

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on Professional Leave (Sabbatical)

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Q1. How often are WSU faculty members eligible for professional leave?

A1. The Office of the Provost releases guidelines each year on professional leave and retraining. See <http://provost.wsu.edu/manuals-forms/> at the Provost's website. The guidelines state that applications can be considered from faculty on permanent appointment and AP employees who have completed at least five years of active service at Washington State University by the time the leave becomes effective and who have completed at least five years of service between leaves. "The amount of prior service on temporary appointment at Washington State University applicable to professional leave will be determined by the Provost and Executive Vice President" (WSU Faculty Manual Section 3 page 74, [http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty\\_manual/](http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty_manual/)). Some faculty go on professional leave only once during their entire career, while others take professional leave every five years. Individuals who have taken professional leave typically are highly supportive of sabbaticals, as the experiences are usually very positive for their programs and professional development. Pre-tenure, tenure-track faculty may wonder whether they can apply for professional leave when they have completed at least five years of service. They are not eligible to take a sabbatical until after they obtain tenure because you have to be on "permanent appointment" before you can take such a leave. However, many faculty members apply for sabbatical at the time they are coming up for tenure, with the sabbatical effective immediately after their tenure date, if tenure is granted. The WSU administration is willing to entertain such proposals, but the sabbatical is only granted if tenure is obtained.

Q2. What is the typical duration of a sabbatical?

A2. As stated in the Faculty Manual "Professional leave may be granted for periods up to two semesters or 12 months for faculty on academic or annual appointment, respectively" (WSU Faculty manual Section 3 page 75, [http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty\\_manual/](http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty_manual/)). The duration of professional leave can vary from as little as one month to as long as one year, depending on the faculty member's underlying appointment, the needs and opportunities of the individual faculty member and the needs of the department or college. Almost all of the sabbatical requests at WSU are for either one or two semesters (6 or 12 months for annual appointees). Requests for one or two month sabbaticals are rare and might not be approved by the chair or dean when the faculty member has a semester-long course to deliver.

Q3. What happens to a WSU faculty member's salary when on professional (sabbatical) leave?

A3. "Faculty on academic appointment may receive 100 percent of base salary for leaves of one semester or 75% of base salary for leaves of two semesters. Faculty on annual appointments may receive 100% of base salary for leaves of six months or 75% of base salary for leaves of twelve months. Faculty on academic appointment who are granted paid leaves of more than one semester but less than two semesters will be paid at a monthly rate which is the average of 4.5 months at 100 percent, and any additional months at 50%. Faculty on annual appointments who are granted paid leaves of more than six months but less than twelve months will be paid at a monthly rate which is the average of six months at 100% and any additional months at 50%. In any case, the monthly rate of pay from state general funds and general local funds during the leave period may not exceed the average salary rate of the highest paid quartile of teaching faculty on academic year appointments (RCW 28b.10.650). Faculty on professional leave continue to earn annual leave and sick leave. Extra compensation for services as a department Chair or other administrative officer is discontinued during a professional leave." (WSU Faculty manual Section 3, page 75, [http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty\\_manual/](http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty_manual/)). For details on exactly how salary payments are handled during a professional leave, contact WSU Payroll (<http://www.wsu.edu/payroll/> or 509-335-9575). The loss of salary for a leave longer than 6 months may not be very great when you consider the reduction in taxes and that many faculty members cover the reduced salary off of grants or stipends.

Q4. What factors are important to WSU administrators in approving an application for professional leave?

A4. The Office of the Provost releases guidelines each year on professional leave and retraining, and on making an application. See <http://provost.wsu.edu/manuals-forms/> at the Provost's website. Eligibility and conditions are clearly specified under Parts 1 and 2, while Part 3 outlines the required formatting and supporting documentation. All parts of the guidelines should be read carefully. Adherence to the guidelines will ensure a complete proposal, and aid an expeditious review. Some applications for professional leave have been poorly prepared in the past, and incomplete proposals are considered ineligible. It is advisable to visit with your department chair before preparing an application, and also to have one or more trusted colleagues read and review the application before submitting it. Preparing the application is not an onerous process, but does take some planning, time, and effort. The college-level deadline for submitting a professional leave application may be one month or more before the Provost's deadline, so check well in advance to ensure appropriate deadlines are met. The importance of advance notice cannot be over-emphasized. Sometimes, more faculty members want to go on sabbatical at a particular time than the department chair can accommodate. Your chair might be able to save you a lot of work if (s)he already knows that (s)he cannot approve your application for that year.

Some individuals arrange a 'stay-at-home' sabbatical, with short trips to locations or conferences associated with their professional leave project, instead of relocating for the entire duration of their sabbatical. Anyone proposing such a sabbatical needs to explain why the sabbatical is not 'business as usual'. Just attending conferences is not adequate. Such an applicant really does need to propose a training opportunity, research opportunity, etc. that could not be accomplished during normal times.

Q5. What is involved in preparing a WSU application for professional (sabbatical) leave?

A5. As stated in the answer to Question 4: The Office of the Provost releases guidelines each year on professional leave and retraining, and on making an application. See <http://provost.wsu.edu/manuals-forms/>. Part 3 outlines the required formatting and supporting documentation. The guidelines should be read and adhered to carefully to ensure a complete proposal and aid an expeditious review. Applications prepared poorly or incompletely are considered ineligible. The guidelines include a check list to help ensure the application is complete. Preparing the application is not an onerous process, but does take planning, time, and effort. The college-level deadline for submitting a professional leave application may be one month or more before the Provost's deadline, so check well in advance to ensure appropriate deadlines are met for your college.

Visit with your department chair before preparing an application. A letter is required from your department chair, dean (and Chancellor for those faculty located at regional campuses) acknowledging your application for professional leave, and verifying that such leave will not have any adverse effects on your program, and departmental or area operations. Each applicant must also provide a curriculum vitae that, at a minimum, contains information about progress since taking the last professional leave. The applicant must state the reason that a sabbatical leave is necessary in order to undertake the proposed work.

Request that one or more trusted and senior colleagues read and review the application prior to submission. You will need to provide two letters of support for your application, which could be the same individuals who review your application. The letters of support must attest to the merit of the proposal and indicate that the applicant is capable of completing this work. In addition, an application for leave must include letters from any labs, libraries, etc. that you intend to visit, indicating that you are welcome there. These letters are not the letters of support from colleagues or your department chair. Letters that only say that particular resources will be provided do not demonstrate the assurances needed by WSU administration.

All requests for professional leave must be accompanied by an effort to secure external funding. Applicants must provide a list of external agencies from which funding will be sought. The funding request does not have to be submitted or procured prior to going on professional leave.

Q6. What happens to a WSU faculty's teaching responsibilities when on professional (sabbatical) leave?

A6. "Faculty members on professional leave are relieved from all teaching, research, administrative, and committee functions for the leave period so that full time may be devoted to the purpose for which the leave is granted." (Faculty Manual Section 3, page 74, [http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty\\_manual/](http://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty_manual/)). Faculty who normally would be teaching during the period of their professional leave should work with their department chairs to make sure that their teaching responsibilities are covered. In the end, covering the department's teaching responsibilities is the job of the chair, so it is important to give your chair as much advance notice as possible if you are contemplating a sabbatical.

Q7. How do you supervise/advise graduate students, postdoctorates, and technicians when on professional leave?

A7. You may need to keep in touch with graduate students, postdocs, technicians, etc. as part of your sabbatical proposal. Advancements in electronic communication such as email, conference calls, videoconferencing, and Skype have made long-distance communication much simpler than previously possible, e.g., videoconferencing by Skype is relatively inexpensive and not complex technologically. However, the ease and cost of long distance communication may vary depending on the remoteness of the location where you will be on professional leave. *Prior* to going on professional leave, contact WSU IT personnel as well as the relevant individuals at the institute or facility where you will be on leave to assess the options and costs available for long distance communication. You may need to purchase equipment (e.g., camera or microphone if your laptop computer isn't equipped with these) or download software onto your computer to facilitate long-distance communication.

The frequency of electronic communication with students, staff, and postdoctoral assistants may vary depending on the level of independence and experience of each. Be prepared for possible emergency or irregularly scheduled meetings, e.g., when students are preparing for professional meetings or dealing with unexpected situations. *Prior* to going on leave, have test runs with the people in your program using the communication method(s) you will utilize on leave, e.g., set up a computer with camera and microphone in an office or lab and practice communicating with each person in the program so they are comfortable with the method(s). If possible, don't do this the first time after you have gone on leave. It may be most efficient to send electronic files as email attachments prior to a call or videoconference. Large files too big to send as email attachments can be sent using services such as YouSendIt.com (free delivery for documents up to 100 MB, and a small monthly fee for larger documents).

Avoid frequent electronic meetings with students and staff. *Prior* to going on leave, discuss with people in your program the need to respect your time and the reasons you are dedicating to being on sabbatical, i.e., to get away from the daily demands of your regular position in order to focus on the sabbatical project or activity. Ask that they not contact you about minor issues that can be addressed readily with others in your program or with faculty/staff in the department. Ask someone highly respected and trusted within your department (e.g., senior faculty member, chair of the department, or director of the research center or school) to meet occasionally with people in your program to assess things, and to provide assistance when needed. Encourage graduate students to make use of their other committee members to address questions.

Depending on the duration of your professional leave, you may want to ask the WSU IT office to increase the space allocated on the WSU server for your emails if you will accumulate a lot of email on the server while on leave. They can also show you how to back up emails, etc. to facilitate the temporary relocation, and how to recover archived e-mail messages upon your return.

If your period of professional leave overlaps with the period of annual review for staff, students, or postdoctorates (depending on departmental policies), ask someone else to take responsibility

for providing constructive critique and feedback to these individuals. You should not write annual reviews during sabbatical unless this is part of your proposal.

Q8. How do you make arrangements for housing and family commitments during professional leave—how do you rent out your house, find housing where you will be spending sabbatical, accommodate a partner and children?

A8. New faculty and postdoctoral associate hires are often interested in renting sabbatical homes, and the key is to identify these individuals in advance of taking your leave. One option is [www.sabbaticalhomes.com](http://www.sabbaticalhomes.com), a fee-based site that lists homes for rent and exchange by academics around the world.

For faculty with a spouse or partner who is unable to co-relocate for the duration of the professional leave, avoid trying to return frequently to 'home base' during a sabbatical. One WSU faculty member commented on how she tried to accommodate a spouse and children who remained in Pullman while she was on sabbatical in another state. She flew to her sabbatical location every Monday and back to Pullman every Friday. As a result, she was never able to settle down and focus fully on the sabbatical project, and strongly recommended against this type of arrangement.

Another WSU faculty member with a spouse who was also a professor at WSU (in a different field of study) was able to coordinate for both of them to take professional leave at the same location overseas. After researching options, they found a location that was suitable for both of them in their respective fields. They had two young children (six months and two years old at that time), so they coordinated a nanny using an on-line nanny agency, as well as housing (through [www.sabbaticalhomes.com](http://www.sabbaticalhomes.com)). They were able to arrange everything online. They used Skype to interview the nanny along with reviewing her references, and e-mail to arrange housing.

The Provost's office has collaborated with the NSF ADVANCE grant, to make [www.sittercity.com](http://www.sittercity.com) available to all tenure-track and tenured faculty members: this resource provides a match-making service for people in need of finding a care taker of any sort (e.g., for pets, parents, children, etc.). Sittercity has a broad network so they can arrange for nannies, etc., even in distant locations. Unfortunately, longer-term funding for this service is uncertain, but it is available now (as of 2012).

Q9. What about pets if going overseas?

A9. According to Charlie Powell, Public Information Officer for the WSU School of Veterinary Medicine, the regulations for bringing pets into a foreign country vary from country to country, and the rules change "by the minute". Be aware that some countries will not allow any pets to be brought into the country, and others may require up to a six-month quarantine of pets. Information available from the US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) includes instructions to contact the consulate or embassy for information on requirements that must be met in order to take a pet into that country: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import\\_export/animals/animal\\_exports\\_pets.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/animal_exports_pets.shtml)  
Another source of information is the USDA APHIS Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC).

As stated in the answer to Q8, [www.sittercity.com](http://www.sittercity.com) is available to all tenure-track and tenured faculty members as a match-making service for people in need of finding a care taker of any sort (e.g., for pets, parents, children, etc.). Sittercity has a broad network so they can arrange match-making services even in distant locations.

Q10. While on sabbatical leave, what are your responsibilities to your department?

A10. While on sabbatical leave, your main focus should be on the sabbatical project, not departmental service. Unless they are part of your sabbatical leave proposal, service responsibilities such as attending faculty meetings, committee work, conducting technical staff and graduate student evaluations, participating in tenure and promotion reviews of junior faculty, etc. are not appropriate or expected.

Q11. What happens when you come back from professional leave? Are there any reporting requirements? How do you adjust to post-sabbatical life?

A11. Part 2.16 of the Provost's guidelines state that a faculty member who has taken professional leave must submit a written summary of work completed during the professional leave. The summary should explain your leave plans, new knowledge generated by the leave, ways in which this knowledge will be utilized in continuing your institutional responsibilities, impact on your research direction and research of graduate students supervised, and other benefits to the University resulting from the leave. The report should be specific about the impact on your teaching (e.g., course titles and number of students taught); describe publications, products, exhibitions, and presentations resulting from the project (e.g., titles, journals, dates); and describe funding that resulted from the project (e.g., project titles, funding sources, amounts of grants). The report should be submitted through the department chair or appropriate immediate administrator to the Dean. A second copy should be sent directly to the Provost's Office. Reports are due in the Provost's Office by April 1 for those who return from leave on approximately January 1 (e.g., those on leave for fall semester only), and on November 1 for those who return from leave on approximately August 16 (e.g., those on leave for spring semester or the full academic or annual year). Reports do not have to be lengthy.

Faculty members who have taken professional leave often comment on the difficulty of returning to the myriad of responsibilities related to their regular positions following leave, the backlog of work that may have accumulated during the leave, and the additional commitments that may have resulted from the professional leave. Awareness of this, planning prior to professional leave, and careful organization/delegation can help minimize or avoid a negative post-sabbatical experience. Allocate adequate time (at least a week or two) after returning from leave to adjust to being back in your regular position. Writing your professional leave report, and presenting a seminar on the professional leave experience and activities can be valuable reminders of the purpose and benefits of your professional leave.

Q12. What are some funding opportunities for supporting professional leave?

A12. All requests for professional leave must be accompanied by an effort to secure external funding. Each applicant must provide a list of possible external agencies from which funding

will be sought. The funding request does not have to be submitted or procured prior to taking professional leave. Almost any source of funding is appropriate, barring no conflict with WSU policies. The Provost's guidelines do not provide specific details on sources of funding, so any funding agency or program typically supporting an applicant's program is appropriate in addition to funding sources specifically for professional development or leave, e.g., Fulbright scholarships ([http://www.cies.org/us\\_scholars/](http://www.cies.org/us_scholars/)). Denial by the funding agency of a request for funding, before or during professional leave, does not necessarily disqualify an application for professional leave.

Q13. Is there any suggested reading on taking professional (sabbatical) leave?

A13. Yes; listings are provided below.

Two valuable resources:

Sima, M. Spring 2000. The Role and Benefits of the Sabbatical Leave in Faculty Development and Satisfaction, *New Directions for Institutional Research* 105:67-75, Jossey-Bass Publishers. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*  
[http://chronicle.com/search/?search\\_siteId=5&contextId=&action=rem&searchQueryString=sabbatical+leaves](http://chronicle.com/search/?search_siteId=5&contextId=&action=rem&searchQueryString=sabbatical+leaves) has numerous short articles on many topics related to sabbatical leaves such as: Justifications for Sabbaticals; Tax Planning and Sabbatical Leaves; Finding Housing for Sabbatical Leaves; Moms on Sabbatical; The Stay-at-Home Sabbatical; Returning from a Sabbatical; etc.

A selection of additional articles:

Armstrong, C. Sabbatical Leave: Will it Become a Thing of the Past?  
<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/careers-advice/1269/sabbatical-leave-will-it-become-a-thing-of-the-past/>

Avakian, A. N. Planning for Innovative Leave Opportunities. *Planning for Higher Education*, 1986–1987, 15:23–28.

Boening, C., and Miller, M. Research and Literature on the Sabbatical Leave: A Review. 1997. Available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, (800) 443-ERIC. (ED 414 777).

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<http://www.aahea.org/bulletins/articles/oct99f1.htm>
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