

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.

In a review of policies at peer institutions, most universities have a policy that provides full pay for at least one semester of leave. Almost all schools allow a maximum of one year leave with the stipulation that faculty is obligated to continue employment for a set number of years. (Please see attached Sabbatical/Educational Leave Profiles of Peer Institutions.)

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.

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

Recommendation 2: The Office of the Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Provost should continue to 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.

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.

Georgia Board of Regents

802.0804 EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

The president of an institution may, with the approval of the Chancellor and the Board, grant leaves of absence, with or without pay, to employees of the institution. Leaves of absence of one academic term or less, with or without pay, may be granted by the institution's president. Extensions of such leaves require the approval of the Chancellor and the Board.

In considering a request for leave with pay, the president should bear in mind that it is the policy of the Board that such leave shall be granted only for the purposes of promoting scholarly work and encouraging professional development. The president should examine carefully the program or project on which the employee proposes to work, and he/she should also consider the likelihood of the employee's being able to accomplish the purposes for which leave is requested. (It is expected that scholarly and professional leaves shall be granted without pay where the leave is supported by an external grant or stipend).

In considering a request for a leave, the president should take into consideration the effect that the granting of the leave will have on the institution or on the department of which the employee is a member. If the employee's work cannot be handled by other employees and if funds are not available for the employment of a substitute, the president will be justified in refusing to recommend that the leave be granted or in deferring action upon the request for a leave.

If, after careful consideration, the president feels the interests of the institution and of the employee will be served by the granting of the leave requested, the president shall submit a recommendation through the Chancellor to the Board of Regents to this effect, together with a statement of the reasons supporting his/her recommendation.

The president ordinarily should not approve a request for a leave with pay if the applicant for leave has been employed at an institution for the period of less than three years, nor should the president ordinarily approve a leave with pay for a person in an academic position who has not already completed the requirements for a master's degree.

Any employee who has been granted a leave of absence with pay shall be required, before beginning the leave, to sign an agreement indicating that:

1. for a leave with pay of less than one year, the employee will return to the institution at the termination of the leave for a period of at least one year;
2. for a one-year leave with pay, the employee will return to the institution at the termination of the leave for a period of at least two years; and that
3. if the employee does not return to the institution for the full amount of time specified in the agreement, the employee will reimburse the institution for the amount of compensation received while on leave, as well as any other expenses paid by the University System of Georgia during the leave.

A faculty or staff member who returns from an authorized leave which enhances professional study and development shall be entitled to a salary which will include, as a minimum, the mandated across-the-board salary raises which occurred during the period of leave. (BR Minutes, 1980-81, p. 191).

No leaves of absence will be granted to persons in the University System who are retired and who are drawing retirement benefits from the Teachers' Retirement System of Georgia or from the University System. Approved leave shall allow employees the right to elect to continue group insurance benefits with institutional participation (BR Minutes, 1949-50, pp. 452-53; 1990-91, pp. 298-299).

PROCEDURES

Recommendations for leave WITHOUT pay will, as a rule, be approved by the Board whenever it appears that the granting of such leave will not be prejudicial to the interests of the institution (c.f. 802.0803).

All leaves of absence must be entered into the Faculty Information System.

Recommendations for leaves of absence submitted by the president to the Chancellor must include the following information:

1. Leaves without pay

Each recommendation for leave of absence without pay must include a statement that the faculty member's absence will not adversely affect institutional programming.

2. Leaves with pay

- A. Length of service at the institution. Normally, the faculty member must have been employed at the institution for at least three years. Strong justification must be provided for the granting of leave with pay to an individual who has served less than three years.

B. Highest earned degree. Normally, the faculty member must have completed the requirements for the master's degree. Strong justification must be provided for the granting of leave with pay to an individual who does not hold this degree, or its equivalent.

C. Statement of benefit to the institution. Each recommendation for a leave of absence with pay must include a statement of the direct and significant benefits that will accrue to the institution as the result of the faculty member's activities during the period of leave.

D. Handling of the faculty member's responsibilities. Each recommendation for a leave of absence with pay must identify the means by which the faculty member's institutional responsibilities will be met during the period of his/her leave.

E. Additional institutional expenditures required. If the granting of a leave with pay will require additional institutional expenditures, the recommendation must note this fact. If not, a statement to that effect is required.

F. Amount of leave pay. The amount of leave pay should be determined with reference to the following:

I. The normal rate of leave pay shall be considered as an amount up to one-half of the regular salary of the faculty member during the period of leave.

II. EXTRAORDINARY JUSTIFICATION must accompany a recommendation for leave pay in an amount exceeding one-half of the faculty member's regular salary during the period of leave or for leave pay at full regular salary for the period of leave. The activities of the faculty member during the period of leave must result in highly significant benefits to the institution, with a full description of these activities provided with the leave recommendation.

III. The amount of any external stipend or any other external remuneration to be received by the faculty member for his/her activities during the period of leave shall be taken into account in the determination of institutional leave pay recommended. The recommendation for leave must indicate the source and the amount of applicable external remuneration.

Last Updated: 10/30/2000

(Source: <http://www.usg.edu/academics/handbook/section4/4.05/4.05.01.phtml>)