

***AdvanceVT* Work/Life Policies  
Summary Report  
November 2010**

*AdvanceVT*'s 2008 Faculty Work/Life Survey showed that 59% of tenured and tenure-track faculty members at Virginia Tech believe it is difficult to have a personal life and earn tenure and 48% feel that their family responsibilities have slowed their career advancement. Female faculty members indicated that they have considered leaving the university in order to obtain better career opportunities for their spouse or partner (43%), as well as to achieve a better personal/professional balance (50%). To address these university-wide concerns, *AdvanceVT* has led the development and implementation of new and revised work/life policies, educated the university community about the availability of these policies, and created a dual-career hiring assistance program.

### **Work/Life Initiatives at Virginia Tech**

Virginia Tech, through the leadership of *AdvanceVT*, has made several changes in university policies and procedures over the life of the grant. Accomplishments to date include the development and dissemination of dual-career assistance guidelines and establishment of a dual-career assistance office in 2005. Successful faculty recruitment and retention often depend on suitable employment opportunities for a spouse or partner, a special challenge for land grant institutions like Virginia Tech that are located outside of major metropolitan areas. To address these needs, Virginia Tech formalized dual career hiring guidelines, hired a full-time coordinator, offers referral services, publicizes its support for dual career couples, and provides search exemptions and transition funds for partner appointments where there is a fit with a hiring department. Central funding for the dual career assistance program totaled over \$300,000 in 2009.

Stop-the-Clock, a university policy used to allow tenure track faculty to suspend the tenure process temporarily in order to manage personal obligations, has been available at Virginia Tech for many years, but was revised in 2006 and now provides automatic tenure clock extension for new parents. Extensions may also be granted for other personal or professional reasons. A new Modified Duties policy was adopted in 2006 to allow accommodation for special family or personal health circumstances that may substantially alter a faculty member's life for a period of time. While in the past such situations were handled informally at the discretion of the department, a formal policy is now in place. Tenured or tenure-track faculty members may request a semester of modified duties at full pay to create a more flexible schedule in order to better manage family or personal issues. Central funding is provided to support department accommodations, such as hiring an instructor to cover the faculty member's courses.

A Part-time Employment policy for tenured and tenure-track faculty was adopted in 2007. Pre-tenure faculty may request a *term* (one semester to two years, renewable) part-time appointment for child/dependent care or personal health reasons with a commensurate salary adjustment and extension of the tenure clock. The maximum probationary period is capped at 10 years. Tenured faculty members may request *term* or *permanent* part-time appointment for family or health reasons, or for professional practice or outside entrepreneurial activities. However, the

university is unable to provide benefits such as health insurance for part-time employees and this policy has not been widely used.

An increase in childcare resources, a pressing need for Virginia Tech’s faculty and staff, has also been a focus of the university’s commitment to work/life balance. In 2005, a part-day, part-year lab school on campus was converted into full-day, year-round daycare. In 2009, the university entered into a contract with a local child-care provider that enabled her to expand her facilities, with 60% of the new capacity designated for the families of Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and graduate students.

### **Work/Life Policy Utilization**

In order to increase awareness of the policies, information has been shared through meetings with and presentations to department heads and promotion and tenure committee chairs, as well as both current and potential faculty members, and distributed through printed brochures, websites, and print and online newsletters. With support from the provost and the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, *AdvanceVT* tracks the utilization of these policies and the career progress of faculty who take advantage of them.

#### Dual-Career Assistance Program

Table 1 shows the number of cases handled by the Dual Career Assistance Office in its first four years of existence, and Figure 1 shows more detailed outcomes of cases addressed in the first two years. Virginia Tech has been able to accommodate quite a number of faculty dual career hires in the past four years. However, not all employment offers are for permanent positions, and concerns about secure, appropriate employment for the spouse or partner may continue for a number of years before they are successfully resolved.

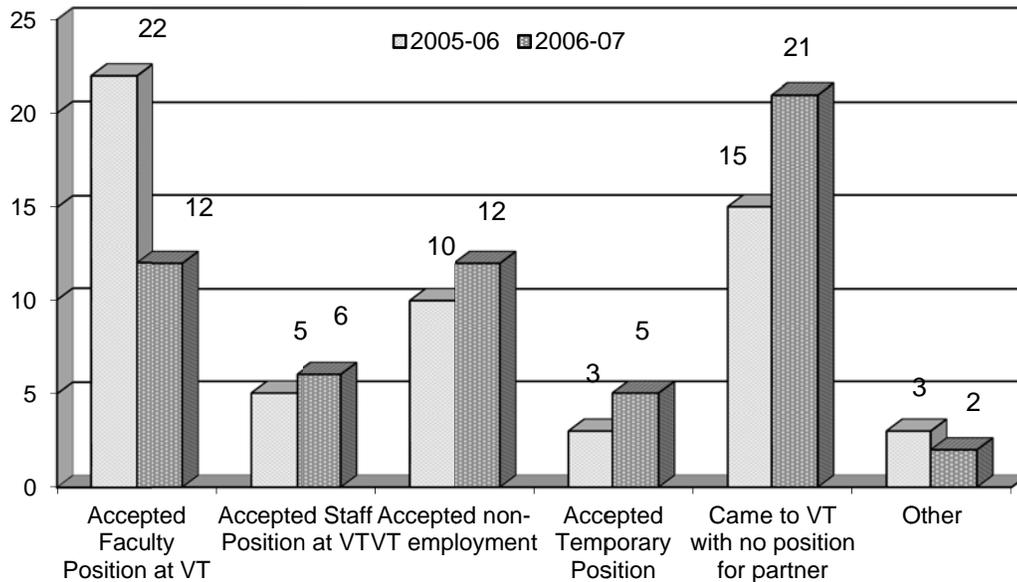
	<b>2005 – 06</b>	<b>2006 - 07</b>	<b>2007 - 08</b>	<b>2008 - 09</b>
Recruitment Cases				
<i>Offered: Accepted</i>	48	36	23	24
<i>Offered: Declined</i>	11	5	5	1
<i>Not offered</i>		3	2	1
Retention Cases	7	21	9	13
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>

Table 1. Dual-career assistance office use at Virginia Tech, 2005-2009

Of faculty members identified as dual hires during the 2005-06 academic year who responded to a survey in spring 2007, 41% reported a very positive experience and 38% reported somewhat positive. While most respondents reported having a good experience with dual career hiring whether they used the office or were hired directly by the department, other individuals had greater expectations than program was able to accommodate, and reported more mixed experiences. Despite the program’s limitations, one participant noted:

*“Guidelines and the existence of the Dual-Career Office at Virginia Tech made us feel more secure about accepting Virginia Tech as an employer for my husband. It is a good indication that Virginia Tech cares for the employees and their family, which is one of the most important factors to consider while looking for a new job.”*

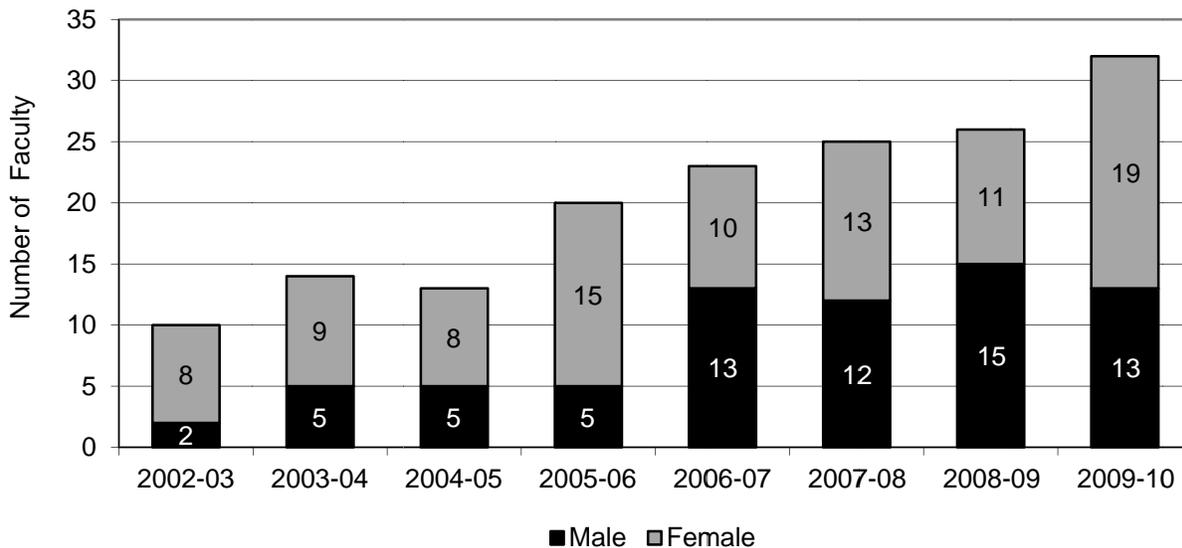
Figure 1. Employment outcomes for dual-career hires at Virginia Tech, 2005-2007



Stop-the-Clock

The stop-the-clock policy at Virginia Tech is not new, and was in use prior to the revisions in June 2005, but the revised policy has resulted in increased usage, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Stop-the-Clock requests by gender, 2002-2010



The increase can be attributed to several reasons:

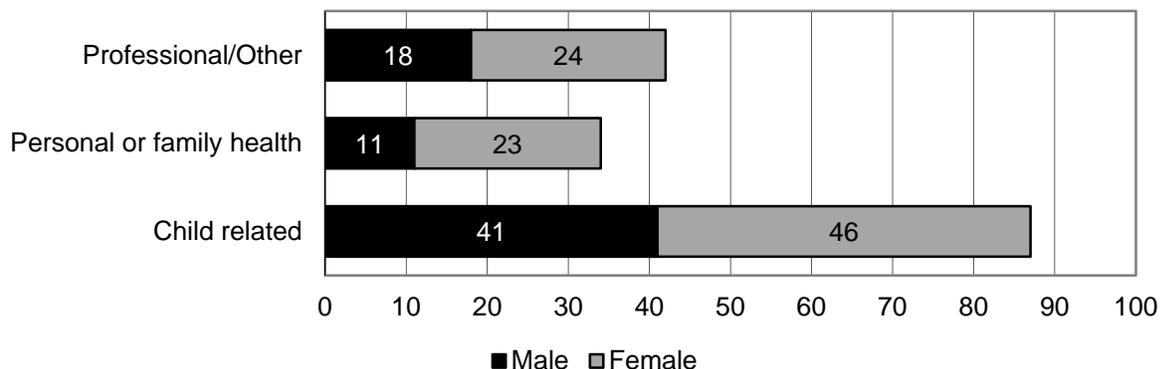
- The newly revised policy makes clear that male faculty members may stop-the-clock at the time of childbirth and adoption and the significant upsurge in male requests in 2006 – 2007 illustrates that many male faculty members are now using the policy for that purpose.
- Virginia Tech has appointed many new junior faculty members in the past few years, at least a third of whom are women, and the policy serves their needs as they start their families.
- The stop-the-clock policy also accommodates faculty members with other special circumstances.

A long-time faculty member at Virginia Tech and advocate of the stop-the-clock policy remarked:

*“These new policies are helping us retain outstanding faculty who now feel that they can work at the institution they love and still take care of the people they love.”*

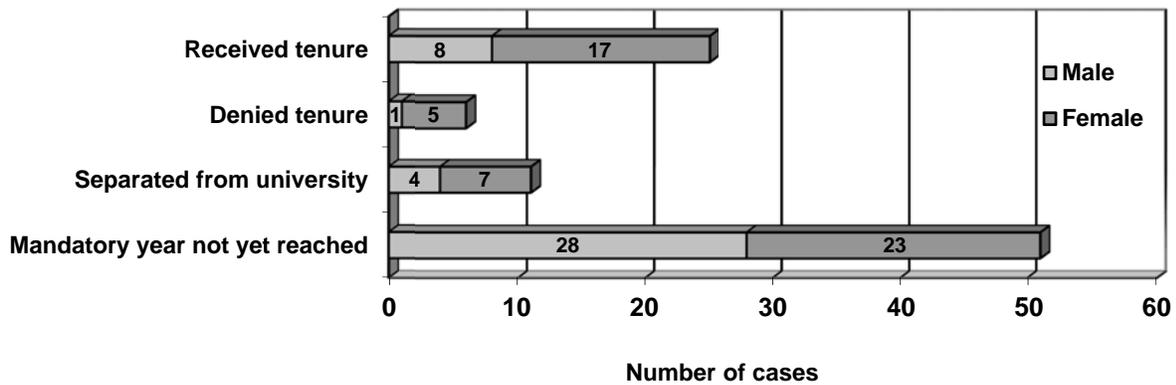
Figure 3 illustrates that the most common reason for stopping the tenure clock is childbirth or adoption. However, Virginia Tech has a fair number of requests for a halt in the tenure clock because of extenuating personal health reasons, or extraordinary professional circumstances not of the faculty member’s own making. Virginia Tech’s policy is somewhat unusual in allowing extensions for such reasons. However, it has worked well in assisting faculty members to be successful when they have encountered difficulties with access to promised laboratories or equipment, or their assignments have been dramatically altered during their probationary period.

Figure 3. Reasons for tenure clock extension, by gender, 2003-2010



*AdvanceVT* continues to monitor whether using the policy actually assists faculty members to successfully achieve tenure. Figure 4 shows the tenure outcomes for those faculty members who stopped the clock for childbirth or dependent care reasons only.

Figure 4. Outcomes for faculty who stopped the tenure clock, childbirth and dependent care cases only, 1996-2007



### Modified Duties

In the 2006 – 2007 academic year, the first year of the modified duties policy, four participants utilized the service, with \$15,000 of central funding distributed to departments to hire replacement instructors. Table 2 summarizes the first four years of utilization of the modified duties policy. Funding through fall 2010 totaled \$274,500. Most of the modified duties requests to date involve childbirth, while several others relate to the impact of the shootings on campus in April of 2007.

	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>
Childbirth/ adoption	4	10	5	7
Personal health	0	2	1	0
Other	0	6	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 2. Modified duties policy utilization, 2006-2010

### Satisfaction with Work/Life Policies

*AdvanceVT*'s 2008 Faculty Work-Life Survey included some questions regarding work/life balance for faculty. Sixty-two percent (62%) of tenured and tenure-track faculty respondents agreed that Virginia Tech cares about the family and home lives of its faculty. Satisfaction with assistance for spouse/partner hiring was lower, with only 46% of respondents satisfied with the dual-career assistance program. About 56% of respondents were satisfied with child care options in Blacksburg, indicating additional needs for child care.

Virginia Tech participated in the COACHE survey of pre-tenure faculty in fall 2009, and found that while pre-tenure faculty members still struggle to balance their personal and professional

lives, they are generally satisfied with the university's work/life policies. Sixty-five percent (65%) of COACHE survey respondents at Virginia Tech agreed that the university does what it can to make having children and the tenure track compatible, placing the university in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile nationwide and 2<sup>nd</sup> among its designated peer institutions. Eighty-six percent of respondents rated the stop-the-clock program effective or very effective, and 67% agreed that their colleagues are respectful of their efforts to balance work and home responsibilities. On the other hand, the COACHE survey respondents perceive Virginia Tech's spouse/partner hiring program as important (72% important or very important) but not particularly effective (31% effective or very effective), in spite of increased university attention to addressing the needs of dual career couples. Continued monitoring of the impact of the policies is necessary, but these preliminary findings are promising.