

ALLOCATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEAVE QUARTERS

Arts & Sciences, Autumn 2006

By University policy, a faculty member is eligible for a professional leave with pay (sabbatical) not earlier than the seventh year of service to the University or not earlier than the seventh year after return from a previous professional leave with pay. Faculty hired by the UW after accumulating years of service at other institutions may, under certain circumstances, be granted an exception to this policy to allow for their first professional leave from the UW on an accelerated schedule, provided this is approved by the Provost's Office at the time of appointment. Assistant Professors in the year of mandatory review for promotion may apply for professional leave. By statute, the State of Washington limits the number of university faculty and exempt staff on professional leave with pay at any given time to 4 percent. As a result, it is not possible for every faculty member to be granted professional leave on a seven-year cycle. A competitive application process is required, with decisions made at the department, college, and provost levels. Below is a description of how this is done.

The Provost's Office has a pool of professional leave quarters to allocate, corresponding to 4 percent of the total eligible faculty and professional staff. It distributes to each school and college a number of quarters that is slightly less than what that school or college would get proportionally and retains a small central pool. The Provost's Office may provide more quarters to Arts & Sciences later in the year. Such a supplementary allocation has been made in the past, thanks to the return to the Provost by other schools and colleges of quarters they do not use. However, in recent years other units have used a greater proportion of quarters available to them than in the more distant past, leaving fewer extra quarters available for Arts & Sciences.

Within the College, the professional leave pool provided by the Provost is split into three divisional pools: for the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities. The divisional distribution is done proportionally, based on the number of faculty in a division eligible for professional leave. Note that although professional staff are eligible, their numbers are not taken into account in allocating professional leave quarters to divisions.

Each Divisional Dean makes provisional decisions on approval or disapproval of faculty requests within the division. Since the number of professional leave quarters available may be insufficient to meet demand, the Divisional Dean makes use of all information available in order to make the wisest possible decision. To this end, a chair's input is invaluable. What is especially useful is a ranking of all requests from the department, accompanied by an explanation of the basis for the ranking.

Below are some considerations taken into account in ranking requests.

** History of prior professional leaves. For example how recent was the last professional leave? What impact did prior professional leaves have on the record of the faculty member?

** Merit of the faculty member's proposal for use of the leave.

** Opportunity for the faculty member to participate in a particular program or combine the leave with fellowship funding in a particular year.

** Timing of the professional leave request in the faculty member's career. For example, has the faculty member just been granted tenure and promotion to Associate Professor? Has the faculty member just completed a term as chair, center director, divisional dean, or other significant position of responsibility? Is the professional leave project the last link in building a strong case for promotion to Professor of a faculty member who has served as Associate Professor for many years?

** Availability of alternative means to meet the faculty member's professional needs.

This is by no means a complete list. Chairs are encouraged to rank requests using whatever criteria they think best. What is most important is that an explanation of these criteria be provided. The chair should

include an evaluation of each request and a ranking of all the departmental requests. If appropriate, a chair's ranking of the requests may be a partial ordering rather than a total ordering—in other words, there need not be a strict comparison of all requests. Some pairs of requests may be deemed not comparable to each other, with no ranking made between them. Of course, in these cases, some guidance to the Divisional Dean would still be appreciated. Note that professional staff members are also eligible for professional leave and that equivalent criteria are used in judging their requests.

In considering a faculty member's request for professional leave, a chair must also take into account the unit's programmatic needs and the ability of the unit to cover the teaching of that faculty member. These considerations may make it necessary to deny an otherwise deserving request for professional leave. In such a case, the Divisional Dean can set as a high priority the approval of a subsequent professional leave request from that faculty member.

As Divisional Deans decide on the requests, they consult with chairs in order to better understand the faculty members' needs as well as to explore ways to fulfill as many worthy requests as possible. For instance, more faculty needs may be met if some faculty can do as well with professional leaves shorter in length than requested, split over two years, or delayed; and these options are often considered. In addition, Divisional Deans consult with each other in order to determine if the needs across the College are better met by moving some of one division's allocation of quarters to another division.