

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES  
POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND CRITERIA  
**(Excerpt Regarding Sabbatical Leaves and Confidentiality)**

**VII. Sabbatical Leave**

Sabbatical Leave (also referred to as Academic Leave) is an important privilege of academic life, intended to enable faculty and supportive professional staff to maintain the highest standards of engagement and ability in their work. Sabbatical leave is not guaranteed, either to the individual or to the faculty community, and continued access depends upon the strong outcomes of those awarded academic leaves. To support such outcomes, the college and university apply a multi-stage review process, with proposals originating at the individual level and evaluated at the unit, college and university levels. The following protocols guide that multi-stage review process:

- A. The unit chair shall forward a cover letter accompanying the unit's rankings which explains how the rankings were developed and how the criteria were applied. All proposals shall be judged on the basis of the information submitted in the proposal and in the chair's cover letter accompanying the unit's rankings. Proposals shall be ranked in terms of their scholarly and/or professional significance, their prospective contribution to knowledge, the quality of their conceptualization and presentation, the capacity of the applicant to conduct the work, reports on previous sabbatical leaves, the likelihood of the completion of the proposed project, and their contribution to the professional development of the applicant.
- B. Only those who shall have completed at least five years (60 months) of full-time service and shall have been tenured prior to a leave of absence with pay shall be eligible for sabbatical leaves. A minimum of six years (72 months) must elapse from the end of one sabbatical leave to the beginning of the next.
  - Proposals for a first academic leave shall ordinarily be ranked ahead of equally meritorious proposals from faculty members who have already had such a leave.
  - In evaluating meritorious proposals for a second or subsequent leave, the unit and college shall take into account the faculty member's written report of accomplishments resulting from the preceding leave(s). A copy of the written report from the preceding leave with pay must be attached to requests for academic leaves. The college council shall not approve an application for a leave of absence with pay if a copy of the report for any previous leave is not on file in both the provost's office and the college office.
  - Provided they have tenure and the required years of service by the time they take the sabbatical leave, faculty may apply for sabbatical leave in the same year that they seek tenure.
- A. Prior to notifying the college, chairs shall indicate to each applicant the total number of leave applications in the unit and the applicant's unit-level ranking. Units shall establish provisions for reconsideration of decisions.
- B. The college council, in consultation with the dean, shall evaluate the applications from all units in the college, taking into account unit recommendations. The council shall review any differences of opinion referred to it by the units and act in accordance with its own best judgment on the dispute. On a college-wide basis, the College Council shall rank applications recommended for approval by the personnel committees. The ranking shall respect, insofar as possible, the rankings provided by the units and shall be based upon the committee's judgment of the relative merits of each project.

- C.
- D. When a Council member submits a sabbatical leave request, that individual's unit will designate a substitute representative to participate in the College Council ranking process.
- E. In distinguishing between equally meritorious proposals, it is appropriate to take into account the history of leaves awarded to each unit, giving preference to proposals from units that have had fewer leaves in the recent past. To that end, the college council shall take into consideration the distribution of sabbatical leaves across unit over the past three years.
- F. The dean shall notify each applicant in writing concerning the council's recommendation. If the college council elects to reverse unit-level rankings, the unit and applicant shall be provided an explanation for any changes proposed at the college level, and the unit shall be given an opportunity to explain its reasons for the rankings. All appeals of the council's recommendation shall be filed within 14 days of the dean's notification; appeals shall be heard in accordance with the policies of the college, prior to the deliberations of the University Council Personnel Committee.
- G. The council, through the dean, shall forward its recommendations to the provost's office. The dean shall prepare a cover letter to accompany the college recommendations which explains how the rankings were developed and how the criteria were applied. When differences between the college council and the dean are not resolved at the college level, they shall be reported in detail to the University Council Personnel Committee.

### **VIII. Confidentiality in Personnel Deliberations**

As personnel matters, all of the academic personnel procedures described above are considered confidential. A breach of confidentiality concerning such deliberations is a serious violation of professional ethics.

1. All personnel recommendations are confidential until the appropriate parties have been officially notified of these recommendations by the chair, director or dean. Even after official notification, the deliberations leading to the recommendations remain confidential. If additional information is required before making a recommendation, it should be sought by the chair or the dean on behalf of the personnel committee or the college council.
2. Written statements prepared by faculty peer evaluators as part of the regular personnel process shall be made available only to those serving on committees concerned with evaluating the faculty member in question, to those administrative officers being advised by such committees, and to the candidate.
3. All information contained in any faculty member's personnel file shall be open for inspection by that faculty member with the following exceptions.
  - a. Written statements which are solicited from external reviewers assessing the professional qualifications, performance, or promise of a faculty member shall be made available only to those serving on committees concerned with evaluating the faculty member in question, and to those administrative officers being advised by such committees. Except in extraordinary circumstances, only chairs shall extend invitations to review a candidate's record of achievement. Candidates should not directly solicit external reviews of their own credentials.
  - b. Upon request, summaries of such statements shall be provided to the faculty member. These shall be prepared by those committee(s) and administrators in such a way that all material that can identify the writer is removed. The sources of the summarized

statements shall not be revealed to the faculty member. The faculty member may submit concise written responses to accompany the summaries. In soliciting the written assessments, the potential evaluators shall be informed that the person evaluated may examine summaries of the evaluative statement, but with material identifying the writer removed, and that the evaluator's identity shall not be revealed to the faculty member.

4. If a confidential statement alleges professional misconduct or impugns the integrity of a faculty member, the statement shall be given consideration by the committee or administrative officer to whom it is addressed only if the allegation(s) is (are) submitted in writing and signed by the person making the allegation(s), with the understanding that the statement and the grounds for it shall be divulged to the faculty member about whom the allegation is made and that the faculty member shall have an opportunity to respond. In divulging the statement and the grounds for it, the committee or administrative officer being advised shall divulge the source of the allegation(s). The findings and report of deliberations concerning such allegation(s) shall be disclosed to the complainant as well as to the person against whom the complaint has been made, and, at the discretion of the administrative officer involved, to the appropriate personnel committee(s). In the event that the allegation is made in an external evaluation, the nature and grounds of the allegation shall be divulged to the affected faculty member; however, the identity of the external evaluator shall remain confidential.