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Accelerated Sabbatical Leaves for Teaching and Service

As expectations rise for faculty excellence in research, teaching, mentoring, and participation in campus governance, the issues of balance and time become central. No one questions the affirming impact of excellent classroom lecturing or of mentored undergraduate research, yet the time demands of these activities weigh against the focused time necessary to develop knowledge and scholarship. Thus time spent with students may, too often, compete with time spent pursuing the new knowledge necessary to continue to challenge and support those same students. With the partnership of the Arts and Sciences Council, we have worked to assess these challenges at Duke and provide helpful responses.

In a first analysis, an Arts and Sciences Council committee, chaired by Craufurd Goodwin, suggested a menu of options to reward the service critical to departmental functions and other faculty governance. These suggestions were adapted and implemented by the Dean's office. More recently, we have worked with the Executive Committee of the Arts and Sciences Council (ECASC) and a committee (chaired by Maureen Quilligan) to better align our stated values with our rewards. As noted above, time invested in high impact teaching and service cannot be appropriately compensated by money; the only relevant compensation is time. Thus, we have sought faculty guidance to better align our allocation of "leave" time with our stated desires for faculty engagement within and beyond the classroom.

Currently, Duke utilizes a standard sabbatical policy. Arts & Sciences also has a clear policy on "top-ups" for externally funded leaves. There has, until now, been an additional opportunity to apply for ad hoc Dean's Leaves for which criteria are loosely defined; consequently, the policy has been less transparent than it should be. It is in lieu of these leaves that we envision creating a better alignment of expectations and rewards following the suggestions of the faculty committee and ECASC.

Under this new policy, tenured faculty members will be eligible to apply for an accelerated sabbatical leave if three criteria are met: 1) Applicants outline an intellectual program that will make effective and timely use of this leave to advance their scholarship.

2) The individual has, since the last sabbatical or accelerated leave, taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels possible in Ph.D. granting departments, and taught at least ten undergraduate courses, with appropriate enrollments of at least 6, and evidence of high quality performance in teaching. Graduate (coded) courses that enroll at least 6 undergraduates will count toward this threshold. Furthermore, appropriate credit will be given for undergraduate research mentoring. Many departments have set various criteria for recognizing course equivalency/course relief for undergraduate mentoring, and these departmental standards will be used for leave accounting. In addition, two additional modes of teaching are to be recognized as equivalency: a) any class with >100 students taught by tenure-track faculty will count as “2 courses” towards the 10 course threshold; b) primary supervision of Ph.D. theses will count on the same basis as undergraduate theses are counted (for course relief) by the department (a basic standard adopted by many departments is that 6 such thesis supervisions equal 1 course and each thesis student can only be counted once toward sabbatical acceleration). 3) The individual has performed significant service beyond the classroom and beyond the minimum. Such service might include, but is not limited to, exceptional departmental or University governance functions expected of a faculty member in the department, unusually intensive graduate and undergraduate mentoring, special advisory roles for student life, and other such roles documented by the applicant.

These criteria serve as a guide for when faculty become eligible to apply for an accelerated leave. Applications require the chair's verification of the proofs of criteria, as well as the chair's endorsement of the overall proposal. Meeting the criteria does not guarantee an accelerated leave, because the impact of all these criteria must be considered. In some instances, one might become leave-eligible in as few as three years. In others, the frequency will be less, depending on teaching loads and the choices individual faculty make in their teaching and service commitments.

When an accelerated leave is granted, the clock for sabbatical eligibility “resets” for tenured faculty, making the year after the accelerated leave the first year of the next normal 7-year cycle. Thus, that next leave can be accelerated as well, based on the general criteria, with the restriction that four complete years of full-time residency must separate accelerated leaves. We expect that the implementation of this approach will result in a more transparent

system that better aligns Duke's stated values with its rewards.

This policy will begin with the 2009/10 academic year, for faculty who submit leave applications in the fall of 2008. Faculty will begin counting eligibility since the last leave. Faculty who are eligible to apply for sabbaticals should use that eligibility before applying for an accelerated leave. When this policy has rolled through an initial four-year cycle, it will be assessed. Upon initial implementation and until this assessment, no more than 25% of the tenured/tenure track faculty in a department will be granted a leave in any one year. (Parental and medical leaves will be treated separately.)

To recognize the unique contributions to the instructional program by regular rank faculty, an analogous policy is also being developed for nontenure-track faculty.

The Deans are grateful to the Arts and Sciences Council for helping to shape this policy and look forward to working with faculty to achieve its successful implementation.