

Academic Life

Sabbatical Leaves

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Why Take A Sabbatical Leave?

Sabbatical leaves for faculty are important because they serve to promote their professional development by providing opportunities for reflection, artistic creation, research, innovation in teaching, and professional exploration. Thus, a leave program is essential for faculty career enhancement and/or redirection. Sabbatical leaves will often involve a disruption of continuity on the job and of the family. However, most faculty who have completed such an experience will testify that the growth that resulted was well worth any such problems.

When To Take A Sabbatical

The decision when to take a sabbatical leave is a personal one and involves decisions that reflect a faculty member's research, teaching, and career objectives. Clearly, one should not begin to think about a sabbatical until the university or college policies permit one. However, even when a faculty member has been on the faculty a sufficient length of time to qualify for a sabbatical, it may not be appropriate or an opportune time for him or her to take one. Other factors must be considered in determining when one should take a sabbatical. The timing of a sabbatical should benefit not only the school and university but also the faculty member.

The following should be considered as pertinent to determining when a faculty member should consider a sabbatical:

- at a point in a faculty member's career when a major shift in career emphasis is desirable for continued productivity and happiness;
- at a point in a faculty member's research when he or she can benefit from spending concentrated time working with a colleague in the same field;
- at a point in a faculty member's career when he or she will benefit from learning new teaching and/or research techniques; and
- at a point in a faculty member's career when he or she would benefit from pursuing a topic that has always been of deep interest but for which adequate time has not been available (such as writing a book).

Getting Started

For a faculty member to begin the process of investigating a sabbatical leave, there are several questions to be answered:

- what are the sabbatical leave policies at the institution?
- how long does it take to have a sabbatical leave application approved?
- what level of funding is provided by the university to faculty wishing to take a sabbatical?
- are benefits such as medical insurance, life insurance, and payment into retirement accounts continued by the university during the sabbatical periods?
- what external funding sources are available to support sabbaticals?
- is it the faculty member's responsibility to arrange coverage of teaching obligations while on sabbatical?
- is the person taking sabbatical leave obligated to return to the university?

- how have other faculty in the college taken advantage of sabbatical leave?
- are there tax breaks for expenses incurred while on sabbatical?
- what are good guidelines for renting one's home while on sabbatical leave to another geographic location?
- what are the difficulties commonly experienced by faculty as they reemerge into full-time faculty life after sabbaticals?

Policies And Obligations Pertaining To Sabbatical Leaves

Every faculty member should be aware of the leave policies of his/her university. The university will have an established sabbatical leave policy generally found in the faculty handbook. Eligibility for a full leave most commonly occurs after six to seven years of continuous, full-time service. After each leave, a similar period of continuous, full-time service must be completed to be eligible again. Typically, academic-year faculty members are eligible for a leave of one semester at full salary or an academic year at half salary. Leaves of 6 months at full salary or 12 months at half salary are standard leaves granted to fiscal-year faculty members.

A sabbatical leave should be considered a privilege to be applied for rather than an earned perquisite or a right of academic freedom. A faculty member requesting a leave should include objectives that are beneficial both to the individual and to the institution. The leave should result in at least one planned product for publication, exhibit, professional performance, or instructional use.

The department head and dean are responsible for reassigning the duties of the faculty member on sabbatical leave, not the faculty member. Some negotiation may be necessary if the timing of the leave occurs at the expense of students or regular department programs.

Planning for sabbatical leave should start one and one-half to two years in advance. Most universities require faculty requesting sabbatical leave to make application by way of a proposal one year prior to the leave. The proposal is usually a narrative that includes the following components:

1. Benefits of the leave to the faculty member including information such as purpose of the leave along with a clear and concise list of objectives;
2. Benefits which the faculty member believes will accrue to the university as a result of the leave;
3. A detailed plan of activity designed to meet the objectives within the time frame of the leave;
4. The location of the leave and any special arrangements made with the sponsoring organization;
5. Sources and amounts of remuneration to be received during the sabbatical period; and
6. A bibliography pertinent to the proposed activity.

Generally, remuneration during the sabbatical period is not allowed to exceed the regular salary budgeted by the university. Paid employment elsewhere during the leave is typically not allowed. For leaves involving reduced university salary, funds from outside agencies (e.g., grants, scholarships, fellowships) are permitted to bring total compensation up to a full salary level. The receipt of grant or fellowship funds to cover travel and other expenses incidental to the leave may be allowed provided the activities associated with these funds are not in conflict with the purpose of the sabbatical leave.

Sabbatical leave, whether at full or reduced pay, is regarded as continuous, full-time service to the university; thus, payment of university fringe benefits such as life insurance, health insurance, short- and long-term disability insurance, liability insurance (clinical faculty) and retirement plans should be continued by the university. The university's contribution should be based on the budgeted full-time salary rate for the period of the sabbatical leave. Social security payments are based on the actual salary

received. If the faculty member pays a portion of any of these benefits, prior arrangements must be made for their payment during the leave period. Policies concerning the accrual of vacation days during the leave period vary by institution.

Permission for paid consulting activities allowed as a regular faculty member may be continued during the leave period, if it is not in conflict with the purpose of the leave. The faculty member should verify the institution's policies on the issues and obtain needed approvals prior to the leave period.

The proposal should be endorsed by the department head and dean or other appropriate administrative personnel of the college of pharmacy. The recommended application is then forwarded through appropriate administrative channels to the chief executive officer and governing board of the institution, who grant approval.

As a general rule, any member of the faculty taking sabbatical leave is obligated to return to the university for at least one full year of service. In addition, most institutions require the faculty member to submit to the chief executive officer of the university through regular administrative channels a report containing the following elements:

1. a detailed description of the leave activities in direct relation to the objectives in the leave application;
2. a list of publications, exhibits, papers presented, and/or instructional materials developed as a result of leave activities;
3. plans for future work in the area of the leave activities; and
4. impact of the leave on the applicant's professional responsibilities.

Sabbatical-Associated Expenses And Potential Funding Sources

Up to half-year sabbatical leaves are usually granted at full salary. Greater than six-month to full-year sabbatical leaves are usually at half salary and require the faculty member to obtain financial support if full salary is required. The faculty member may pay travel expenses and other expenses incidental to the sabbatical out of pocket. If the faculty member, or the host institution, has outside financial support from a foundation, endowment, government agency, or other non-university source for an activity associated with the sabbatical, travel and other incidental expenses may be included in that budget. Faculty should inquire at the division of sponsored programs at their university for assistance in identifying potential funding sources. Ideas for funding sources include:

1. **Fulbright Scholar Program.** Coordinated by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, this program's purpose is to send scholars abroad. Awards are for lecturing, research, lecturing/research, junior faculty lecturing/research, distinguished lecturing, travel only for lecturing/research, and professional activities. Faculty members must match their proposals with programs of the host country.
2. **National Institutes of Health.** Notices of availability can be found in the weekly publication, NIH Guide for Contracts and Grants. Watch for announcements specifically identified for career development in a particular area of scientific research.
3. **National Science Foundation.** Notices of availability are announced periodically in the NSF Bulletin. Watch for announcements specifically identified for career development in a particular area of scientific research or designated for a specific country/global region.
4. **Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education.** Priority announcements for education-related project proposals are published periodically in the Federal Register. Generally, proposals that are considered must show benefit to the community through improvement in the knowledge and skills of a particular group of practicing pharmacists.

5. **Foundations and Endowments.** Organizations that might consider pharmacy-related project proposals that benefit the general good of the community would include groups such as the Merck Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, or Lilly Endowment. The Lilly Endowment offers an open fellowship program for mid-career faculty interested in gaining enrichment as persons and teachers. Organizations with specific interests (e.g., The Arthritis Foundation) may be identified for special projects. To gather more information on foundations/endowments and associated areas of proposal interest, contact your university's sponsored programs division or request information directly from the foundation/endowment.
6. **Direct Support.** It may be possible to arrange for direct support through existing grant funds from the institution hosting the sabbatical leave. This must be planned well in advance of the sabbatical when the host's institution proposes the grant to a funding agency.

The sabbatical host can help to identify appropriate housing for the faculty member. The faculty member is usually responsible for the rent expense. Low-cost housing offered by the host institution or a sabbatical house in the area are good alternatives to consider. Often, the faculty member who is going on sabbatical is more interested in finding a renter who will take good care of his/her home and yard than obtaining top dollar for rent. Generally, the faculty member will seek a good renter for the family home to offset the rent paid at the sabbatical location. Also, if contemplating a foreign sabbatical, the faculty member and family will need valid passports and visas, which take some time to arrange.

Since the expenses of the faculty member (not family members) incurred while on sabbatical for travel, lodging, and subsistence represent a type of educational expense, they may (or may not) be deductible on the faculty member's federal income tax return. Prior to the sabbatical leave, the faculty member should review current tax codes and seek the advice of a tax consultant to identify which expenses are deductible and to set up a recordkeeping system. Rent received on one's home would be considered income. For foreign sabbaticals, tax laws on expense/income may change with the time one spends abroad; thus, it is important to consult with a tax specialist prior to the sabbatical.

Faculty interested in a sabbatical, but unable to leave town, can investigate the possibility of taking a sabbatical in their geographic area. There may be an organization within driving distance that can provide a suitable opportunity for new growth. It may even be possible to stay at the university, but have the time designated as sabbatical leave so the faculty member has the opportunity to develop a new concept and/or take course work without the distraction of regular faculty responsibilities. While this approach may not be optimal since proximity to the job makes interruptions more likely, it is certainly preferable to no sabbatical at all. Faculty are encouraged to consider these and other innovative ideas for obtaining sabbatical leaves. Remember, the potential rewards are worth the effort.

Returning From Sabbatical Leave

Sometimes the faculty member returning from sabbatical leave will find that very little has changed at the university. Time pressures are the same as before. This can be frustrating since the faculty member is usually refreshed and excited about continuing the sabbatical project and/or implementing knowledge and skills acquired on the sabbatical, as well as possibly needing a load reduction to work on the final report of the sabbatical. Make an agreement with the department head for time to work on the new project as part of the original proposal. In lieu of a written agreement, assertive diplomacy may be required to negotiate desired job responsibilities on return from sabbatical.

On other occasions, the faculty member may return to find that a great deal has changed. The administration of the department or school may have changed or the person who took over the faculty member's favorite course may have really enjoyed it and has received permission to continue the course. In these instances, the returning faculty member should remain flexible and negotiate desired

responsibilities with the department administration. Revitalized and retooled from the sabbatical, the returning faculty member should look on any changes with a positive approach toward developing a more satisfying career.

Try It, You'll Like It

If after careful consideration of the information presented here you are interested, we encourage you to actively pursue a sabbatical leave. Participating in the planning process will be an excellent opportunity for personal growth. If the sabbatical comes to fruition, it is our great hope that you will experience tremendous career growth.