revised individually, and to the committee's knowledge, no comprehensive review has been conducted to ensure that the policies align with each other. The most recent revisions to University policy came with the adoption of the University of Maryland Policy on Faculty Parental Leave and Other Family Supports (II-2.25[A]) in 2012.

In October 2014, members of the FAC brought to the committee's attention various inconsistencies within policies related to different types of leave for faculty. The FAC created a subcommittee to review all University policies related to paid leave for faculty and develop a comprehensive list of issues to be addressed within the policies. In February 2015, the subcommittee presented the full committee with concerns with faculty leave policies as reported by the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, the Faculty Ombuds Officer, the University of Maryland ADVANCE program, and members of the Faculty Affairs Committee.

In an initial review of leave policies, the FAC found inconsistencies related to: eligibility requirements; definitions related to the age of dependent children for policies related to parental leave; definitions of modified duties; and time periods in which leave may be taken. Additionally, the committee found language related to domestic partnerships that should be updated in response to recent changes in State of Maryland law related to same sex marriage. The committee feels that many of these issues could be addressed by standardizing language between policies and revising definitions for consistency. Additionally, the FAC also found substantive issues it would like to consider, such as how policies on different types of leave apply to professional track faculty, how to address concerns raised related to negotiations for modified duties, and whether appeals processes should be incorporated into each leave policy. The FAC plans to work closely with the Office of Faculty Affairs during its review of these issues, and seek guidance from the Office of General Counsel both as it begins its work and on any suggested revisions to University policy.

The Faculty Affairs Committee respectfully requests a formal charge to consider the issues explained above. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Devin Hayes Ellis
Chair, Senate Faculty Affairs Committee

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