

10-31-2011

Sabbatical Task Force Report

The College at Brockport, College Senate

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Resolution # 06 2011-2012 College Senate

Supersedes Res #: _____

TO: Dr. John R. Halstead, College President

FROM: The College Senate: **OCTOBER 31, 2011**

- RE: **→**
- I. Formal Resolution (*Act of Determination*)
 - II. Recommendation (*Urging the Fitness of*)
 - III. Other, For Your Information (*Notice, Request, Report, etc.*)

SUBJ: **Sabbatical Task Force Report** (routing #79_10-11FP)

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____
(John P. Daly 2011-2012, College Senate President)

Please fill out the bottom portion and follow the distribution instructions at the end of this page.

TO: John P. Daly, College Senate President

FROM: John R. Halstead, College President

- RE: **→**
- I. Decision and Action Taken on Formal Resolution (circle choice)
 - a. Accepted - Implementation Effective Date: Immediately
 - b. Deferred for discussion with the Faculty Senate on ____/____/____
 - c. Unacceptable for the reasons contained in the attached explanation
 - II, III. Response to Recommendation or Other/FYI
 - a. Received and acknowledged ____/____/____
 - b. Comment:

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Dr. John R. Halstead, President, The College at Brockport)

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COLLEGE SENATE OFFICE
RESOLUTION PROPOSAL COVER PAGE
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: FEBRUARY 28

Incomplete proposals may be returned and proposals received after the deadline may not be reviewed until next semester.

Routing Number <i>Routing # assigned by Senate Office</i>	#79_10-11FP <i>Use routing number and title in all reference to this proposal.</i>
This Proposal Replaces Resolution	

INSTRUCTIONS – please, no multiple attachments – submit each proposal electronically as one Word document.

- Submit only complete proposals with this cover page, attachments and support letters from your department chair and dean merged into one Word document.
- Signed documents may be submitted as hard copies.
- Use committee guidelines available at brockport.edu/collegesenate/proposal.html.
- **Locate the Resolution # and date this proposal will replace at our "Approved Resolutions" page on our Web site.**
- Do not send your proposal as a .pdf file.
- Email your proposal as one attachment to senate@brockport.edu. Signed pages can be sent/faxed as hard copies.
- All revisions must be resubmitted to senate@brockport.edu with the original cover page including routing number.
- Questions? Call the Senate office at 395-2586 or the appropriate committee chairperson.

1. PROPOSAL TITLE: Please be somewhat descriptive, ie. *Graduate Probation/Dismissal Proposal* rather than *Graduate Proposal*.

Sabbatical Task Force Report

2. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

Recommend approval of the recommendations made by the Task Force

3. WILL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AFFECTING BUDGET BE NEEDED? NO YES EXPLAIN YES

4. DESCRIBE ANY DATA RELATED TO STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT USED AS PART OF THE RATIONALE FOR THE REQUESTED SENATE ACTION.

5. HOW WILL THIS EFFECT TRANSFER STUDENTS:

6. ANTICIPATED EFFECTIVE DATE:

September 1, 2011

7. SUBMISSION & REVISION DATES: PLEASE DATE ALL REVISED DOCUMENTS TO AVOID CONFUSION.

<i>First Submission</i>	<i>Updated on</i>	<i>Updated on</i>	<i>Updated on</i>
3/24/11			

8. SUBMITTED BY: (contact person)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>
Anne Huot	Provost	2524	ahuot@brockport.edu

9. COMMITTEES TO COPY: (Senate office use only)

Standing Committee	Forwarded To	Dates Forwarded
<input type="checkbox"/> Bylaws Committee	Standing Committee	3/24/11
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment Planning & Policies	Executive Committee	9/19/11, 10/24/11
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty & Professional Staff Policies	Passed GED's to Vice Provost	
<input type="checkbox"/> General Education & Curriculum Policies	Senate	10/10/11, 10/31/11
<input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Curriculum & Policies	College President	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Policies	OTHER	
<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Curriculum & Policies	REJECTED -WITHDRAWN	

NOTES:

Report of the Provost's Task Force on Sabbaticals
September 20, 2010

Task Force members:

David Bloom

Maira Fallon

Jim Hansen

Maura Keefe

Mike Kozub

Stanley Radford, Chair

Kulathur Rajasethupathy

Mohammad Tahar

Jose Torre

Introduction

Provost Anne Huot created the Task Force on Sabbaticals in Spring 2010. The Charge was delivered to the Task Force on March 31, 2010.

Academic Affairs Task Force on Sabbaticals 03-25-2010

Context

A sabbatical is a privilege granted to faculty for ongoing professional development that brings value to the institution by enriching its program. The existing guidelines for sabbatical application have been in place since 1982. The policy governing sabbatical leaves emanates from the SUNY Board of Trustees.

There has been significant heterogeneity in the quality of sabbatical proposals and final reports, calling into question the value of the significant investment the College has made. In this light, modifications to sabbatical policy or practice might assure the value of the investment, whether the quantity of that investment is reduced or not. Given our financial challenges we must ensure that our resources are expended responsibly and with maximum return on investment.

Charge for the Academic Affairs Task Force on Sabbaticals

The **Task Force on Sabbaticals** is charged with reviewing sabbatical guidelines and making recommendations for change that will enhance the rigor of the review process and ensure that at all levels of review only meritorious applications are endorsed. Recommendations on how to enhance accountability related to completing the anticipated scope of work should also be made.

Further, the Task Force is asked to consider the following as potential means by which the College can continue to support this important form of faculty development and reduce the expense related to supporting it for the next 3 year period. These options are reducing the pay for one semester sabbaticals to less than 100%, restricting the number of sabbaticals that will be granted in any given year, and/or only approving sabbaticals if the existing department workforce can cover the teaching needs while a colleague is on sabbatical. The Task Force is asked to comment on the merit of these options, or others they may wish to propose, as well as the consequences of implementing them.

The Task Force should make every effort to keep the College community informed about its progress and engaged in the process as it carries out the charge. Avenues for broad input should be sought. The recommendations must be submitted to the Provost by May 31, 2010.

Task Force Membership

Chair – Stanley Radford

Staff Support – Karen Mogle

Task Force Members – Maura Keefe, Mohammad Tahar, Davida Bloom, Mike Kozub, Jose Torre, Jim Hansen, Kulathur Rajasethupathy, Moira Fallon

Due to the delay in receiving the charge, the time for submission of recommendations was extended to September 30, 2010.

The Task Force met three times: March 31, April 14, and April 28. Minutes of those meetings are posted on the Task Force web page. In addition, the Task Force requested and received anonymous information about the Sabbatical applications and costs for the past three years (i.e., covering the tenure of the current Provost).

The Provost presented the Charge to the Task Force at the March 31 meeting. During, and subsequent to, this meeting the Provost outlined particular concerns:

- ♦ In the Provost's view approximately 10% of the (53) proposals she has received in the past three years have been weak, and should not have come to her desk;
- ♦ Approximately 20% fail to achieve the stated goals, most with reasonable justification; however
- ♦ Roughly 5% (of the total) fail and do not provide justification;
- ♦ Most final reports are not received on time, almost all require substantial pursuit and;
 - Many are received very late,
 - Some are never received.
- ♦ There are never enough full-year sabbaticals (at half salary) to cover the expenses of the half-year sabbaticals (at full salary).

Based on the data the Provost provided, we estimate the **net** expense of the Sabbatical program (i.e., total teaching replacement costs less half-salaries saved from full year sabbaticals) to be \$267,638 over the previous two academic years (AY2008 – AY2009), with an additional \$56,260 slated for the current academic year.

In our discussions, guided by the charge from the Provost, we recognized and discussed four general areas of concern:

- ♦ Rigor of the review process,
- ♦ Quality of successful applications,
- ♦ Accountability for completion / reporting of project,
- ♦ Expense of the program.

Based on our discussions and the Charge, a Survey containing 11 questions was prepared. Department Chairs and Program Directors were asked to respond via Angel. We received nine responses.

Chair and Director Survey / Task Force Discussions

The questions and a summary of responses follow, along with a summary of the Task Force discussions on the same topics. The Survey was made available through the Task Force Angel page. The Task Force Charge and *Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave Proposals* (hereafter referred to as the *Guidelines*) were also provided. The full results of the Survey are attached as an Appendix. Where warranted, we denote comments from the Survey responses as (Chairs) and those from the Task Force discussion as (TF).

1. How far in advance do you need to start planning replacement staffing for a sabbatical leave?

The consensus of the responses and Task Force members was that the current requirement - basically Fall semester of the current academic year for Sabbaticals in the following academic year – is sufficient.

2. Do you know where to go to find information about Sabbaticals?

Of the nine responses, seven were affirmative.

We note that the *Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave Proposals* are provided in the 2010-2011 **Faculty Guide to Academic Policies and Practices at Brockport**, on pages 28 – 32. We note that the discussion of Sabbatical Leaves actually begins in the paragraph preceding the “formal” section (still on p. 28 though). A summary of the policy is available on the Human Resources website at www.brockport.edu/hr/Leaves/sabbatical.html which also has a link to the **Faculty Guide**.

3. *Are the College’s Sabbatical policies and guidelines clear and consistent? If not, what is unclear or inconsistent?*

In general, the responders found the policies and guidelines to be reasonably clear and consistent. However, concerns were raised, both by survey respondents and Task Force members about the implementation of the policies. In particular, questions were raised about:

- ♦ “Departmental politics” during the review process (Chairs, TF);
- ♦ Lack of guidance about proposal quality (Chairs, TF), and review standards (TF);
- ♦ Inconsistent implementation of the policies (Chairs, TF);
- ♦ Clarity of the expectations for the Final Report (TF)
- ♦ Eligibility of non-tenure track faculty (Chairs).

Regarding the final bullet, the Policy states that “academic employees having a continuing appointment ...” are eligible. In addition to tenured faculty, there is also provision for some “college administrative officers.”

The Task Force recommends that the review and approval processes be clarified and made more rigorous. These recommendations are stated in detail in the following section.

4. *What value do Sabbaticals add in your department in areas of faculty recruitment, retention, and professional development?*

The consensus among the Chairs was that Sabbatical Leaves are valuable and valued. However, there seems to be something of a perception of entitlement in some of the responses, additionally similar views were expressed by faculty (TF during discussions).

While the issue of “Sabbatical entitlement” is addressed in the **Faculty Guide**, clarification is probably warranted.

5. *What is the role of your department’s APT committee in the Sabbatical review process?*

The Survey results indicate that Department APT Committees review applications, provide feedback to applicants, and make recommendations to the department Chairperson. The Task Force regards the APT Committee involvement as key to ensuring the high quality of the applications.

6. *In your department, how frequently are Sabbatical proposals returned to applicants for revision, either by the APT Committee or by the Chair?*

The consensus among the Chairs was – never or very rarely. However, anecdotally, we know that this does occur, at least occasionally. Given the Provost’s assessment discussed above, the TF considers this to be a key function of the APT Committees and Chairs. We recommend clarifying this point in the *Guidelines*.

7. *How frequently are Sabbatical proposals returned to your department’s Chair or APT Committee by the Dean or Provost?*

The consensus among the Chairs was – never. Given the Provost’s assessment discussed above, the role of the Dean in providing a rigorous review of proposals should be reiterated.

8. How frequently have faculty in your department not completed their sabbaticals, i.e., the anticipated scope of work was not completed and/or the sabbatical reports were not turned in?

The consensus of the Chairs was – never, or rarely. This seems to be at odds with the Provost’s assessment. The issues of completion and reporting need to be resolved. The TF recommends that the expected content of the Final Report be clarified. Also, the Sabbatical Contract signed by the candidate should clearly state the Final Report due date. In addition, while it seems patronizing, the Provost’s office should send a reminder to faculty about a month before the sabbatical report is due.

9. Should there be consequences if a sabbatical is not completed, i.e., the anticipated scope of work is not completed and/or the sabbatical report is not turned in? If so, what do you consider an appropriate consequence?

The consensus among the Chairs was that there should be consequences, but no agreement as to their nature.

At present the *Guidelines* state merely that “past performance” will be among the “Criteria for Review” as part of the “Feasibility of the proposal.”

We recognize, as mentioned in one Chair comment, that not all “failure” is under control of the faculty member, and that often the results of the sabbatical do not meet expectation. Consideration can and should be given for events not under the faculty member’s control. However, when it is clear that the terms of the sabbatical have not been met and/or the final report has not been filed, we concur with the Chairs that there should be a consequence. Further, we recommend that the consequence should be clearly stated.

The TF recommends that the consequence for failure to complete the sabbatical contract (without Dean/Provost justification) should be ineligibility for future sabbaticals, and that this should be clearly stated in the *Guidelines*.

10. In the Committee charge, there is mention of three “potential means by which the College can continue to support” faculty sabbaticals while “reducing the expense” they incur. If you would like to comment on one or more of these possible options, please do so.

There was very little support for any of the proposals mentioned in the Task Force charge. The Chair comments were quite similar to those made during the Task Force discussions:

- ♦ “Reducing the pay for one semester sabbaticals to less than 100%” received minimal support. The idea here is to reduce the salary by the cost of adjunct replacement for teaching, nominally \$7,500 (slightly higher or lower, depending on the School). The general response was that such a reduction, particularly for newly tenured faculty, would present such a hardship as to discourage applications. (Chairs, TF)
- ♦ “Restricting the number of sabbaticals that will be granted in any given year” based on budget considerations received modest support with the provision that awards were made “equitably” across Schools and Departments. Restricting the number based on rigorous quality control received some support, but concerns were again raised about the “transparency of the review process. (Chairs, TF)
- ♦ “Only approving sabbaticals if the existing department workforce can cover the teaching needs while a colleague is on sabbatical” received minimal support due to the concern that many departments, particularly smaller ones or those with highly specialized faculty, would find it hard to staff the courses. (Chairs, TF) In fact, since the “existing department workforce” would be teaching the courses as overloads, it’s hard to see how this is financially superior to hiring adjuncts. (TF)

Several suggestions were made by Task Force members and by Chairs:

- ♦ One Chair suggested that in light of the current budget situation, the sabbatical program should be “put on hold for a few years;”
- ♦ A member of the Task Force suggested a “tiered” version of the Provost’s first option
 - Faculty on full year sabbaticals should continue to receive 50% of their basic annual salaries; faculty on their **first** half-year sabbaticals would continue to receive their full basic salaries; faculty taking their **second and subsequent** half-year sabbaticals would have their salaries reduced by the cost of adjunct

replacement. Thus, newly tenured faculty would not be discouraged from applying for a sabbatical, while the salary reduction would occur only for senior faculty who, in principal, could better manage it.

This is, not surprisingly, the topic of greatest contention. The Task Force members expressed the same concerns as the Chairs. The Provost has made it clear that she desires to continue to support faculty sabbaticals, but also needs to control costs. Given the cost issues raised in the Introduction, we agree that some modification of the support structure may be warranted. However, the Task Force was not able to achieve a consensus on this issue.

11. *Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the process to ensure successful completion of sabbatical projects so that sabbaticals may better serve their intended purposes as stated in the Faculty Handbook?*

The majority of the Chairs did not see any issues with the *Guidelines* or their implementation. Suggestions were:

- ♦ “Help the Chairs feel more empowered to decline weak proposals.”
- ♦ “The evaluation guidelines look rigorous; make sure to follow them closely.”
- ♦ “A structured form in addition to the letter of application.”
- ♦ Clarify the issues regarding “prospective income.”

Sabbatical Task Force Recommendations

After discussions and review of the Chairs and Directors responses, the Task Force has the following recommendations for revision and implementation of the Sabbatical Policy:

1. Adhere to the stated standards for proposal approvals, i.e., enforce rigorous standards.
2. Clarify the role of the Department APT Committee to include:
 - Guidance to faculty to develop a sabbatical proposal
 - A rigorous review
 - And/or Suggestions for improvement
3. Clarify the role of the Department Chair or Director to include a rigorous review based on the *Sabbatical Guidelines*, as well as a recommendation to the School Dean.
4. Clarify the role of the School Dean to include a rigorous review based on the *Sabbatical Guidelines*, as well as a recommendation to the Provost.
5. At any point along the “review and recommend” process a recommendation to “revise and try again next year” should be viewed as a possible outcome.
6. Clarify the expectations and timeline/timing for the Final Report.
7. Funded proposals and final reports should be published on the Academic Affairs web site
8. Clearly state that the consequence of failure to complete the Sabbatical Contract (i.e. finish the project and/or submit a final report) without a satisfactory reason is ineligibility for a subsequent sabbatical.

With regard to the financial issue, the Task Force was not able to come to a consensus. In our discussion there was some support for the Provost’s salary reduction proposal; more support for the “tiered” salary reduction proposal. However, the Task Force members took the view that rigorous application of the current standards should eliminate weak proposals from arriving in the Provost’s Office, and the existence of the consequence for non-completion of the sabbatical (including failure to file the Sabbatical Report) should encourage satisfactory completion. The recommendation of the Task Force is to follow through with the above eight recommendations and see if they are, in fact, sufficient. If not, then a version of the salary reduction proposal would seem to be the least onerous choice.