

# The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

## Proposal 8-19

(Voting Units: Academic)

### Sabbatical Leave for Continuing Lecturer Track Faculty

#### I. Introduction

Michigan Technological University has been a leader in developing instruction focused faculty Lectureships, as a full and equivalent career track parallel to that of tenured faculty. For both tenured faculty and lecturers there are equivalent systems of promotion and evaluation, clearly stated expectations of research, service, and instruction, and a clear expectation that faculty will engage in active professional development. In recognition of the important role that Lectureships play at Michigan Tech, it is proposed that the opportunity for sabbatical leave be extended to continuing Lecture track faculty.

#### II. Proposal

To further recruitment and retention, to further professional competence, and to promote equity, Lecturer track faculty with a continuing appointment at the rank of Senior Lecturer, Principal Lecturer, or Professor of Practice (see [Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty Handbook, Section 1.5.5, Non-Tenure-Track Academic Rank Definitions](#)) should have access to sabbatical leave in furtherance of career development that is mutually beneficial to both the University and faculty member. The current system of Lectureships was principally created to insure the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty who support and contribute to the academic mission of a department, school, and the University. The rationale for sabbatical leave for Lecturers is the same as that for tenured faculty, in that “the granting of sabbatical leaves of absence is intended for the mutual benefit of the University and the person granted such a leave. Sabbatical leaves may be granted to faculty members in order to provide a period of creative activity for the purpose of *furthering professional competence*” (emphasis added) (Board of Trustees Policies 6.7).

Under this proposal Lecturers with a continuing appointment, i.e. those with the appointment of Senior Lecturer, Principal Lecturer, and Professor of Practice may be eligible to apply for sabbatical leave. Lecturers applying for leave would be subject to the same eligibility requirements, review process, and conditions of leave, as currently outlined for tenured faculty applicants. Therefore, only Lecturers with continuing appointments who can provide a clear and compelling rationale for leave, i.e. clear objectives related to scholarly work and/or professional development, will be qualified to submit a Sabbatical Leave application. For this reason, Lecturers in some departments and schools across the University may not qualify for sabbatical leave based on the requirements and duties for Lecturers established within those academic units, and as outlined in individual letters of appointment. In any case, as per the existing Sabbatical Leave policy for Tenured Faculty, “[t]he granting of such leave will in no case be automatic, and each request for sabbatical leave will be judged on its own merits” ([Academic Affairs, Sabbatical Leave](#)

[of Absence](#)).

### **III. Rationale and Benefits for Sabbatical Leave for Lecturers**

The University benefits from the critical work Lecture track faculty do in terms of teaching load, student advising, curriculum development, department, college, and University service, and scholarly research; while the faculty who secure these continuing appointments benefit from secure employment, opportunities for professional advancement, and the same career opportunities and advantages that all faculty benefit from as members of the University community. The instrumental and intrinsic value of retaining and advancing Lecturers – as opposed to the use of temporary adjunct faculty – is highly beneficial to individual faculty, academic departments, and the overall mission of the University.

At the Provost’s luncheon for Lecturers on November 7, 2017 a series of questions were discussed by attendees in small groups. As the document summarizing these discussions demonstrates – available from the Provost’s Office – there is a strong desire for sabbatical leave on the part of Lecturers across departments and colleges at the University. The reasons stated for this change range from a desire to undertake focused research that cannot be done when teaching upwards of 1000+ student credit hours a term across multiple sections of distinct courses, to being able to complete scholarship and professional development that will allow reappointment and promotion under the guidelines outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

[The Faculty Handbook, Section 1.5 Faculty Status Definitions](#) lists the development of new courses, the development of teaching methods and procedures, and the conducting of research, along with contributions to the University’s broader national and/or international impact, as some of the expectations associated with the rank of Senior and Principal Lecturers and Professors of Practice. The Fulfilment of these expectations represents professional competence beneficial to the University, and from the perspective of the Lecturer, demonstrated evidence of this competence is used in the evaluation process for reappointment and promotion. It stands to reason then that the stated rationale for sabbatical leave, namely “to provide a period of creative activity for the purpose of furthering professional competence”, as it might apply to Lecturers with continuing appointments, is also to the “mutual benefit of the University and the person granted such leave” ([Academic Affairs, Sabbatical Leave of Absence](#)).

### **IV. Concluding Remarks**

Michigan Tech has established, in the form of continuing Lectureships, a defined, institutional commitment to recruiting and retaining highly qualified individuals to supplement and further the academic mission of the University. In creating this parallel tract to tenured faculty lines, the University has acknowledged the critical role that Lecturers play in the advancement of our institutional goals. In recognition of this role, the University has established criteria and expectations for the continued curricular, scholarly, and professional contributions of these faculty members. It is only fitting then that the University also provide an equal opportunity for those

Lecturers, whose appointments are dependent upon said expectations and criteria, to be afforded the ability to apply and be evaluated for Sabbatical Leave.