

FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

Best Practices for Supporting Pregnant Students

(as adapted from www.thepregnantscholar.org –
The Center for WorkLife Law, UC Hastings College of Law)

- Promote a Harassment-Free Classroom
 - Include a non-discrimination and accommodation policy in your syllabi.
 - “Missouri Western State University does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy or related conditions. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student’s doctor and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can seek assistance with accommodations from the Accessibility Resource Center in Eder Hall 203 (816-271-4330) or from the Title IX Coordinator’s Office (Adam McGowan, Blum 228, 816-271-4432).”
 - Maintain a “zero tolerance” policy for discriminatory or disparaging comments and behaviors. Make it clear that such hostility is unacceptable and constitutes harassment based on sex.
 - In advising students, communicate that the student’s educational choices are her own. Don’t make assumptions about a student based on her family status, health, gender, pregnancy, or marital or parental status. Graduation date is the guide post; the student can make the decision to postpone/delay graduation, the University cannot.
 - Communicate clearly that a student will not be penalized for taking medically necessary leave related to pregnancy, childbirth, recovery or a related condition.
- Excuse Absences
 - Inform students anticipating absences or leave related to pregnancy and childbirth that they will not be penalized for exercising their right to take medically necessary leave or leave under Missouri Western’s disability or maternity leave policies.
 - Discuss deadlines for make-up work with students. Returning students should have *at least* as much time to complete each assignment as other students had. Consider that returning students typically must catch up with the material while also negotiating new family responsibilities and ongoing health concerns. Please contact Mike Ritter of the Accessibility Resource Center, or Adam McGowan, Title IX Coordinator, for assistance in developing an educational plan with the student.
 - Remember that leave means that that the student is on leave – not doing school work. Do not assume that a student on leave will be able to complete academic work during her time away. As a best practice, any communication with the student during her leave term regarding make-up work or supplementary materials should make clear that the first priority is the student’s health.
 - Use flexible scheduling options. A student returning from leave or managing regular medical appointments may be less able to stop by for office hours or attend hastily scheduled meetings. Consider meeting over the phone or video chat, and schedule

standing meetings so that students may plan for them in advance.

- Provide Accommodations
 - Treat pregnancy accommodation requests as you would any ADA request, and refer the student to resources for additional help. Pregnant students often do not realize their condition may be covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and may not know the formal channels for asking help.
 - Don't request medical information. If a student is struggling, ask to discuss their work and academic needs, but not their medical status. If information is disclosed to you by the student or another official, treat the information as confidential.
 - Include any accommodation statement in your syllabi so that students with difficulties will be more likely to seek help early.
- Respect Student/PostDoc Employee Rights
 - Consult with Human Resources about student employee's workplace rights.
 - Seek temporary assistance to cover for student employees on leave. Funding may be available from MWSU or from your grantor.
 - Communicate clearly that employees taking leave will be welcomed back following their absence. Remember that discouraging employees/students from taking their legally guaranteed leave may be considered discrimination.
 - Meet with employees who are taking over the work of the employee while they are on leave. Use positive language that reiterates the importance of respecting an employee's legal right to take leave for family responsibility and health needs.
 - Review your department's hiring and employment policies to see if they comply with Title IX and employment law standards, including those for recruitment. Consult with HR or Risk Manager if questions arise.
- Report Discriminatory Behavior
 - Make sure employees you supervise are aware of their obligation to report discrimination basis of sex, including pregnancy, childbirth, related conditions, or family status. Publicly listing reporting information serves as another reminder that discrimination is serious and will not be tolerated.
 - Encourage your department to enact policies that do not treat students differently on the basis of sex.