

Benefits Committee Policy Recommendation for the Implementation of Professional and Educational Leaves at UGA

The Georgia Board of Regents Academic Affairs Handbook Section 4.05.01, policy number 802.0804, entitled “EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEAVE” provides guidelines for faculty members desiring to take a leave of absence to engage in scholarly, creative, professional, research, or other academic activities that will enhance their contribution to their respective colleges. (Please see attached BOR policy).

To assess the extent of the BOR’s policy implementation at the University of Georgia, the Benefits Committee conducted an inventory of educational and professional leave practices across UGA academic units. Except for three units that have specific formal written policies and procedures (i.e., College of Education, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the School of Public and International Affairs), most other schools and colleges use the general BOR policy to guide their faculty leave decisions.¹ However, we also found that these decisions are sporadic and overly discretionary and faculty members are, by and large, uninformed of this benefit.

The importance of implementing a professional leave program at UGA is clearly stated in the Faculty Affairs Policy Manual:

In the absence of a Sabbatical Leave Program, it is imperative that the University of Georgia have mechanisms that provide faculty with the opportunity to enhance their scholarship. The purpose is to provide an environment that will be as supportive as that provided by the nation’s major research institutions even though we do not have a Sabbatical Leave Program. (*Section 1.12-1, Source: <http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/faculty/fac112.htm#1121>*)

The Benefits Committee believes that a Professional and Educational Leave Program is crucial to the recruitment and retention of world-class faculty but we are also concerned that the above UGA policy may not be effectively implemented across all departments, schools, and colleges. We, therefore, propose the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: All UGA schools and colleges should develop their own formal written policies and procedures for granting professional and educational leaves. These policies and procedures must be promoted and accessible to all faculty.

Recommendation 2: The Office of the Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Provost should collect data each year on the number of professional leaves granted throughout the university. In the interests of transparency, make these data readily available on the University Council web site.

¹ The College of Arts and Sciences is in the process of passing a formal written policy.

Recommendation 3: Encourage the University to set aside funds to be used as needed so that productive faculty in all units have an opportunity to take professional and educational leave. Some units do not have sufficient resources to implement a meaningful professional and educational leave policy and university funds dedicated to the program will ensure equal opportunity across campus.