

# **G**UIDELINES FOR SCHOLARLY LEAVE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

---

The School of Medicine recognizes the importance of scholarly leave to the professional growth and development of its faculty and the linkage between scholarly leave and enhancement of our teaching, research and clinical programs. The School of Medicine also recognizes the need to promote the professional development of faculty across departments and disciplines and to encourage faculty to seek opportunities for scholarly leaves that benefit the department, the School and the University. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure a fair and equitable process for evaluating requests for scholarly leave under the University's *Study-Research Leave Policy*.

## **BACKGROUND**

The report of the University's Salary Administration Study Committee calls for an examination of formal and informal leave policies among the college and schools and recommends that ". . .the Provost . . . work in consultation with the deans to develop a set of guidelines which will provide for system-wide criteria and uniform standards for implementing the existing leave policy." In conjunction with this recommendation, each school and the college were directed to develop guidelines for scholarly leave.

In order to ensure that the guidelines developed are in the best interest of all faculty and departments in the consolidated School of Medicine after merger with the School of Basic Health Sciences on July 1, 1994, the Dean of the School of Medicine solicited advice from the Advisory Committee for Implementation of the Merger. The Committee reviewed the University study-research leave policy, leave policies at other institutions, and criteria provided by other schools. The Advisory Committee recognized the need for selection criteria that benefit both the individual and the School, the importance of the department chair's recommendation, and the department's need to meet its obligations for continuation of services while a faculty member is on leave. The Advisory Committee acknowledged the need for flexibility in administration and implementation of leaves and the importance of faculty involvement in the selection process. The Advisory Committee also recognized the need to adapt the School's scholarly leave guidelines to the unique salary structure for faculty members in the School of Medicine.

## **ELIGIBILITY AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT**

The School's guidelines must conform to the University's *Study Research Leave Policy*. This policy permits eligible faculty members, based on merit, to qualify for study-research leave. In order to qualify, a faculty member must be tenured with six years of prior university service or have completed six years of service since a previous study-research leave. The policy states that the awarding of such leave is "subject to the availability of funds and the ability of the department or school to meet its teaching and other requirements." Faculty members are eligible to apply for a maximum of one contract year for leave at one-half salary; the remainder of the salary, up to full salary, may be supported from non-state or external sources. Alternatively, an eligible faculty member may apply for up to six months of leave at full pay.

Unlike other University faculty, faculty in the School of Medicine are paid according to a specific salary schedule approved by the VCU Board of Visitors. In addition to University income, eligible faculty may receive clinical compensation from the veterans administration medical center or MCV Physicians. Total compensation should be considered when planning the salary for the period of a study-research leave. Faculty members are encouraged to seek external funding to support salary and expenses for research-study leave. Approval of the sponsor may be required to continue salary support from research grants and contracts during a scholarly leave; arrangements should be made through the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

---

## **-- CRITERIA AND REVIEW PROCESS --**

---

Faculty members must submit written requests for study research leave to their department chair six to twelve months in advance of the proposed leave. The written request will describe at minimum:

- the proposed period of the leave including site for proposed leave and proposed agreement with sponsor;
- goals and objectives to be accomplished during the leave period;
- proposed activities during the leave period;
- experimental design or study plan;
- formal training to be undertaken during the period; and

- how the activity will benefit students, the faculty member, the department, the School of Medicine and the University.

The department chair will attach to the request his/her assessment of the merit of the leave, the department's ability to provide funding to support the leave, and the ability of the department to meet its commitment without the faculty member's services during his/her absence. The department chair will submit the request and his/her recommendation to the Dean.

The Dean will appoint a standing committee to review and prioritize requests for scholarly leave. The Committee will consist of at least four faculty members with representation from both basic sciences and clinical departments. The Committee will meet at least twice each year to review and prioritize requests for scholarly leave. The Committee will submit to the Dean a prioritized list of requests, an evaluation of each proposal, and rationale for prioritization of requests.

The Committee will give priority to those proposals that

- benefit ongoing departmental or school research,
- enhance teaching skills,
- develop or enhance clinical skills needed to keep the School's techniques current, or
- provide needed skills to enable the faculty member to be in a position to apply for and conduct funded research.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Secondary consideration will be given to those proposals that

- lead directly to completing a specific project or
- qualify as additional formal education.

The Dean will review the prioritized list of requests and will either accept or reject the proposal. Faculty members will be notified in writing of the Dean's decision and, if rejected, the reason(s) for rejection. The Dean will forward accepted proposals to the Vice President for consideration. The Vice President will notify the Dean of his recommendation and, if approved, will submit the request for approval to the Board of Visitors. The Dean's office will notify faculty members of Board actions.

Prior to commencement of the leave, the faculty member will sign an agreement with the University benefits office to return to the University for no less than twice the period of the leave. University policy requires that if this commitment is not honored, the faculty member must pay back the state salary received during the leave period with interest. Within three months after return from research-study leave, the faculty member will submit a written report to the respective department chair, Dean, and Vice President describing the

leave experience and goals and objectives accomplished. In lieu of a written report, the faculty member may prepare a paper or grant proposal.

The guidelines for scholarly leave in the School of Medicine correlate with the University's *Study-Research Leave Policy*. In addition to scholarly leave undertaken for the primary purpose of professional growth and development and to enhance competencies of the faculty to carry out their responsibilities to the University, faculty may be eligible for other types of leave with or without pay. Educational leave, for example, may be approved in order to pursue formal education usually leading to an advanced degree.

**OTHER  
LEAVES AND  
OFF-SITE DUTY**

Occasionally, another institution or governmental agency may request the services of a faculty member. Upon recommendation of the department chair, Dean and Vice President for Health Sciences, an interagency service agreement may be approved.

The department chair, with approval of the Dean, may assign a faculty member to work off site. Off-site duty assignment is not considered a leave. The faculty member continues to devote 100% effort to assigned University responsibilities, and the University continues to pay full salary. Off-site duty is usually approved in conjunction with requirements of a research grant or subcontract with approval of the sponsor, and the grant or subcontract usually provides 100% salary support during the period of off-site duty.