

**SUMMARY:
STRENGTHENING THE RESEARCH
LEAVE PROGRAM AT WFU
RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT
JANUARY 21, 2000**

Introduction

WFU's Plan for the Class of 2000 emphasized the Teacher-Scholar Ideal as a role model for our faculty. The Research Advisory Council's 1998-99 Report stressed the importance of a strong research leave program to the scholarship of our faculty. Dean Escott then asked the Research Advisory Council (RAC) to produce the Research Leave Report in response to the 1998-99 RAC report's recommendations on our leave program. The RAC gathered leave program data from a number of comparison schools and surveyed the WFU faculty, with a 55% response rate, prior to proposing the leave program recommendations presented here.

Problems with the Current Research Leave Program

- 1) Current leave program eligibility and award criteria are not clearly understood by the faculty.
- 2) Many faculty members believe that the leave program is very competitive and that many good leave proposals are not funded.
- 3) Even among those faculty members who have had leaves, there is a general impression that they do not occur frequently enough or with enough duration to maximize research productivity.
- 4) Many faculty do not think they can afford to take a leave under our current program, which restricts summer employment and pays only half salary during an academic year leave.
- 5) The current tenure-track leave program, which consists of 3 options, is not considered to optimally provide true leave opportunities to tenure-track faculty members.

Solutions

- 1) Enhance the clarity and publication of leave program guidelines. Publish the review criteria.
- 2) Implement a leave program in which all faculty with substantive proposals would be eligible for and expect to receive a paid year leave every 7 years or a paid semester leave every 4 years.
- 3) Institute a noncompetitive leave program for tenure-track faculty that guarantees a semester paid leave in the 4th year of the tenure stream.
- 4) Eliminate the current 3-option leave program for tenure-track faculty.
- 5) Track the results of leaves. The best way to track productivity is to have a more frequent leave program with an application process that involves justifying the request by providing the results of the previous leave.
- 6) Broaden the eligibility criteria for internal research support funds to allow requests for summer salary support.

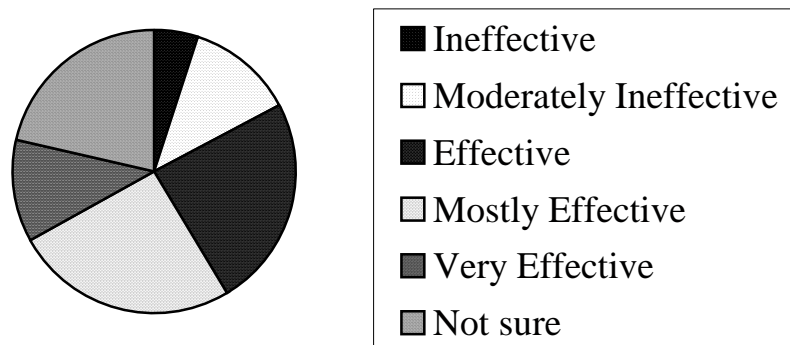
RAC REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

WFU's Plan for the Class of 2000 advanced the ideal of the Teacher-Scholar and promised to create an environment in which that ideal might be realized. However, the Research Advisory Council (RAC) reported in 1998-99 that there has been a decrease in time available to devote to research, a decrease in the number of grants sought and in scholarly production. The RAC report recommended that the Reynolds leave program be strengthened in order to promote scholarship at the college. In order to make recommendations on how to strengthen the Reynolds leave program, the RAC carried out two surveys. First, we collected data on comparable institutions' research leave policies. This information is contained in the 1998-99 RAC report and is restated in Appendix II to this report. RAC also surveyed the college faculty for perceptions about the current leave program and ways to strengthen it. The surveyed faculty were tenured and tenure-track members of the Reynolda campus college faculty, not including the Calloway School of Business.

The survey response rate was 55%. Most people did find the current Reynolds leave program effective, as shown in Figure 1. This is not surprising, since leave programs do work. But only 12% found it very effective at promoting research. The survey identified many ways to strengthen the current leave program. A summary of the data from these two sources and recommendations on the contours of a new leave program follow.

Figure 1: How Effective is the Current Reynolds Leave Program at Promoting Research Productivity?



II. PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT PROGRAM IDENTIFIED IN THE COLLEGE FACULTY SURVEY:

A. Criteria

1. The criteria by which leave applications are selected were generally not considered to be clear. Of those responding, 59% felt that the tenured leave criteria were not clear

and 45% felt that the criteria for tenure-track faculty were unclear. 23% did not even respond to the latter question. We concur that the current guidelines are vague and are difficult to locate on-line as they are buried within the Faculty Handbook.

2. Many faculty believe the current leave program is too competitive; there are too few leaves available and some faculty do not even bother to apply. The questions “If you have not applied for a leave, why not?” elicited such comments as: “competition was keen,” “the number of leaves is too small,” “I perceive the leaves to be extremely competitive,” “perceived lack of chance of getting a leave.” 65% of those who responded to the survey report they have never had a research leave. Yet, this perception is countered by survey results that indicate that the overall funding rate is high, at 94%. To clarify this contradiction, data on leave application and awards was collected from the provost’s office and is reported below in Table I (at the tenure-track level, includes data for the competitive leave program only).

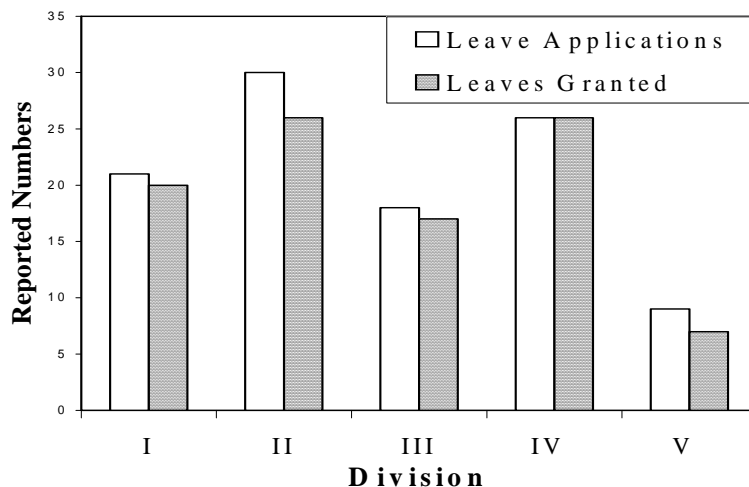
Table I: Leave Applications and Funded Leaves Reported by the Provost’s Office

Academic Year	Senior leaves			Tenure-track leaves		
	Applications	Awards	% Awarded	Applications	Awards	% Awarded
94/95	19	13	68%	9	4	44
95/96	27	12	44	7	4	57
96/97	29	15	52	5	3	60
97/98	27	19	70	3	2	67
98/99	21	18	86	8	6	75

Although the percentage of leaves awarded is increasing over time, the number of applications is unacceptably low given the size of the faculty (165 tenured members and 80 tenure-track). Furthermore, the low participation rate of tenure-track faculty in the competitive option (applying for a funded leave during the academic year) attests to the perception that the competitive program is not sufficiently encouraging tenure-track faculty to be maximally productive in research.

3. Other faculty indicate that the leave program is a giveaway, and does not do enough to promote research. Comment: “our leave program should ... be tied to the faculty member’s productivity.” The Faculty Handbook indeed states that “One leave is ordinarily assigned to a senior member of the faculty who...would use a semester or a year in reading or study...” (Chapter 3 “Leaves With Pay”, p. 17).
4. Others indicate that the leaves are not equitably awarded across disciplines. One respondent wrote that s/he needed “the reassurance that scholars outside of the natural sciences had a competitive chance in applying for these leaves.” Another respondent indicated that “it’s perceived that the ‘hard sciences’ receive such a huge percentage of any available funding.” In the attached Figure 2, it is clear that this perceived divisional bias may not be correct. This data indicates that very similar rates of funding are seen in each division.

Figure 2: Self Reported Leave Applications and Awards by Division



5. Many faculty members believe a leave requires them to be off campus. When asked what would motivate him/her to apply, one faculty member wrote: “I need to identify a good situation to visit.” Another stated s/he would apply for a research leave if s/he “had a clear idea of experiments ... that were better done elsewhere than here.” Also, “for experimental scientists, it is not a simple matter to go elsewhere and be productive” and “the best leave I could arrange would be for me to visit another university for a semester. Even with full pay, I simply cannot afford it.” In fact, the Faculty Handbook does state that one condition on the leave is that faculty “spend as much of the leave as possible at some place other than Winston-Salem” (Chapter 3 “Leaves With Pay”, p. 17).
6. Some faculty members consider that the only way to take time and be able to meet the expenses of having/ adopting a child is to use the time afforded by a research leave for that purpose as well. The university’s maternity/family leave policy of paying 6 weeks of the 15 weeks of salary from one semester for those on maternity/family leave should be clarified and publicized. The absence of money to pay colleagues to teach for those on maternity leave causes individuals to feel that leaves lead to overburdening their peers.
7. The timing and rigidity of the application process are not conducive to application for additional grant support for leaves. As one respondent indicated “We need to integrate Wake Forest into the real world of grants. In order for faculty to link up with other grants and make plans to join research institutes there should be flexibility in the timing of leave program and the University's willingness to support faculty who are able to gain the support of other institutions for their work.”

B. Responsibilities

Teaching

Despite the endorsement of the Teacher-Scholar Ideal in the Plan for the Class of 2000 and in other university statements, a perception of the opposition of teaching and research unfortunately persists. Some faculty even see a desire for a leave as indicating a

dislike of teaching expressed in the comments: “I enjoy teaching and at present do not feel a need to take a semester away from it” and “I enjoyed teaching and had no project in mind.” Other faculty believe “no one is available to teach my classes.”

Administrative Duties

For some faculty, administrative and teaching responsibilities overshadow research. As one respondent commented: “the research component of my career ... is being slowly buried under other commitments.” When asked “If you have not applied for a leave, why not?” comments included “did not apply while carrying out significant administrative responsibility,” “too much administrative involvement in grants and clinical program,” “I have found it hard to break away from administrative duties.”

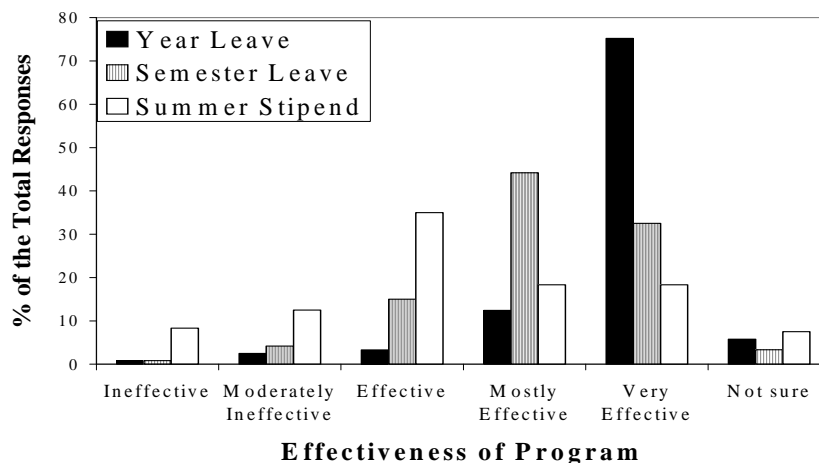
C. Pay

Faculty members believe they cannot afford a leave. There are additional personal costs associated with leaves in alternative locations including housing and transportation expenses, and the lost wages of partners or spouses that accompany a faculty member on leave. These additional costs make leaves at full pay difficult for many and leaves at partial pay impossible for most faculty members. In addition, the Faculty Handbook prohibits teaching in the summer either preceding or following the leave, which makes it difficult to offset the leave-associated expenses. (Also see comments below “Why Full Pay?”).

D. Tenure-track Faculty Leave Three- Option Program and Summer Stipends

For a number of years, the university has offered tenure-track faculty the mutually-exclusive option of choosing between guaranteed summer stipends offered over three summers, a guaranteed semester leave at half pay or competing for a fully-financed semester leave during the academic year. When asked about the overall effectiveness of year leaves, versus semester leaves, versus summer stipends (at pre-and post-tenure levels), the surveyed faculty indicated strongly that semester leaves are more effective than summer stipends, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Effectiveness of Various Leave Options



Of those who responded, 86% said that summer stipends were not as effective as continuous time off during the academic year at promoting research. Additionally, more than 50% of those responding indicated that the choice between automatic summer stipends and competitive semester leaves should not continue. Comments on summer stipends' lack of effectiveness, as compared to that of semester or year long leaves, at promoting research productivity were some of the strongest that were received, and included: "the summer alone is too short a time to complete substantial research," "there is no comparison between three months and six months," "three months is just not enough to make headway in a major project," "I was basically forced into this option in paying expenses of setting up a household in Winston," "summer is not long enough, and time must also be spent preparing classes for the upcoming semester," "summer is too short, and much time is spent preparing for next semester," "to work on any serious project necessitates a prolonged period of time," "we need a concentrated period of time over a period of weeks that a summer would not allow," "these summer stipends are about problems with the level of salary, not about research productivity... semester or year leaves are much more effective," "summer stipends are simply an increase of annual pay."

Summer stipends do play an important role for those individuals who normally teach or do other work during the summer to supplement their income. As the recent faculty salary survey by the AAUP has clearly demonstrated, WFU salaries are below those of comparison institutions. Therefore, many faculty who could use the summer as research time are unable to do so because of financial commitments. Broadening the eligibility criteria for internal summer funds would address this problem (see below **F. Support Summer Research**). As one respondent indicated "Most of faculty in my department work all summer on research, even without compensation. Some need to take summer school assignments to make ends meet."

III. SOLUTIONS

A. Revamping the leave program to promote research at WFU:

We recommend that the number of leaves be increased so that research-active tenured and tenure-track faculty will have regular leaves. A clear research plan should be required, but the pool of available funds should increase to encourage more individuals to apply. Research-active tenured faculty should be eligible to take a year-long leave at a minimum of every seven years at full pay or a semester-long leave at full pay every four years.

92% of college survey respondents indicate that the frequency of leaves that would best promote research at WFU would be a range of 4-7 years. (The survey question did not specify semester or year so as to allow for flexibility between disciplines and ranks). This is the range used at comparable institutions as well (see Appendix I for the Emory data and Appendix II, part of the RAC 1998-99 report). For example, Emory

and Vanderbilt, as well as two liberal arts colleges without extensive graduate programs, Wellesley and Williams, offer suitable comparisons to Wake Forest with its focus on undergraduate education.

We recommend a system of twice-yearly application/award deadlines of September 15 and February 15, along with increased flexibility with timing if faculty members have secured outside funding. Additional changes in the application deadline will encourage faculty to secure outside funding.

B. Tenure-Track Leave Program

We recommend that a semester-long leave for tenure-track faculty at full pay in the 4th year of the tenure stream be instituted. This leave should be guaranteed for all tenure-track faculty that have shown their success by passing their second two-year review. Tenure-track faculty could also compete for a semester leave before the 4th year, without excluding them from the guaranteed leave at full pay in the 4th year, if they are not successful in the earlier application.

The college should discontinue the three-choice format for tenure-track leaves. Choosing guaranteed summer stipends over guaranteed semester leaves at half pay or a competitive option for semesters at full pay discourages many tenure-track faculty from choosing research leaves. Summer Stipends were roundly criticized in faculty comments as a poor alternative to semester or year-long leaves, as was the idea of forcing individuals to make a choice between a guaranteed sub-optimal option and a competitive ideal option. As one respondent stated “It is pointless to make competitive leave full-pay but 'guaranteed' leave half-pay. This does nothing more than sort people by their degree of risk aversion. Except as a sociological experiment, it serves no purpose.”

C. Why Full Pay?

The faculty should not be asked to reduce its pay to do research since research is a job requirement. As one survey respondent stated: “research is part of the job—essential to the full realization of the teacher-scholar.... Either we are a teaching university, in which case research is a personal indulgence done in our own time, or we are a full university, with teaching and research organically linked. The very formulation of the issue in these terms—research leave VERSUS salary—speaks volumes about the attitude of the university to its faculty’s research function.” Another faculty member stated: “the current climate treats a leave as a privilege guarded by the College, not as a component of one’s employment.” Another stated: “A year of leave at full pay ... is common at every other institution I’ve ever been at ... and would certainly enhance my scholarship significantly.”

When surveyed, more than 65% of the faculty who responded said “no” to salary reductions. Compared both to 50 top national universities and 40 top liberal arts colleges and to nine colleges and universities with which we regularly compete for students, WFU faculty salaries are below average already (source: AAUP faculty salary study committee, 1999 report).

Clearly, research leaves are expensive for the university. One solution to the costs of full year leaves is to require faculty to apply for outside funding for their leaves. If this funding is received, then the university will spend less money on this program and the prestige of these fellowships will strengthen the research records of those applying.

D. Reduced Teaching Load vs. Leave Time

The RAC survey of the college faculty gave the option to respond to the effectiveness of reduced teaching load at promoting scholarly activity and there was support for this idea. Teaching load at WFU is high and, although we urge the university to move to a reduced teaching load (from an average 3/2 to 2/2), we assert that a reduction in teaching load does not go as far as continuous leave time during the year at promoting research productivity.

E. Enhance the Clarity of the New Program's Criteria:

1. Rewrite the leave policy in the Faculty Handbook and publish it, the application procedures, and the review criteria on-line in a more accessible location.¹
2. Do away with the practice of awarding a leave for reading or study. A regular leave policy promotes research, an essential part of our job as university teachers and professionals.
3. Ask department chairs to reemphasize the importance of scholarship. Aside from its intrinsic merit, scholarship invigorates teaching. Chairs should encourage faculty to go on leave. Clarify what percentage of faculty time should be devoted to research. Reward merit pay accordingly.
4. Do away with the travel condition and the prohibition against summer employment. Not all faculty need to travel to conduct research, and not all faculty can afford to forgo the pay earned in the summer. Applications from those faculty members may be hampered by the present Faculty Handbook statements prescribing travel and proscribing summer employment.
5. Disseminate to all faculty members the results of the college-wide survey. The data will dispel the numerous misconceptions about the program.
6. Elect the faculty members of the selection committee. They should be elected by the faculty, not appointed by the administration. This will answer those who believe the selection process is unfair to them.

¹ Contained in the responses to the faculty survey we conducted, there is a great deal of supporting data that can be utilized in rewriting the policy and guidelines. The members of this committee would gladly participate in this process.

F. Special Fund to Offset High Expenses Sometimes Associated with a Leave

We recommend that the university create a special fund to supplement the salary of those leave recipients who encounter special circumstances, such as the extremely high cost of living on the West Coast or in many foreign countries, that may hinder their ability to take a leave.

G. Support Summer Research by Allowing Faculty to Use Internal Funds for Summer Stipends

We urge the university to broaden the eligibility criteria for internal research support funds to allow requests for summer salary support. For example, the current Science Fund requires an external proposal and does not have an option of summer support within it. A research-active faculty member could receive salary compensation in order to be free from summer teaching and to carry out research in the summer. This would provide seed money to allow faculty to compete for outside grants more effectively and to use their academic-year leave time most productively. These summer grants would differ from Archie Funds by not mandating travel and by not penalizing applicants for years of service. These summer awards could adjoin the semester- or year-long leaves, or improve the chances of gaining outside funding for subsequent leaves, and would enable faculty to begin projects that could then be completed during subsequent leave time. Other universities use this broader model of allocating summer funds.

H. Implementing the new program outlined above:

Currently, the Reynolds leave program funds about 18 tenured leaves and 6 tenure-track leaves per year, both semester-long at full pay and year-long at half pay. If we assume three-fourths of those leaves are currently semester-long and one-fourth year-long, we estimate about 15 full-year replacement positions leaves are currently utilized ($24 \times .75 = 18$ semester replacements and $24 \times .25 = 6$ year replacements) in the college. In order to provide a year leave every seven years, $1/7$ of the 165 tenured faculty would be the approximate MAXIMUM number on leave at any time. This would be 23 tenure faculty per year, which represents only a 1.5 fold increase in the number of leaves. As there are currently 80 tenure-track faculty, this would amount to 20 semester leaves, or the equivalent of 10 full year replacements, which represents a 2.5 fold increase. Adding together pre-tenure and tenured leaves, this equals 18 additional replacement faculty annually. This is clearly an overestimate, as not all faculty are research-active and not all faculty will apply for leaves, and other faculty will obtain outside funding for leaves.

IV. CONCLUSION

By investing more in a strong leave program, the university will enhance its academic reputation as a community of Teacher-Scholars. Extended periods of time devoted to scholarship yield high impact publications and performances and enhance the learning environment for undergraduate and graduate students. In the humanities, books typically have a greater impact on university reputation than articles. Book publication increases scholars' opportunities for grants and honors. In the sciences, review articles and book chapters are more common. These take more time to write than typical articles but tend to be much more heavily cited than shorter articles. This more extended time spent writing a chapter or review also provides the faculty member with a broad perspective of the research area, making future grant proposals in the area much stronger. Major pieces of scholarship have a correspondingly large and positive impact on the academic reputation of the institution. The Teacher-Scholar ideal that the university has embraced will be strengthened by a more comprehensive leave program.

V. APPENDICES

Appendix I.

Emory University's policy is that all junior faculty who pass their 4th-year pre-tenure review (contract renewal) are awarded a full semester off in their 5th year, and if they obtain a grant can take the full year off. There is also a full semester off at full pay or a year at half pay in the year after tenure, and after every subsequent 6 years (12 semesters) of teaching. The Dean's office makes up the difference between any major grant and the faculty member's salary--and the university continues to pay benefits as long as they administer the grant (i.e., the grant is paid to them, and they pay the faculty member as before--this allows them to track how much money is actually being awarded).

Appendix II.

The following table summarizes the data contained in the 1998-99 RAC report and includes the Emory data as well.

Wake Forest	not specified	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 50% of salary	12-19 (tenured) 2-6 (pre-tenure) (245 faculty)
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Leave Programs at Other Colleges and Universities

Institution	Eligibility	Research period/ Percent Pay	Awards/Year
William and Mary (50-70 applicants)	7 years	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 80% of salary	30
Brandeis ("sabbatical")	6 years	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 50%	no data
Wellesley ("automatic")	6 years	1 year at full pay	35-45 (all faculty?)
Williams ("automatic")	3 years	1 semester at full pay	27 (semester)
	6 years	1 year at 75% of salary	33 (year) (all faculty?)
Amherst ("sabbatic")	3 years	1 semester at 80%	no data
	6 years	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 80% pay	
Vanderbilt (competitive, but few turned down)	4-5 years Humanities and Social Sciences	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 50%	40-45 (12-13.6% of 330 faculty)
	6-7 years Sciences		
Emory ("automatic")	6 years	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 50%*	no data
	Post-tenure	1 semester at full pay or 1 year at 50%	

* In addition, at Emory the Dean's office makes up the difference between any major grant and the faculty member's salary, and the university continues to pay benefits.