

McCormick Policy on Faculty Leaves of Absence

The McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science *strongly encourages* all of its faculty members to take advantage of the opportunities available for academic leaves of absence. McCormick supports the position on faculty leaves outlined on page 22 of the 2001 edition of the *Faculty Handbook* of Northwestern University:

“Northwestern is committed to the scholarly and professional development of the faculty. The University recognizes the need for its faculty to engage in research and professional development activities that will benefit both the scholar and the University. Active encouragement will be given to provide opportunities for professional and research leaves.”

Leaves of absence may be granted for academic/professional reasons (*academic leave*) or for personal reasons (*personal leave*). The following policies supplement the policies presented in the *Faculty Handbook*, pp 22-24.

ACADEMIC LEAVE OF ABSENCE

1. **Description:** An academic leave of absence releases a faculty member from on-campus teaching and service responsibilities for a specified period of time.
2. **Eligibility:** Every faculty member, both tenure track and clinical track, is eligible for an academic leave of absence. The conditions under which the faculty member is eligible for a leave with full or partial salary are given in item 5 below. Such a leave is not normally given to untenured faculty, although exceptions to this policy will be considered.
3. **Purposes:** Valid reasons for taking an academic leave include but are not limited to:
 - To gain industrial experience
 - To engage in entrepreneurial activity
 - To perform a service for city, state, or federal governments
 - To design a new course
 - To write a book
 - To work with research colleagues in other universities or laboratories
 - To switch fields
4. **Procedure:**
 - a. At least 6 months prior to the date the requested leave is to begin, the faculty member submits a 1-2 page leave request to the Dean indicating
 - Academic leave of absence requested.

- Purpose for the leave.
 - What efforts are being made to secure full or partial support.
- b. The Department Chair submits a letter to the Dean indicating how the duties of the requesting professor will be taken care of.
 - c. If the leave is approved by the Dean, the Dean makes a recommendation on the leave request to the Provost.
 - d. The Board of Trustees grants final approval of the leave request.

5. Salary and Benefits

- a. Up to fully salary and full benefits¹ are possible for a one-quarter leave, provided three years of service have accrued since the last academic leave.
- b. Up to fully salary and full benefits are possible for a two-quarter leave, provided six years of service have accrued since the last academic leave.
- c. Up to half salary and full benefits are possible for a one-year leave, provided six years of service have accrued since the last academic leave.
- d. Relocating temporarily for an academic leave can be a major financial burden. Thus, in cases where an outside source pays part of the faculty member’s salary during the leave, the total salary is allowed to exceed the faculty member’s nominal salary, unless a separate fund for travel expenses is provided by Northwestern University, the host institution, or the awarding agency. The allowed excess is equal to 10 percent of the current median McCormick full-professor salary.
- e. An academic leave without pay or benefits is also available. This would be appropriate for entrepreneurial leaves of absence to devote full time to a start-up company or similar activities.

¹ For the purposes of this policy the term “full benefits” shall be taken to include:

1. Full health and dental insurance, with the university and faculty member’s contributions to the cost the same as if the faculty member were not on leave.
2. Full long-term disability and life insurance at the same level of coverage the faculty member would have, were (s)he not on leave. The university and faculty member’s contributions to the cost will remain the same as if the faculty member were not on leave.
3. Full tuition benefits (including accrual of time toward the service requirement for these benefits) as if the faculty member were not on leave.
4. University and faculty member contributions to university retirement plans will be proportional to the fraction of the faculty member’s salary paid by the university.

- f. For purposes of all university benefits that depend upon the number of years of “continuous full-time service,” time away for an academic leave will be considered “continuous service” and the time will count in full toward the individual’s “service requirement” independent of the fraction of salary paid by the university.²
- g. In all cases, it is expected that the faculty member will attempt to secure salary support for the leave. Applications for grants for leaves and travel funding must be approved by the Dean prior to submission.

6. **Restrictions:**

- a. Normally, a one-quarter academic leave is granted at most once every three years.
- b. Normally, a one-year academic leave is granted at most once every six years.
- c. In exceptional circumstances a faculty member may request a second year of entrepreneurial leave. Such a request must arise from a compelling need and can be granted only upon satisfaction of all of the following conditions.
 - The activity of the faculty member during the leave must be consistent with the department’s academic goals.
 - The leave will not cause serious problems for teaching and other assignments in the department.
 - The department should be compensated for the administrative and opportunity costs of holding the position open.

In order to be granted a second year of leave the faculty member must demonstrate that the experience will make him/her a more effective teacher and researcher, or will in some way bring back to the department and the university something of significant value. This means, among other things, that new experiences, insights and skills will be brought into the classroom or laboratory to broaden the education of the students, and/or open new research opportunities.

A second year of absence obviously places extra burdens upon the teaching and administrative loads of the department, and may result in lost opportunities for development of the department. Thus, it would be necessary for the absent faculty member or his/her company to compensate the department a significant amount to hold the position open.

² Thus, even if a faculty member secures full non-Northwestern funding for a leave, the time away during the leave will be considered “continuous service” and the time will count in full toward the faculty member’s “service requirement” for benefits that depend on the length of service to the university.

In applying for a second year of entrepreneurial leave, the professor should prepare a detailed proposal explaining the need for the leave, describing the work to be done and showing how the conditions described above are to be met. This proposal is to be approved by the department chair and submitted to the dean for consideration. As in all leaves, the final decision rest with the Board of Trustees.

In no cases will a third year of leave be possible. If a third year were required this would indicate that the interest of the faculty member is focused more on the business and that his or her interest in the department has declined to the point that a faculty position is not tenable.

- d. The faculty member is expected to return to campus for one year following any academic leave that is paid for in part by Northwestern, or return all salary and benefit payments received from the university.

7. **Teaching Load:**

- a. The teaching load during the year of a one-quarter leave is two-thirds the normal load.
- b. The teaching load during the year of a two-quarter leave is one-third the normal load.
- c. The teaching load during the year of a one-year leave is zero.

PERSONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A personal leave of absence releases a faculty member from on-campus teaching and service responsibilities for a specified period of time. A personal leave may be granted because of *maternity/paternity/adoption, personal/family crisis* or for the purpose of satisfying *military* obligations. All leaves taken for maternity, paternity, childcare, adoption, faculty member's illness or for faculty member to care for ill family member will be counted toward faculty member's FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) entitlement.

Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave of Absence

1. **Description:** A maternity/paternity/adoption leave of absence releases a faculty member from on-campus teaching and service responsibilities for one academic quarter.
2. **Eligibility:** Any faculty member is entitled to a one-quarter leave of absence due to the birth *or adoption* of a child. If a medical disability arises in connection with pregnancy or childbirth, then additional sick-leave benefits are provided (see Paid Sick Leave in the Northwestern University Faculty Handbook).

3. **Procedure:**

- a. Faculty member submits a leave request at least 60 days in advance or as soon as practical to the Dean indicating which quarter the maternity/paternity/adoption leave of absence is requested. (In the case of adoption leave, this request should give a “best guess” of the time window within which reception is expected.)
- b. Department Chair submits a letter to the Dean indicating how duties of the requesting professor will be taken care of.

4. **Salary and Benefits:**

- a. Maternity/paternity/adoption leave provides full salary and benefits.
- b. For purposes of all university benefits that depend upon number of years of “continuous full-time service,” time away for maternity/paternity/adoption leave will count in full.

5. **Timing:** The timing of the one-quarter leave is normally as follows. If the birth/reception of the child is during the first half of a given quarter, then that quarter is taken as leave. If the birth/reception of the child is during the second half of a quarter, then the remainder of that quarter, together with the entire next quarter is taken as leave. If the birth/reception of the child is during the summer, then the fall quarter is taken as leave.

Since the timing of a birth is fairly predictable, provisions for the timing of the leave are normally straightforward, in that case. In the case of adoption, timing of reception of the child is often unpredictable. The Department will be as flexible as possible in adoption situations in scheduling leave.

6. Teaching Load: The teaching load during the year of a maternity/paternity/adoption leave is two-thirds the load the faculty member would otherwise have had.
7. Maternity/Paternity/Adoption leaves do not affect eligibility for academic or personal leaves of absence.
8. The tenure clock may be extended if requested and approved as per the guidelines in the Northwestern University “Policy on Extending the Probationary Period.”

Child-Rearing or Personal/Family Crisis Leave of Absence

1. **Description:** A *full leave* of absence releases a faculty member from all on-campus teaching and service responsibilities for specified period of time no greater than one year. A *partial leave* of absence reduces to a specified level a faculty member’s teaching and service responsibilities for a specified period of time no greater than three years.

2. **Eligibility:** Any faculty member is eligible to apply for a full or partial leave for personal/family reasons.
3. **Procedure:**
 - a. Faculty member submits a leave request to the Dean indicating:
 - Personal leave of absence is being requested.
 - The period of time and the fraction of leave requested.
 - The purpose or justification of the leave. (A medical certification will be required if the faculty member or a family member is ill. Human Resources has a form for this.)
 - Salary and benefits requested during the leave.
 - Provisions for office and lab space during and after the leave (e.g. whether or not the faculty member requests to maintain control of his or her office or lab space during the leave or to regain control after the leave.
 - b. Department Chair submits a letter to the Dean indicating how duties of the requesting professor will be taken care of.
 - c. If the leave is approved by the Dean, the Dean makes a recommendation on the leave request to the Provost.
 - d. The Board of Trustees grants final approval of the leave request.
4. **Salary and Benefits**
 - a. For a level of half time or greater, the faculty member will continue to receive full benefits and partial salary. Retirement contribution will be based on partial salary.
 - b. For purposes of all university benefits that depend upon number of years of “continuous full-time service,” time spent at part-time will count as “continuous service.” Time will accrue toward the “service requirement” in proportion to the level of service.
5. **Note:** When a leave is requested, each faculty member will be asked to declare his or her intention to return to full-time status following the leave.

Leave of Absence for Military Service

McCormick follows the policy as stated on page 24 of the 2001 version of the Northwestern University *Faculty Handbook*:

“Leave without pay is granted for qualified military service, as provided by law. According to policy established by the Board of Trustees, faculty members serving in the United States armed forces will be rehired at their former academic ranks upon returning from service.”

AGREEMENT TO THE POLICY

In accepting any leave, a faculty member will be asked to sign a statement stating that he or she has read and agrees to this policy.

Drafted by the Faculty Sub-committee of the Committee on our Future, Peter Voorhees (chair), Collette Coullard, Mark Daskin, Rich Finno; Original draft written by Coullard, and the Women in McCormick Committee, Katherine T. Faber. The original draft of this policy was unanimously approved for recommendation by the Committee on our Future. (1994)

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