Procedures for Managing Faculty Responsibilities During Leave
College of Education

Relevant Policies
Sick Leave
Family Medical Leave Act
Guidelines for Requesting an Extension of the Tenure Probationary Period
Shared Leave
Educational and Professional Leave

University and system policies as well as, in some cases, federal law, govern when, whether, and to what extent leave may or must be taken. Human Resources, Faculty Affairs, EOO, or Legal Affairs should be consulted as needed in addressing issues of leave.

This document is not meant to replicate or replace those policies or resources. Rather, it is meant to facilitate planning and communication between faculty members taking leave and supervisors about how workload will be managed during the leave period to meet the leave needs of the faculty member, to promote equity in the leave process across the college, to ensure that university business continues uninterrupted, and to minimize impact on colleagues and students.

Overview
A wide range of situations necessitate taking leave, and leave can be foreseeable or unforeseeable; short-term, long-term, or intermittent. Examples of situations that may necessitate leave include: research leave granted by the college, a Fulbright or other award, or a variety of medical/family situations (e.g., recovery from an accident, surgery, chronic health conditions, childbirth, adoption, family illness). Every situation is different in its predictability, timing during the academic year, and in the case of medical/family situations, severity, treatment, duration, etc. Thus, it is impossible to construct blanket policies that will govern every situation. The underlying philosophy of this guidance is that administrators should do everything possible to ensure faculty members have full information regarding their rights and responsibilities so that they can take the leave that is needed and that appropriate use should be made of university resources to ensure continuity of service to students and the conduct of university business.

In particular, faculty members who are taking medical/family leave should be advised about implications for progressing through the ranks. For example, if the faculty member is on the tenure track, is not yet tenured and is considering a medical/family leave that will extend the probationary period, the Department Head should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of requesting an extension to the probationary period for tenure or any other preliminary review (e.g., third-year review). It should be noted that formal requests for an extension of the probationary period serve as a protective mechanism for the faculty member and should not be perceived negatively by other faculty or administrators when votes surrounding review processes occur. Furthermore, these requests for extensions of probationary periods should occur as close to the event as possible as in most cases it is not possible to request such extensions more than 3 months after the specific event occurs.
In summary, this policy calls for plans regarding leave to be made proactively, supportively and individualized to the faculty member’s leave request while minimizing resultant effects on others or the standard course of university business.

Procedures

1. When a faculty member or supervisor becomes aware of a situation that might necessitate taking leave, s/he should initiate a discussion between the faculty member and supervisor as early as possible.

2. Together, the faculty member and supervisor should construct a comprehensive list of the faculty member’s responsibilities (instruction, advising—undergraduate and graduate students, grant responsibilities, committee service, program administration, etc.) and identify the potential impact of the situation on each of these responsibilities.

3. A plan should be constructed for how these responsibilities will be handled and who is responsible for finding coverage for the responsibilities. Ultimately, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring appropriate coverage of responsibilities. In some cases it may be appropriate for the faculty member to be involved in finding coverage (such as supporting a doctoral student), but in no case should a faculty member who is taking medical/family leave be additionally burdened by trying to find coverage for duties or put in the position of having to seek favors from colleagues.

4. If leave will be less than a full semester, the plan should also include a timeline for transition back to work after the faculty member has been on leave. For instance, someone who is on leave August-October may not be able to return to a teaching role in November, so a plan may need to be made for the faculty member’s instructional responsibilities for the remainder of the semester. In such cases, the faculty member should be assigned other duties to account for the instructional time remaining in the semester. These should be real, tangible duties that are tracked, evaluated, and documented by the supervisor.

5. The plan should be documented in writing with signatures indicating agreement by the faculty member and supervisor prior to the time the faculty member’s leave begins (in the case of foreseeable leave). The Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff Services can serve as a third party negotiator, if needed. If agreement cannot be reached, the faculty member can appeal to the Dean for resolution. Copies of the plan should be filed with the Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff Services.

When unforeseen leave is taken, the supervisor will need to take the lead in constructing a plan. In other cases where the need for leave is unpredictable, the plan may be tentative and may require multiple revisions as care plans or needs change. In these cases, the plan should be reviewed by the faculty member and supervisor as soon as is practical and should be reviewed regularly as the situation evolves.

6. If the faculty member’s absence will create an undue burden on colleagues or lead to disruption in services to students, the College will assist the department by providing resources, which may include funding for additional instructional support, extra compensation for colleagues who incur additional responsibilities, or other resources as appropriate to the
situation. The supervisor should make a request to the Office of Faculty and Staff Services for resources to cover the faculty member’s responsibilities. It is ultimately the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that instruction and other matters are adequately covered.

*In summary, this guidance is situation-specific. Although the best-laid plans might be initially constructed, the nature of the need for leave might be dynamic, necessitating modified plans, a formal leave request, or a delayed request for college resources.* Furthermore, the supervisor should make the faculty member aware of the policies, procedures, and resources available to the faculty member.

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