UWW Faculty Sabbatical FAQs

1. What is a sabbatical?

Faculty sabbatical is a professional leave program that grants a faculty member a release from his or her typical duties (research, teaching, and service) for either one or two semesters in order to pursue an intensive project of his or her choosing. Sabbaticals can be for one year (fall and spring semesters) or one semester (fall OR spring). Sabbaticals for an academic year receive institutional financial support up to 65% of the faculty member’s full compensation for that period. Sabbaticals for one semester of the academic year receive financial support up to a maximum of the faculty member’s full compensation.

1. When can I apply for / take a sabbatical?

These are two different questions. A faculty member may go on sabbatical only after he or she has completed at least six years of full-time service within the University of Wisconsin System. Although he or she needs not have received tenure to go on a sabbatical, preference is given to those who are already tenured. Experience at non-University of Wisconsin colleges or universities does not count even if you were granted years of service towards tenure when you were hired. The faculty member must have also not received a different sabbatical within the last six years.

The earliest a person can apply is in the fall (due date is typically in September) of his or her sixth year of service for a sabbatical to be taken the following year (after six completed years of service). This gets more complicated if the faculty member has services from multiple institutions in the UW System but all service in the UW System counts toward eligibility. For example, if you started work at UW-Whitewater in the summer of 2013, then you would be eligible to apply for a sabbatical in the fall of the 2018 – 2019 semester (during your fifth year) to take a sabbatical in the 2019 – 2020 academic year. See the table below.

2013-2014 = 1 year of service (completed)

2014-2015 = 2 years of service (completed)

2015-2016 = 3 years of service (completed)

2016-2017 = 4 years of service (completed)

2017-2018 = 5 years of service (completed)

2018-2019 = 6 years of service (eligible to apply)

2019-2020 = 7 years of service (first year eligible to go)

1. How does FMLA or other leave effect eligibility for a sabbatical?

Preference is given to those who have had no leaves of absences in the last four years. However, FMLA leave does not count against you in terms of eligible years of service. Other leave may not be the same (such as unpaid leaves of absence or research leaves supported by external fellowships). In general, as long as you remain on the UWW payroll you will accrue years of service. However, if this is at all a concern, the faculty member should check with ORSP before applying.

1. What obligations does the sabbatical entail?

In order to take a sabbatical of any length you must return to UW-Whitewater for a full academic year following the sabbatical period (regardless of length of sabbatical). Failure to do so would require the faculty member to re-pay the costs of his or her salary and benefits for the period on which he or she was on leave. In addition, for traditional sabbaticals the department and college needs to develop a plan to “cover” for the faculty member who is on leave either by increasing class sizes or canceling certain classes. Traditional sabbaticals come with no funds or support to hire adjuncts. This “plan” is part of the sabbatical application process.

1. What is a Chancellor’s Fellowship?

A Chancellor’s Fellowship application is no different from that for a traditional sabbatical but it also provides funds to the member’s home department in order to help pay for staff replacement costs while the faculty member is gone (typically up to $10,000). This is meant to help support smaller departments or programs where the faculty member’s course offerings would be hard to forgo or to replace while the faculty member is on sabbatical. However, this also makes Chancellor’s Fellowship awards more competitive as these funds are limited. These applications do need compelling justification from the Department. In any case, you should consult with your Department or Dean if their support is contingent on receiving these additional funds.

1. If I don’t receive additional support funds for my department through the Chancellor’s Fellowship, can I still be considered for a sabbatical?

No. Although similar, the review and funding process is separate. If a faculty member applies for but does not receive a Chancellor’s Fellowship he or she cannot be separately considered for a traditional sabbatical. This is why the choice of which to pursue must be made carefully.

1. What is the impact of a sabbatical on fringe benefits and retirement?

Time on sabbatical counts towards retirement as you are still considered a UW System employee while on sabbatical. The faculty member retains all of his or her benefits while on sabbatical (e.g., health insurance). However, if you take a full-year sabbatical, you will only receive 65% of your regular salary. Likewise, your retirement contribution will similarly be at the lower rate of 65%.

1. Am I allowed to work elsewhere while on sabbatical?

The simple answer is no unless this work was part of the faculty member’s proposal. For example, he or she cannot propose a sabbatical to go teach at another university and then be paid both by UWW and the other university. However, he or she can apply for other grants or fellowships and accept them as long as they do not conflict with the sabbatical project. The faculty member needs to let ORSP know about any and all such funding. Any funds paid to the faculty member from other sources may not exceed his or her regular salary for the period.

1. How does a sabbatical work with a Fulbright?

Several UWW faculty members have completed Fulbright projects as part of their sabbaticals. This is recommended in order to avoid any interruption of university benefits while on a Fulbright fellowship (in any case, faculty and staff are encouraged to meet with their payroll and benefits specialist in the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Human Resources Office prior to submitting a Fulbright application as well as with ORSP). Some things to keep in mind: a) most Fulbright proposals are due in August meaning the faculty member would need to complete all of the work in advance of the UWW sabbatical deadline; b) If he or she does not receive a Fulbright (sabbatical decisions are announced first) then he or she will need to submit a revised proposal for review and approval in order to keep the sabbatical; and c) if he or she receives a Fulbright but not your sabbatical he or she would need to take an unpaid leave of absence and would be responsible for the cost of fringe benefits.

1. Who decides which faculty members receive sabbaticals?

Proposals are reviewed and scored by the Academic Development Committee. This group rates each proposal as highly recommended, recommended or not recommended. These recommendations are reviewed by the Provost who makes final determinations and forwards the final list of recommendations to the Board of Regents for approval at their December meeting.

1. When will I know if I was funded?

The campus sends its recommendations to UW System in early November and notifications are usually sent out by February after the Regents have made their final decisions.

1. Must I have Department and College Support?

The faculty member’s department chair and college dean must comment about their support when approving the proposal within Cayuse. However, they can decline to give their support. If they do so they must explain their rationale. The Academic Development Committee and Provost will then take this into consideration when making funding decisions. A lack of support does not mean a sabbatical cannot be funded. However, it’s best to have clear evidence of college and departmental support.

Hints for writing a solid proposal:

1. Include all of the required sections of the proposal format (e.g., objectives, rationale, evaluation) and write to every one as convincingly as you can. Several unfunded proposals in the past ignored or gave far too little attention to certain components of the proposal.
2. Connect to your department, college, UWW, and UW System priorities. The more convincing it is that your project will further these goals and objectives, the better your chance of support.
3. Connect to your own professional goals and prior work. Convince the reviewers that this project will forward your scholarly work or teaching. You don’t want your project to come across as unrelated to your area of professional expertise, teaching, or prior work. Show that this project will add value to you as a faculty member.
4. Make it clear how the sabbatical will allow you to accomplish an important task that you wouldn’t otherwise be able to complete. Show the reviewers that the sabbatical is necessary and sufficient to your project.