

Policy on Faculty Summer Salary

This summer salary policy is intended to help faculty stay within rules established by the federal government and Northwestern University regarding activities that can be undertaken when faculty are supported entirely on federal funds. This policy is substantially the same as those adopted by a range of other US research universities.

These guidelines should also be used when support comes from other, external sources unless some different policies from the granting agency apply. The normal maximum amount of summer support faculty may earn from university flow-through grants and contracts is for 2.5 months (one month of summer salary is 1/9th of the "institutional base salary" as defined by the University.) Most faculty take some vacation time during the summer quarter, and the intent of this policy is to avoid a situation where a faculty member takes vacation during a period when he/she is supported by an external grant.

Faculty may earn up to an additional 0.5 month summer salary from a discretionary account or released funds from recovered academic year salary as compensation for unsponsored summer work such as administration, university or professional service activities, teaching preparation, proposal writing, and unsponsored research; this additional summer salary is not for use as paid vacation time.

Some faculty do not have access to such funds, or may not choose to use them for summer salary. If less than three months of summer salary is paid, then of course faculty may make their own decisions about allocating their unpaid time to vacation, research (sponsored or otherwise), teaching preparation, or other university, professional, or personal activities.

During periods when summer salary comes from sponsored projects, a faculty member's effort must be substantially committed to work on that (or those) sponsored project(s); faculty members must certify this in their regular effort reports. This means that nearly all of an investigator's time during the period of support should be dedicated to work on the sponsored project(s).

At the same time we recognize that maintaining the effective and efficient operation of the university is fundamental to the performance of grant-supported research. Thus, faculty receiving summer funding from or through Northwestern should be responsive to modest administrative and operational needs of their departments and centers, the McCormick School, and Northwestern. This may include engaging in communications through various channels, as well as attending occasional and essential meetings. It does not include writing competitive proposals. Such non-grant activities should not constitute a major use of time for grant supported faculty, and faculty must apply their good judgment in the use of their time during periods of 100% grant support to make sure that grant funds are appropriately and wisely applied.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Northwestern University Summer Salary Policy

- *Is there any case in which a faculty member can take three months of summer quarter salary from sponsored accounts?*

University policy allows this on a limited basis with prior approval from the chair, dean, and Vice-President for Research. During this three-month period you may only expend effort on the grants/contracts that are funding your work – with the *de minimis* exceptions noted above – no other effort or vacation days are allowed. To secure this approval you will need to specify all of your planned activities during this time period and certify that only activities directly related to the sponsored project will be undertaken during the funded period. You will need to back this up with your summer quarter effort report. McCormick strongly discourages taking three full months of summer salary from sponsored accounts.

- *What if I've specifically committed (or been awarded) three or more summer months on sponsored projects?*

If three full months of summer effort have been committed to/awarded by sponsors, the corresponding sponsored accounts may fund the three months of summer salary, in accordance with the approval process stated above. Alternatively, some portion of the committed summer effort may be rebudgeted into the academic year to leave some unsponsored time in the summer quarter.

- *If I am paid three months of summer salary from sponsored projects, can I write proposals or do substantial administrative work that is not grant-related?*

No. If an investigator receives three months of summer salary from sponsored accounts, the funding agencies do not allow time to write proposals, work on other research, or perform significant administrative work beyond *de minimis* activity described above. If a portion of the three months of summer salary is paid by a discretionary or other non-sponsored account, then faculty may work on proposals, other research, teaching preparation, and administrative duties with effort in proportion to the fraction of summer salary paid from the non-sponsored account.

- *Can I distribute my effort over the summer even though I specify the calendar dates for various sponsored projects to pay my summer salary?*

Yes. Summer salary can be paid any time during the summer, from June 16 to September 15 in half-month increments; the effort on which the summer salary is based can be distributed throughout the three months of summer, regardless of the month during which the summer salary is paid. For instance, if an investigator has one month of summer salary support from each of two grants for a total of two months, the investigator would be expected to spend an aggregate of one month of work on each grant at some time over the summer. This leaves one month for other, non-grant activities, including vacation. This time can be distributed throughout the summer, though it would not be appropriate to take a vacation during a time interval that is charged to a grant.

- *Can I go to a conference while I am being paid from a sponsored project?*

Yes, if the conference is related to the sponsored project; in your effort report you must certify that the effort (time) spent during the paid period, including attendance at the conference, contributed to the sponsored project.

- *Do I have to be at the University during the summer?*

No, but faculty are generally expected to be at the University for the period of summer salary support, with exceptions for travel to conferences, meetings with collaborators, or off-campus work (for example, data collection at a remote site or research at another institution) that are related to the sponsored project(s) from which your summer salary is drawn. When you are supported by non-sponsored funds, the same expectations for campus presence apply, but your activity set may require more business-related time away from Northwestern.

- *May I engage in consulting during the summer?*

Yes, as long as you keep consulting time within official University limits (an average of one day per week). Consulting is not University effort.

- *If I don't use one day a week for consulting during the summer quarter, may I use that day for other activities and still remain in compliance with federal and non-federal regulations?*

No. Consulting is an explicitly-defined opportunity for faculty, and it is excluded from measures of University effort. Other activities do not fall into that category.

- *While I am 100% grant funded, may I use the hours I work beyond 40 hours each week (evenings and weekends) for administrative tasks or writing proposals?*

No, other than the de minimis effort described earlier. Federal agencies and Northwestern measure effort, not time – we don't keep records of hours worked. If your effort is typically more than 40 hours per week or includes evenings or weekends, then all of that effort constitutes 100%; if you are full time on a grant for a period of time, that 100% is defined as full time.

To some this sounds like the University – really, the grant agency – is buying all of our waking hours, work and leisure. The principle is actually straight forward: if the grant is providing 100% of your summer support for some time period, it is buying all of your work effort (save de minimis activities as discussed above), as you normally define it, no matter when it is expended – days, nights, weekends. That doesn't mean the grant is buying your relaxation time – just the time you define as work.

Frequently Asked Questions for the McCormick-Specific Summer Salary Policy

- *May I use academic year salary recovery funds to pay for my summer salary?*

Yes, within limits. Specifically to give faculty flexibility in their summer work activities when they are earning summer salary, McCormick permits the first ½ month of academic year salary recovery to be used to pay the ½ month of summer salary that cannot be paid from sponsored accounts. Academic year salary recovered beyond ½ month will be distributed according to the usual split between the investigator, the department, and McCormick.

- *Am I required to use the first ½ month of academic year salary recovery funds to pay for ½ month of my summer salary?*

No. If you do not use the money this way, it will be distributed according to the usual split between the investigator, the department, and McCormick.

- *May I use gift accounts for my summer salary to supply this ½ month of summer salary?*

Yes, as long as this use is within the spirit and intent of the gift agreement. Requests for summer salary support from gift accounts must be approved by the McCormick Senior Associate Dean.

- *May I use startup or retention funds for my summer salary?*

Internal funds for start-ups or retentions may only be used for faculty summer salaries if they are so-designated. Funds designated for equipment or post-docs may not be redirected to summer salary.

- *Can I use other funding sources, such as professional MS programs or other appointments carrying incremental funding to pay my summer salary?*

Yes, provided that this is permitted in your appointment agreement. Unless otherwise specified in an appointment letter, no more than one month of summer salary can be paid by an academic program within McCormick (including professional MS programs, centers, and other academic units). In all cases, summer salary from academic programs must be approved by the dean or senior associate dean.

- *May I take summer salary from a grant even if I did not recover academic year salary?*

Yes, but academic year salary recovery is strongly encouraged because it brings benefits to McCormick as well as the faculty member (through discretionary funding and supplemental summer salary as described here).

- *How is effort reporting handled in the summer quarter?*

Effort reporting is required only for the portion of the summer for which you are paid through Northwestern.

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