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9-26-2005

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Recommended Citation

Bleicken, Linda, "Proposed Revisions to Educational Leave Policy 9-26-2005" (2005). *Faculty Senate Index*. 383.
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Proposed Revisions to Educational Leave Policy

9-26-2005

Submitted by Linda Bleicken

9/26/2005

Discussion:

Rationale:

Response:

Discussion Item, Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA), "Proposed Revisions to Educational Leave Policy" Attachment

Patricia Humphrey gave the floor to Dr. Linda Bleicken to lead the discussion. She asked two people to help her with this discussion. One was the chair of the task force that actually looked at this, Dean Fred Whitt.

The other was Dr. Amy Heaston from her office. She began by briefly giving some background. This was a request for information that came from Steve Damelin last fall. When we began looking in the Provost's office at our current Educational Leave Policy, one of the things we found was that there appeared to be some confusion as to who was eligible, how often they were eligible, and so forth, and quite frankly, when we started looking around we could not find the documentation that made all of that very clear. So at that point, I asked Dr. Rice Jenkins (Senate Moderator at that time) if she thought that Dr. Damelin would mind serving on a task force for such a thing to be put together. First, the task force would look at our Educational Leave Policy and decide whether there was a need for a firmer structure. Dr. Damelin did agree to serve. Dr. Whitt agreed to chair that task force. Dr. Whitt, I called upon because he had the longest institutional memory about educational leave, and I thought he would probably understand or remember some more about it than maybe the rest of us did. And Dr. Heaston also served on the task force to be a resource person from our office. You see before you, I think, about draft number 8, of this document. The process began with the original draft that came from the task force. It was then discussed more than once in

Deans' Council. It has certainly been discussed with the President. And what you see before you is the latest draft. I hope you have had a chance to read it. It does lay out who is eligible, how often the individual is eligible, the process that would be used to consider educational leave, and some forms that that helped make that a little bit more understandable. It also, I think, provides some lead time because one of the other problems that we had quite frankly with the educational leave as it stood was that we were sometimes putting departments in a bit of a bind. Sometimes chairs, and I do not know how this happened, but sometimes chairs were not as aware as they might have been of who was coming up for educational leave. So we found ourselves actually shorting some departments where more educational leaves had been given than probably were prudent in a certain time. Not that the educational leaves were not appropriate, but simply the spacing of them made it somewhat difficult for departments. This document is really trying to put some structure around that. I don't know, Dean Whitt, is there anything else you would like to say?

Candy Schille (CLASS): I actually have two questions. One is, when one signs off on these, do the several levels of recommendation or non-recommendation include providing the applicant with a rationale especially when the recommendation is denied? That is my first question. Next one is, if the endorsement or the recommendation is denied at one level, say at the department chairs', does the process stop? Or may the applicant seek recommendation at a higher level?

Fred Whitt (Dean, CHHS): I do not know that we actually addressed appeals, if you will, but we were really just trying to get something on paper that we could discuss.

Candy Schille (CLASS): How about rationales then for the choice?

Fred Whitt (Dean, CHHS): This was all part of, I think, Chancellor Portch's initiative on faculty development. Part of this had to do with the institution spending a certain percentage of their budget toward faculty development, had to do with the post-tenure review process, and also had to do with establishing educational leaves. It was interesting even though I had some institutional memory my dean colleagues did not know we had an educational leave policy, and many of the faculty did not know that either, so we pretty much started from scratch and tried to look at what others were doing, both in the System and also our peer institutions. To do these things, you have to be able to facilitate leave with a schedule, so the faculty chair needs to understand who is interested in coming up and whether they can facilitate the faculty leave--can the classes be covered, etc. The Dean would need to be aware of that as well, and the Provost. I am not sure I heard your question, but I thought it was, why do we have those levels?

Candy Schille (CLASS): Basically two questions.

Fred Whitt (CHHS): Okay.

Candy Schille (CLASS): Big hot SPC word these days is accountability. What kind of accountability does the administrator have for making a choice up or down on the candidate's application? That is one thing. Is there any rationale say in writing? And then the other thing is the appeals process. I do not know if you want one, but I was just wondering should we have one.

Fred Whitt (CHHS): Well, I would assume everything is appealable on all decisions made at the department level, and I think we were constructing this as a document to try to facilitate these, not to be punitive toward who can and who cannot. But, if you did have five people there would have to be some sort of level, at the department level. No, as a small ad hoc committee, we did not get into what levels would decide this one would be and this one would not. (Just as we don't dictate how much travel fund is available to faculty. Each department does that individually.) We certainly could go back and take a look at that.'

Candy Schille (CLASS): That would be great. Thank you.

Michael Nielsen (CLASS): I am wondering whether it is conceivable that everyone who applied for the leave might actually be granted it, or is there some cap or limit that the institution has?

Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): Yes, Mike, I think that these have to be considered within the budgetary realities that we have. But I do not know that we have ever been punitive at all about not granting these. There has been in the past a process in which one wrote a proposal, and that proposal was considered by the Faculty Development Committee, and then it was signed off on, but prior to that the proposal had a recommendation certainly from a department chair and a Dean as well. Part of what we are really trying to do is put some better structure around it so that we do not have a whole slew of people inadvertently applying for leave and draining a department in a semester so that the work of the department cannot happen. Also, we certainly want to provide as many of these as we can, but it has to be within budget guidelines. If you will note, there is an extra group that is going to be looking at this, and that is a college group, a group at the college-level. The reason for that was that we sometimes had people on the Faculty Development Committee who would look at a proposal, and, if

there was no one on the committee who was familiar with a specific discipline, there was sometimes a question as to how to evaluate that particular proposal. We want to add that college step to be sure that there is some review by one's peers. I do not know if that got after your question.

Fred Whitt (CHHS): There is not a separate budget for educational leaves. There is not a separate Foundation budget or a separate University budget just for these. The way they are funded is you may pick up an extra class, or you may try to cover a class, or if you know ahead of time maybe there will be some temp money available or part-time money available to help offset this, and then hopefully when your turn comes around the same thing will happen. For some reason, there seemed to be a perception from Steve, and talking with the other faculty members, that folks did not know we had an opportunity to do it, and those that did thought it was on hold, and we were not allowed to do it, and, frankly, there just had not been any applications. So we thought by getting something out and kind of reigniting this we would generate some interest among the faculty and try to encourage this.

Mary Hazeldine (COBA): I would like to know if the phrase "enhancing teaching" in the introduction could be put back in, please?

Fred Whitt (CHHS): I guess it could be. We discussed that. We literally decided to go with the language exactly from the Board of Regents Policy Manual, and it is written word-for-word this way. We did not mean that it would be exclusive of teaching. I think you are talking about where it talks about "promoting scholarly work and encouraging professional development." That is exactly out of the Board of Regents Policy Manual, Section 802.0804, word-for-word. We just were trying to be consistent with that, but certainly it would be to enhance teaching, scholarship, etc.

Mary Hazeldine (COBA): Well, considering that we have a primary mission of teaching, I would like to see it in.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): I notice that there is a time line for when faculty should apply, but there is no time line for feedback, so there is nothing outlined here as to when the department chair, Dean, or Provost's office will reply to the faculty about whether they have been approved or not.

Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): Good point.

Candy Schille (CLASS): Last thing. I know there is no punitive intent at all, but when I see a sentence like "Educational leave is awarded to highly productive faculty who demonstrate academic excellence," then I would like a rationale, as to why, say if I

applied for this, I either was considered one of those or was not. So a rationale would be very nice.

Fred Whitt (CHHS): Of why the language is as is?

Candy Schille (CLASS): All I really want is for the people that pass on the recommendation to their higher ups, at every level to provide some kind of a written rationale for their choice. Fred Whitt (CHHS): I understand.

Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): Good point.

Mary Marwitz (CLASS): And a system of what those choices are based on, so we will know not just why they were turned down, but what we should include and why we should include it.

Richard Flynn (CLASS): I think for many opportunities on campus we have, for instance, if you apply for a Faculty Research grant, you can go over to the Faculty Research office, and look at successful proposals, and the like. I was hoping that part of instituting the revision of this Educational Leave Policy would be some mechanism for that kind of assistance for the faculty member applying--looking at particularly good proposals or that sort of advice. This is going to be administered by the Faculty Development Committee to make its recommendations to the Provost, is that correct?

Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): Yes, but also, once again, remembering that there will be a college committee also that would look at this, and so I guess my question to you would be since we are having this discussion about, the final form that this might take, would those examples be best if they were discipline-specific? In other words, available at a college rather than a University, because I would think that sometimes proposals that you might look at from Information Technology, for example, might not be suitable or good models for you.

Richard Flynn (CLASS): Yes, I think most likely that would probably be true. I want to point out a couple of real advantages to this proposal as I know I had to wait ten years to get my first educational leave, and you no longer have to under this system, and I think that is good. There has been heretofore nothing specified about when you can apply for another one. And I know that there are people who have gotten them say after three years, second ones, so I think it is a good idea to have the seven-year cycle written in the document. I would also like to say that I think that when this proposal is in its final form that the Senate should probably vote to endorse it, or not endorse it.

Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): I think that's a very good point. One of the reasons that it was brought for discussion is that there would be some very good suggestions to be incorporated, so thank you.

Michael Nielsen (CLASS): So if someone were contemplating applying for this next year, is there a time frame in terms of when this might take effect, and those kinds of things? Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): Yes, Mike, I think that these have to be considered within the budgetary realities that we have. But I do not know that we have ever been punitive at all about not granting these. There has been in the past a process in which one wrote a proposal, and that proposal was considered by the Faculty Development Committee, and then it was signed off on, but prior to that the proposal had a recommendation certainly from a department chair and a Dean as well. Part of what we are really trying to do is put some better structure around it so that we do not have a whole slew of people inadvertently applying for leave and draining a department in a semester so that the work of the department cannot happen. Also, we certainly want to provide as many of these as we can, but it has to be within budget guidelines. If you will note, there is an extra group that is going to be looking at this, and that is a college group, a group at the college-level. The reason for that was that we sometimes had people on the Faculty Development Committee who would look at a proposal, and, if there was no one on the committee who was familiar with a specific discipline, there was sometimes a question as to how to evaluate that particular proposal. We want to add that college step to be sure that there is some review by one's peers. I do not know if that got after your question.

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Linda Bleicken (Provost and VPAA): I think that it would not be that difficult for us to revise according to some of the suggestions that have been made here, and bring this back for the next Senate meeting. What is your thinking on that?

Fred Whitt (CHHS): I would hope so, because I think that the date was like January 10th, the earliest date. June for spring and January for fall, so there would be a lot of planning by the chair. We really would like to get this implemented, and I would share your comments with Steve as well. Steve is a very valuable member of this committee, and he really led us through, wanting it to be more flexible, not to tie down exactly what should be in a proposal, but to provide some opportunity for some creativity among the

faculty, among the projects. So we tried not to be too restrictive in this, and to make it much more faculty friendly, and he was very helpful in that.

Patricia Humphrey (COST), Senate Moderator: One thing I might remind people of is Steve Damelin, who is on the committee, is on academic leave this year.

Fred Whitt (CHHS): That is why he wanted to do this.

Patricia Humphrey (COST): Senate Moderator: But, I know from personal experience he will certainly weigh in by email. Are there any other comments on the revised academic leave proposal?

Fred Whitt (CHHS): Thank you.