

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Faculty Affairs Committee

DATE: March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: Approval of Changes/Updates to SD 06-14: Sabbatical Leaves

WHEREAS, there has been confusion regarding procedures in evaluating applications for sabbatical leaves,

WHEREAS, a number of faculty applications for sabbatical leaves in the Fall 2021 semester have been denied despite providing necessary documentation as evidence warranting for granting of leaves,

WHEREAS, decisions to decline sabbatical leaves were issued regardless of the denied faculty applications having demonstrably met the requirements and protocols established by their respective departments and SD 06-14: Sabbatical Leaves,

WHEREAS, the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) was charged with submitting a report (included below) on sabbatical review procedures by Office of Academic Affairs and the Professional Development Committee,

WHEREAS, FAC had included recommendations and/or policy revisions to the Executive Committee by the March 25, 2022, document deadline so that any updated policies can be implemented in fall of 2022.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Senate approve the updated SD 06-14 that further clarifies and establishes the appropriate process of evaluating cases submitted for sabbatical leave as follows:

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## SABBATICAL LEAVES

PFW's mission includes the search for new knowledge, excellent teaching, and service to the university, profession, and community. In order to maintain and continue the high level of academic excellence necessary to support this mission, it is important for the faculty to periodically update and strengthen their professional skills. A sound program of sabbatical leaves is thus of vital importance to the University in that it provides for this continued professional growth and new or renewed intellectual achievement through significant study, research, and writing that cannot easily be done while engaged in the ongoing duties of a faculty member.

A sabbatical leave is not a leave which a faculty member automatically "earns" by having been employed for a given period of time. Rather, it is an investment by the University in the expectation that the sabbatical leave will significantly enhance the faculty member's capacity to contribute to the objectives of the University. For this reason, all periods of sabbatical leave count as full-time service to the University and will be approved only if there is adequate reason to believe that they will achieve this purpose. *Candidates should know that the way this belief is evaluated will be based on the presentation (via narrative, CV, and/or department support letters) of a candidate's scholarly productivity in recent years. If a candidate has devoted considerable time to service, teaching-related work, or other activity at the expense of research productivity, they should plan to explain this.*

A statement of goals for the sabbatical, an outline of the type of evidence that will be used to demonstrate how those goals will be achieved, and a statement of the proposed use of the applicant's time during the sabbatical period are required as part of the sabbatical application. Acceptable programs for the use of time may include:

1. Research on significant issues and problems, including pedagogical issues.
2. Important creative or descriptive work in any means of expression, for example, writing, painting, and so forth.
3. Retraining in new domains of scholarship or creative endeavor in one's discipline. Such retraining may be used to enhance one's scholarship and/or one's teaching capabilities.

Before being evaluated by the Professional Development Subcommittee, applications for sabbatical leave must have been reviewed to ensure that the applications meet the guidelines specified in this document by appropriate administrators (chair/dean or director). *A departmental or division faculty committee (e.g., the Promotion and Tenure or Personnel*

Committee) must make a written recommendation about sabbatical applications to the appropriate administrator at that level, which must factor into PDS' evaluation process. The administrator will forward this recommendation along with his or her own recommendation to the next level.

The Professional Development Subcommittee is responsible for recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs regarding sabbatical leave applications. Professional Development Subcommittee should follow only this document and department criteria in evaluating sabbatical applications. PDS operates as an independent faculty committee. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs makes final decisions regarding sabbatical leave applications. Process questions should be brought to Faculty Affairs Committee for guidance. Denied applications should be given clear and individualized explanations for the rejection of their applications with an opportunity to respond.

At the termination of the leave, and not later than three months after returning to campus, the faculty member must submit a report about the sabbatical leave to the department chair or program director to whom they report. The Chair forwards the report to the next level, usually the Dean or Director, who forwards the report to the Office of Academic Affairs. This report must outline how the sabbatical period was used, what outcomes were achieved, and indicate further outcomes that are expected as a result of the sabbatical project. All such reports must be included with subsequent sabbatical applications. Information about the outcome of previous sabbaticals will be used to evaluate subsequent sabbatical applications.

(Note: Per Senate Document [SD 06-19](#), each department or division should establish specific criteria for the granting of sabbatical leaves that will serve as the basis of evaluation for applications coming from that department or division, and that are consistent with the above guidelines.)

## Faculty Affairs Committee Report on Sabbatical Review Procedures

In February 2022, Senate charged the Faculty Affairs Committee to undertake

- a review of the role that Office of Academic Affairs procedures or lack of procedures played in the way PDS carried out its review of sabbatical applications in Fall 2021;
- a review of the way PDS carried out its review of sabbatical applications in Fall 2021;

Senate charged the Faculty Affairs Committee to

- make appropriate revisions to SD 06-14, such as
  - clarifying the role of the VCAA
  - clarifying the role of PDS
  - clarifying the process for determining criteria for evaluation
  - determining whether department criteria still have primacy, and
  - any other matters that will prevent any confusion and therefore unnecessary stress for faculty in the future;

Senate charged FAC to

- submit its recommendations and/or policy revisions to the Executive Committee by the March 25, 2022 document deadline so that any updated policies can be implemented in fall of 2022.

In view of the charge, Senate FAC conducted interviews (VCAA, PDS Chair, others) and found the following for which we make recommendations.

**Finding 1:** PDS Chair mentioned that in the past, the Subcommittee did not use rubrics. In 2021, PDS developed and adopted rubrics for evaluating sabbatical applications. The rubrics apply varying weights to different evaluation items with the heaviest weight on recent publications.

**Recommendations:** As PDS starts adopting specific rubrics for evaluating sabbatical applications, it will be beneficial to make the rubrics, specifically the evaluation items, available to faculty members prior to the call for applications for sabbatical leave.

Given decisions on sabbatical applications based on the currently adopted rubrics are different than previous decisions, if rubrics will be used to take future decisions, such rubrics need to be approved by Faculty Affairs Committee and made public before applications are due.

The Senate Document and/or OAA guidelines need to inform candidates that productivity for the last 5 (or possibly fewer) years is a major consideration for those reviewing sabbatical applications, and as such, they should be clear that this information is included in CVs and/or candidate narratives.

**Finding 2:** While the pre-existing processes for evaluating sabbatical application proposals did not include rubrics, in Fall 2021 PDS decided to adopt a similar process to that used for evaluating Summer Faculty Grant proposals. One of the points the PDS Chair mentioned was that, in light of the rubric used to evaluate sabbatical application proposals in Fall 2021, there were unsatisfactory proposals due to lack of or inadequate literature review.

**Recommendations:** For Summer Faculty Grants, applicants are allowed to request one or two previous successful proposals for review. As PDS uses the same process for evaluating both types

of proposals, we recommend that approved sabbatical proposals be made available for review by candidates. This will be consistent with the process of Summer Faculty Grants. In addition, it will help faculty members construct their sabbatical proposals of better quality and have a better success with their applications.

**Finding 3:** Senate FAC found that PDS considered themselves to have been put in a position of pressure from upper administration to limit the number of applications approved. The VCAA noted in an interview that staffing and cost of staffing at the university are a prime concern for his office and therefore sought to be extra diligent in decisions regarding how university money is spent. This diligence, it seems, may have resulted in the pressure felt by the members of the PD subcommittee.

**Recommendations:** PFW documents should reflect what faculty believe to be a proper relationship of communication between VCAA and PDS for sabbatical applications. VCAA's office should not do anything that gives members of PDS the impression that certain findings are expected from them. Anything otherwise dilutes the important role of shared faculty governance and decision-making on the campus.

**Finding 4:** Candidates denied sabbatical for the 2021 application cycle were not offered a clear and personalized explanation for the rejection of their applications. This has the potential to inflict stress, anxiety, and breed self-doubt in our own colleagues. Especially given our findings of the changed process for evaluating sabbaticals this year, this discovery is particularly concerning for the strain likely put on faculty whose applications were rejected.

**Recommendations:** The Senate or OAA documents need to include some language that requires either PDS or VCAA or both to offer faculty whose applications were not approved a clear and fair explanation for this decision.

**Finding 5:** Expectations for what belonged in the candidate's proposal were not clearly indicated in the relevant Senate and OAA documents. Examples of discrepancies include: no specific request for literature review in application, yet some PDS members were looking for it; emphasis on CV should show productivity in last five years; requests for specificity in what and where faculty aimed to publish after the fact.

**Recommendations:** Expand language in Senate or OAA documents to reflect these requests. Moreover, the language should include a grandfather clause to allow time for faculty to accommodate the new criteria on publications.

**Finding 6:** The Committee found an almost total neglect of Department or College criteria and recommendations in the decision-making process when it came to evaluating applications. Whereas candidates are asked to make sure their application adheres to department criteria, these criteria are no longer relevant once the dossier reaches PDS. Similarly, department members give time and energy to sitting on review committees and reviewing the sabbatical proposals, while recommendations of committees, chairs, and deans, seem not to factor into the rubric for evaluating faculty applications at all.

**Recommendations:** Senate document should be revised to require that PDS and/or VCAA take into consideration the recommendations and opinions of department and college faculty when evaluating the potential sabbatical.

**Finding 7:** Senate committees are sometimes not aware of the relevant Senate Documents that should be used to guide their work.

**Recommendation:** All Senate committees should be given information regarding their role, responsibilities, and relevant Senate documents to fulfill their charge.