

Scholarly Leaves of Absence in the College of Arts and Science Policy

Vanderbilt's *Faculty Manual* describes some of the key parameters for the Leave Policy of Vanderbilt University. Below are some portions of that policy (the full text can be found in Part VI, Chapter 4 of the *Faculty Manual* <http://vanderbilt.edu/faculty-manual/part-vi-faculty-benefits/ch4-leaves-of-absence/>).

“Scholarly leaves of absence may be granted at the discretion of the Provost or Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs upon the recommendation of the appropriate dean. Such leaves are for the purpose of advancing scholarship to the benefit of the faculty member and the university. They are granted in recognition of the productivity of the faculty member and are not an entitlement such as may exist in other institutions that have sabbatical leaves. The granting of leaves is determined after taking into consideration department and school staffing requirements, availability of funds from all sources, and other factors, such as scholarly productivity (including publications) and the outcome of previous research leaves.

As a matter of university policy, requests for scholarly leaves of absence are generally not granted more frequently than once every four years, and a longer minimum interval may apply in individual schools and programs. Leaves will not be provided to tenure-track faculty members if the leave would be taken in the terminal year. The period between leaves begins with the first full academic year after the leave.

Generally, a faculty member on a scholarly leave is granted half-salary and full benefits for a full year or full salary and full benefits for a half-year. All faculty members returning from research leaves are expected to submit to the dean a report of their scholarly activities and accomplishments. Unless waived in writing by the provost or the vice chancellor for health affairs, a faculty member who is granted a scholarly leave is obligated to return to active status for at least an equivalent period immediately following such leave.

Scholarly leaves are not cumulative. If more than four years have passed between leaves of absence, that fact will not shorten the required interval between subsequent leaves or allow a full year's paid leave instead of one semester.”

The College of Arts and Science is able to offer research leaves only under the guidance of these University-wide policies. To clarify and emphasize relevant passages of the policy:

1. Unless other arrangements are spelled out in the letter of appointment, within the College of Arts and Science, tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply for a leave to occur after only six semesters in residence. This “4th-year or pre-tenure” leave allows every opportunity for our junior colleagues to solidify their scholarship/creative expression in preparation for the tenure review. Upon returning from the pre-tenure leave, they are next eligible to apply for a scholarly leave to occur after the standard 8 semesters in residence.
2. Unless other arrangements are spelled out in the letter of appointment, and the exception noted above for tenure-track faculty, the normally expected interval for leave eligibility is 8 semesters in residence at Vanderbilt for all tenured and tenure-track faculty in the College of Arts and Science. I stress that leave is NOT an entitlement, and it is not a given.

3. Faculty will be recommended for leave by the Dean of the College of Arts and Science depending on a number of factors, including:
 - a. The proper time period since the most recent leave has been met.
 - b. The faculty member has remained research active since the most recent leave.
 - c. The faculty member has been able to complete projects for which they have applied for leave in the past.
 - d. The faculty member's home department is able to absorb the faculty member's leave without requesting additional resources for maintaining a healthy offering of courses.
4. At the time of their leave, faculty members are eligible to request a one semester leave with full salary and benefits or a full year of leave at half-salary and full benefits. Either will be granted only on the same conditions outlined in 2. A faculty member may also request a semester at full pay, and an additional semester of leave, contingent on their success in obtaining funding (internal or external). In this case, the applying faculty member should state his/her preference for the semester to be on leave if the contingency should fall through.
5. If a faculty member receives an external grant or fellowship for a research leave *prior to their eligibility for leave*, the chair or director should contact the Dean's office. A number of options may be entertained, including (a) the deferral of the leave, so that the faculty member might take a full year of leave at full pay when next eligible for leave, or (b) taking a leave early. Please be aware that, if a candidate is granted an early leave due to such a grant or opportunity (early meaning prior to the full eight semesters in residence), his or her leave clock is "reset" after the leave, meaning that s/he will not be eligible to apply for another leave until after s/he has returned from leave and been in residence for eight semesters.
6. Should a faculty member receive funding (internal or external) for a leave, please inform this office immediately to amend leave terms, if applicable.

Scholarly Leave Application Procedures:

- A call for applications for leave to occur during the following academic year is usually sent to department chairs and program directors in early- to mid-October.
- Leave applications are normally due in mid-November and must include specifics about the semester and financial terms requested, a statement of proposed projects and or scholarship to be completed while on leave; a current c.v., information about applications for funding, and a brief summary of previous leaves and projects accomplished during them.
- Each department/program should send all of their leave requests as a group to be considered as a whole.
- The department chair/program director must assess the requests for leave and include in her or his endorsement information regarding course coverage for the excused faculty, and arrangements for graduate student mentoring. In the case of junior faculty leaves the chair/director should also assess whether the leave will interfere with his or her ability to establish the requisite level of effectiveness in the area of teaching.
- The Divisional Deans will process leave requests in December and January, calling chairs and directors for clarification, etc.

- Leave approvals and denials are generally sent toward the end of January.

I understand that a number of contingencies arise when it comes to questions of leave and eligibility for leaves; as a result, I encourage you to be in contact with the Dean's office as questions arise. Problems will be averted if we are all working off the same page.