WORK-LIFE ACTIVITIES 2006-2007 (adopted from the ADVANCE Annual Report)

During Year 4, this committee focused on producing and seeking approval of dual career guidelines, refining the Work-Life-Family website, planning a day-long conference for 2008, and establishing the University’s first lactation site. The Work-Life committee has expanded to include Affirmative Action. The following individuals joined the committee: Bob Gillis, Director of Affirmative Action Office; Dorothy Donnelley, Professor of English, and Mercedes Hudec-Rivero, Professor of Chemical Engineering. Working closely with the President’s Commission of the Status of Women, ADVANCE work-life goals have been incorporated into the PCOSW’s Strategic Plan.

Dual Career Guidelines. In 2005, a dual career policy was endorsed by the President’s Commission on the Status of Women, Human Resources, Affirmative Action, and the AAUP Faculty Union. However, concerns on the part of university administration continued to include reverse discrimination, legal issues, and the perception that the policy offered a placement guarantee. Revisions were made and over the past year (2006-2007), URI President Carothers and Provost Swan approved a policy statement regarding the dual career assistance program. President Carothers’ reservations about this program were addressed by consulting with Bob Gillis, the Director of Affirmative Action, about how such a program would best work in concert with other affirmative action hiring practices. Language was added to the proposal that clarified the point that this program was not a guarantee of employment, and clarified the conditions under which a “search waiver” would be considered. The revised proposal was a clearer, stronger, and more acceptable document for URI. The policy statement reads: The University of Rhode Island acknowledges the importance of supporting dual career partners in attracting and retaining a quality workforce, and in its long-range economic benefit to the University, and is committed to offering placement advice and assistance whenever feasible and appropriate.” The President has submitted this statement to the State Ethics Commission for review. ADVANCE met with the AAUP, who indicated that the statement was acceptable. The State Ethics Commission has yet to address the language in the statement.

Work-Life-Family Website. In December 2006, the URI Work-Life-Family website was activated (www.uri.edu/wlfc). The site is evolving and continues to be refined to update the wealth of information available to URI employees and others. A tri-fold flyer was produced to make this new site well-known to the campus (Appendix H). The flyer was distributed through campus mail to all students, staff, and faculty. The site receives 20-30 hits a day. The website was conceived as a virtual work-life center, and a first step toward the creation of an actual center at some point in the future. The website functions as a portal to URI, community, and national resources for issues related to Work, Family, Education, Community, Health and Wellbeing, and Housing and Relocation. The Work-life Committee will be exploring grant opportunities to fund a Work-Life Center at URI, which will hopefully be located in the suite of offices in the ADVANCE Office.

Parental Leave. Helen Mederer has met with the AAUP Negotiating Team with a revised and improved parental leave policy to be negotiated hopefully during the fall 2007.

Work-Life-Family Conference. The committee is planning to host a one-day work-life conference to be held in March 2008. A “Breakfast Summit Meeting” is scheduled for October 18, 2007 to correspond to Work & Family Month in the Workplace, sponsored by the Alliance for Work-Life Progress. This will be followed by a “Work-Life” month in March 2008, during which one day a week will feature a variety of events related to work-life balance.
**University Lactation Center.** In planning the configuration and function of the future ADVANCE Office subsequent to the end of the grant, the ADVANCE director proposed to establish the University’s first lactation site (proposal is included as part of ADVANCE Center Proposal in Appendix I). Plans, which include renovations to a small (8’ X 10’) office within the ADVANCE suite, have been approved by the URI Space Committee. The university will allocate funds for the renovations. The work is pending. A University policy has been drafted, and will be presented to the Provost when renovations near completion. Efforts are underway to establish this facility as a Professional Breastfeeding Resource Center through application to the LaLeche League. In addition, upon completion, an application will be submitted to the Rhode Island Department of Health to qualify for their annual Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Award.

**Task Force on Flexible Work Policies.** In May 2006 an ad hoc task force convened to explore how to expand and formalize existing mechanisms to offer flexible work options to employees, faculty and staff alike. Members included 3 administrators from the ADVANCE Leadership Team (Judith Swift, Lynn Pasquerella, and Helen Mederer) and a representative from the PCOSW (Carolyn Sovet). This task force will likely be given support and increase its activities as the President’s Strategic Plan is activated. Mederer was named to the AAUP Negotiating Team to ensure that work-life issues are part of the new AAUP faculty contract for 2007 – 2010.

**Work-Life Presentations.** In addition to talks on Work-Life Balance at URI functions, 3 talks work-life presentations were given outside URI.


**Work-Life Accomplishments 2006-2007**
- Dual career assistance policy approved
- Development of Work-Life-Family website
- Work-life conference planned for 2008
- First Lactation site approved