

Faculty Welfare Committee
February 1, 2011

A Proposal on Sabbatical Standards

The Faculty Welfare Committee bases its decisions regarding sabbatical proposals primarily on the recommendations of Deans and Chairs. The absence of clear evaluation criteria has concentrated much of the decision process with the Provost. Yet the FWC believes that faculty should have input into the criteria by which sabbaticals are evaluated and the priorities that govern funding decisions. The following proposal is intended to establish clear, fair, and appropriate university-wide priorities for sabbatical funding decisions.

Types of Projects

Certain kinds of sabbatical projects are currently well-recognized as valuable at Salisbury University, such as those resulting in publication in peer-reviewed journals. However, other kinds of sabbatical projects that have, in the past, been supported at SU are no longer recognized as justifiable. For instance, the Faculty Senate in February 2009 approved a policy of sabbatical leave stating that new course development would be an acceptable product of sabbatical. However, this statement has since been eliminated (in a 2010 revision of the policy initiated by the Provost's Office) on the grounds that funding realities will increasingly limit such sabbatical projects. While the Faculty Welfare Committee (and the Faculty Senate) approved this revised policy as a set of realistic guidelines for faculty applying for sabbaticals, the FWC does not want that particular endorsement to be understood as an acceptance of a particular view as that of the faculty as to how sabbatical decisions *should* be made.

At SU, scholarship is defined by the Boyer Model of scholarship. Ernest Boyer (1990) categorizes scholarship in four areas: *discovery*, *integration*, *application*, and *teaching*. The first category, *discovery scholarship*, refers to increasing the knowledge base with new information. *Integration scholarship* relates (or integrates) the new knowledge into the academic realm. The third category of the Boyer model, *applied scholarship*, means demonstrating the application of the new knowledge to the world at large. Finally, *the scholarship of teaching* is devoted to helping those with little or no previous expertise in the specific discipline gain meaningful new knowledge.

Some types of scholarship are believed to lead to either more visibility or greater financial support for Salisbury University than others. Thus, a sabbatical proposal devoted to publishing a book, or a grant, may be favored over a sabbatical proposal devoted to new course development. Such a policy threatens the very core of SU's prime mission of undergraduate education. The FWC has noted a distinct decline in integration and applied scholarship sabbatical applications, corresponding to a climate that seems to view this work as of secondary importance. However, all four areas of scholarship serve Salisbury University's mission in important ways. In particular, the traditional and continuing strength of SU's teaching depends on faculty willing and able to devote themselves to the scholarship of teaching. Thus it would be unwise to limit funding to only those sabbatical projects that are expected to produce the most visible or

financial support for the university. Sabbatical projects devoted to all four areas of scholarship--discovery, integration, application, *and* teaching--should be valued at Salisbury University.

Structural Priorities

Sabbatical decisions must be made in the context of structural realities (e.g., economic, political), but it is important that individual faculty have equitable opportunity for sabbatical leave and that the multifaceted mission of SU be reflected in sabbatical priorities. For these reasons, the Faculty Welfare Committee proposes that the following considerations be recognized in sabbatical funding decisions:

First and subsequent sabbaticals

- First sabbaticals should be valued as an important means of faculty development. First-time applicants should receive priority, and all things being equal, their proposals should be approved.
- For second, third or fourth sabbaticals, successful earlier sabbatical projects should be valued.

Service to the University

- Sabbaticals that have been deferred due to service to the university (e.g., to teach critical courses or to serve as department chair) should be valued.
- Sabbaticals necessary for faculty to prepare to take on a new role in the department such as developing a new area of study or new course should be valued.
- Sabbaticals that are especially designed to further the University mission in serving the wider community or academia (e.g., working with a non-profit organization, an educational organization or an academic association) should be valued.

Numbers of sabbatical applications

The number of sabbatical applications varies widely from semester to semester, resulting in stiffer competition in some semesters than others. Some applications are denied more because of the high number of competing applications than because of any fault of the applications themselves. Thus, the FWC proposes the following:

- A “resubmit” category of response for sabbatical applications. When the number of applications results in worthy sabbatical applications being denied, applicants should be encouraged to apply again rather than simply being turned down.
- An online “intent to apply” process which would allow potential applicants to better gauge their chances and perhaps alleviate the unevenness in numbers of sabbatical applications from semester to semester. With such a process, when funding is tight and in the absence of other determining factors, faculty who have indicated an intent to apply in advance would be viewed more favorably than those who have not.
- An appropriate benchmark of numbers of sabbaticals to be supported. Currently there are 321 tenure track PIN lines in the four teaching schools. (Since Faculty Librarians are subject to different leave policy there are excluded from this analysis.) In an ideal world all 321 would be filled with faculty who are engaged scholars and who, with our teaching loads in particular, would need and apply for sabbaticals every 13 semesters. Again if the world were ideal these sabbaticals would be spread uniformly over the 13 semesters so

24-25 faculty would be on sabbatical in any given semester. We are not, however, living in an ideal world. Some faculty, for a variety of reasons, delay sabbaticals; some faculty leave SU before they become eligible. Unfortunately, some faculty who have been denied sabbaticals in the past have become so discouraged that they no longer apply and simply do not reach their potential in the area of scholarship as a result. And, most dramatically, hiring is not uniform and in some years many more faculty become first eligible than in others. Nevertheless, with a benchmark of 24-25 sabbaticals per semester, the university should do its level best to approve at least that many when there are 25 or more sabbatical applications. If the resubmit category above were also employed when there are more than 25 sabbaticals then we could begin to more closely approach that ideal world.

Boyer, E.L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.