

Faculty Professional Leave Program

The purpose of the Faculty Professional Leave Program is to encourage productive scholarly research and to stimulate contributions of high caliber in the future that will enhance the stature of both the individual and the University. It allows faculty to take periodic leaves of up to one academic year for purposes related to scholarship, creative endeavors, and to their professional development as teachers and scholars.

Differentiation from Related Programs

- A. The Professional Leave Program is intended to be separate and distinct from other programs or leaves of absence available through state or federal laws. Leaves granted for visiting professorships, consultantships, and work on advanced degrees are not necessarily covered by this leave program (unless requested by the faculty concerned and approved as such by the dean and Provost/VPAA), and the granting of leave shall not be restricted because a faculty member has had other such types of leave granted previously.
- B. The payment of normal professional leave compensation is based upon the assumption that the individual receiving the leave will not sell their services or be employed elsewhere during the leave period. However, a fellowship or scholarship and/or a travel grant that does not conflict with the intent of the professional leave may be accepted. Research grants, fellowships, and other positions that do require service may be accepted only after the approval of the department chair, dean, and Provost/VPAA of the University. This is to assure that the period of the leave will be used for the intended purposes.

Conditions for the Granting of Professional Leave

A. Eligibility

- 1. Any tenured member of the instructional staff of the University holding the rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor who has a minimum of six years of full-time tenured and /or tenure-track service shall be eligible for professional leave. No semester spent on leave can be counted as part of the required six years. At the Dean's discretion, a faculty member may be excused from teaching for a semester and still have that semester count toward the six years so long as he or she remains in residence and performs other university duties. Otherwise, any exceptions to the six-year rule must be approved by the Provost/VPAA.

2. Except in the case of the kind of time extension described under Procedures, item 9, of this policy, a minimum of six years in residence must elapse following the completion of a professional leave before the same faculty member would again be eligible for professional leave.
3. The acceptance of a professional leave automatically commits the faculty member to return to teaching or other appropriate functions at Georgia College for respectively, one year in the case of a one-half academic year leave, and two years in the case of a full academic year leave.. Should the faculty member decide to leave the university within that period, he or she shall reimburse the University for the pro-rata share of their obligation.

B. Compensation

1. A faculty member may apply for and be granted either one full academic year or one-half academic year of leave. If one full academic year is granted, the rate of compensation from the University shall be one-half of the faculty member's regular salary for the academic year.
2. If one-half academic year is granted, the rate of compensation shall be the individual's full pay for the period of the leave (one-half of the individual's full academic year salary). The administration will establish the salary rate that would have been in effect without the leave, and this rate will be used to compute the professional leave compensation.
3. While on leave the faculty member may not engage in other regular remunerative service unless specifically authorized to do so by the department chair, dean, and Provost/VPAA, or unless the activity is described in the accepted request for leave.

C. Procedures

1. An eligible faculty member desiring a professional leave shall submit a formal application to the department chair. The department chair reviews and makes a recommendation to the dean of the college or director of the library.
2. The application must be submitted by October 15th of any year for a leave to begin the following academic year (example: application is due by October 15, 2023 for professional leave that will commence in fall 2024, spring 2025, or the span the entire 2024 AY).

3. The individual's application must contain a statement of plans for the use of the leave period, and may also contain pertinent supporting documents such as records of publication, grants received, etc., if a research program is planned.
4. The department chair's recommendation, if supportive of the application, shall contain specific information as to how the workload of the member on professional leave will be handled during their absence.
5. The dean shall consider the applications and recommend to the Provost by November 1, for leaves to begin the following Academic year and all applicants shall be informed in writing of the disposition of their requests at the collegiate/library level by the dean/director. In reaching their conclusions, the dean/director should be guided by considerations of demonstrated academic superiority of the applicants and potential for growth, adequate distribution of leaves among the various disciplines, and the needs of the college. In the awarding of any faculty leave, both the welfare of the academic unit and individual faculty opportunities will be preserved.
 - a. The dean (or designee) will enter the approved applications via electronic form. The department chair/school director/library director and dean will electronically approve the form, which will then route to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. The electronic form should be accompanied by the chair's/director's plan for course coverage and the dean's cover letter.
6. If the number of leave requests exceeds the budgeted support for professional leave in any given year, then the Provost/VPAA may forward the applications to a faculty advisory committee for ranking. Advisory Committee recommendations are made to the Provost/VPAA. The Provost/VPAA, in consultation with the President, shall accept or reject the recommendations of the deans and/or the Advisory Committee by December 1st, for professional leaves to begin the following fiscal year.
7. The Provost/VPAA shall inform in writing all persons recommended for leaves and the dean whether such leaves will be granted. In reaching a decision, the Provost/VPAA will be guided by the following considerations: the availability of adequate funding to support leaves, the recommendation of the dean (and, when applicable Advisory Committee), the distribution of professional leaves among the colleges /library, the needs of the institution and the

welfare of the department/college and individual faculty applicant. While the distribution of leave does not have to be equal between colleges every year, in general the goal will be to fund the equivalent of at least four professional leaves per year. Upon Presidential approval, the Provost/VPAA will notify the USG office using the prescribed reporting mechanism. A faculty member whose request for professional leave is rejected by their dean may appeal the decision in writing to the Provost/VPAA. The decisions of the President (or the President's designee) are final.

- a. All faculty members who receive an approval letter from the Provost/VPAA must then enter a Leave of Absence form, which can be found on MyGCSU --> Academic Affairs --> Other Forms.
8. The recipient of professional leave shall, within one month of returning to the university, make a report in writing to the dean of their college outlining the accomplishments of the leave. A copy of the report will be sent to the Provost/VPAA to be added to the personnel file (note: if the recipient has received a grant, the report should be copied to both the Provost/VPAA and to the Office of Grants and Contracts). Failure to produce the required report will impact the individual's ability to qualify for a second professional leave later in their career.
9. Although the constraints outlined under "Eligibility" of this procedure, must be observed, professional leaves are to be awarded regardless of the size of the department. If the faculty member's normal workload cannot be absorbed within the department of discipline, a temporary replacement will be provided by the college. However, when the welfare of the academic unit is at stake, the dean, with sufficient notice and with the concurrence of the Provost/VPAA, may require the faculty member to reschedule their leave, on the condition that such a delay would in no way lengthen the calendar under which the faculty member becomes eligible to apply for subsequent sabbatical leaves.

The authority to grant exception to one or more of these policies and procedures is vested with the President of the University or their delegated representative.

Forms related to Professional Leave can be found on MyGCSU --> Academic Affairs --> [Other Forms](#).