

# The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

## Proposal 4-10

(Voting Units: Academic and Staff)

### "Entrepreneurial Leave Proposal"

#### Background/Rationale:

Michigan Technological University's Strategic Plan states that MTU should "promote economic and social development and innovation in Michigan the nation, and the world" (3.2). In order to accomplish this, we should "encourage and support technology transfer and start-up businesses emerging from faculty, staff, and student expertise and scholarly activity."

Faculty and staff have found our leave policy structured in ways that hamper their ability to take advantage of opportunities for entrepreneurial leadership. Currently, our professional leave policy in the faculty handbook (chapter 4.2, see appendix) requires professional leave to be full time. Some departments and units would like the flexibility to pursue opportunities requiring only part-time leaves. By comparison, the Staff Handbook includes language that permits leave for professional development (Section 3.6), but the language does not encourage entrepreneurial activities. Staff have created valued companies like GSE, Signature, ThermoAnalytics, etc.

More flexible leave policies should allow faculty and staff *part-time* leave and will allow individuals and units to pursue certain professional development, service, research, and entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurial activities, such as commercializing university intellectual property, clearly provides institutional benefit and meets the university's mission to enhance economic development in the state and region.

Provost Seel explained that this is a basic housekeeping issue, since individual faculty and chairs are already doing this using various release time arrangements on a case-by-case and unit-by-unit basis. He also said that the administrative team's preferred option would be to highlight MTU's entrepreneurial spirit by creating a special category of leave for entrepreneurial activities.

The Academic Policy Committee saw value in giving this flexibility to individual departments as a way to reinforce existing practices with release time. There was less consensus about privileging entrepreneurship over other types of professional development or service. Many committee members saw no reason why part-time leaves should be extended for entrepreneurial activities, for example, but not sponsored research opportunities or professional service to professional organizations. These committee members felt that the current leave policy should be modified to include entrepreneurship activities. That text is included for reference in Appendix B.

#### **Proposal:**

It is therefore proposed to either create an Entrepreneurial Leave Policy for the Faculty Handbook. It is further recommended that the University's Administrative Team direct staff to revise the Staff Handbook to include appropriate language.

## **Recommended text:**

### **4.2.x Entrepreneurial Leave**

**Leaves of absence not to exceed one year may be granted to University employees to pursue entrepreneurial activities. Such leaves may be full or part-time and are without pay. Employees must meet normal university standards for benefit eligibility to retain benefits while on entrepreneurial leave. These leaves must have the recommendation of the Department Chair and approval of the Dean, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the President, with notification to Human Resources. Renewals may be granted under special circumstances.**

It is further recommended that the senate adopt updated language for the current leave policy (Faculty Handbook, 4.2 Professional Leave) by striking line last line that refers to an outdated Board of Control policy: ~~"(Board of Control Policy 5.6.1)"~~

#### **Appendix A: Current Language on Leave Policy**

##### **Faculty Handbook, 4.2 Professional Leave**

Leaves of absence not to exceed one year may be granted to regular University employees, to pursue graduate study, to gain professional experience in industry, to engage in research sponsored by an agency other than the University or for other purposes beneficial to the University and to the professional stature of the individual. These leaves of absence are without pay and must have the recommendation of the department chair and approval of the dean, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President, with notification to Human Resources. Renewals may be granted under special circumstances. (Board of Control Policy 5.6.1)

(For additional information regarding leaves of absence see Section 6.2, "Leaves/Absences.")

##### **Staff Handbook, 3.6: Professional Development Leave**

A Professional Development Leave may be granted to regular, full-time, exempt, non-faculty, non-represented staff who are more than one echelon below a Vice President. The leave is not to exceed one year, and may be granted to eligible employees for the purpose of pursuing graduate study, maintaining professional expertise, engaging in research sponsored by an agency other than the University, or for other purposes beneficial to the University and to the professional stature of the individual. The leave is intended for employees with at least three years of continuous employment at Michigan Tech. There should be at least one year between Professional Development Leaves. The leave provides for benefits to continue at no additional cost to the person on leave. Staff may not accept full-time employment outside the employment proposed in the leave application. Employees agree to return to Michigan Tech upon completion of the leave for a period equal to the length of the leave.

For more information or to obtain an application for Professional Development Leave, contact the Benefits Office in Human Resources.

#### **Appendix B:**

**Current Leave Policy, modified to include Entrepreneurial Leave (changes in bold italic print, strikethrough text removed):**

## 4.2 Professional/Entrepreneurial Leave

Leaves of absence not to exceed one year may be granted to regular University employees, to pursue graduate study, to gain professional experience in industry, to engage in research sponsored by an agency other than the University, **pursue entrepreneurial activities** or for other purposes beneficial to the University and to the professional stature of the individual. These leaves of absence **may be full or part time and** are without pay and must have the recommendation of the department chair and approval of the dean, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President, with notification to Human Resources. Renewals may be granted under special circumstances. (~~Board of Control Policy 5.6.1~~)

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