

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 8-18

Sabbatical Leave for Lecturer Track Faculty

Carl Blair, Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences

Sam Sweitz, Associate Professor and Senator, Department of Social Sciences

Background: Michigan Technological University has been a leader in developing instruction focused faculty Lectureships, as a full and equivalent career track to the research focused tenured faculty track. 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.

Current Situation: Currently only tenured faculty are eligible for sabbatical leave ([Board of Trustee Policies, Section 6.7](#)).

Desired Change: To promote equity, Lecturer track faculty with a continuing appointment at the rank of Senior Lecturer, Principle Lecturer, or Professor of Practice (see [Non-Tenure-Track Instructor and Lecturer Appointments](#)) should have access to sabbatical leave.

Benefits to the University: The same as for tenured faculty, in that “[t]he 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). 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. The University benefits from the critical work these 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 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.

Rationale for Extending Sabbatical Leave to Continuing Lecturers: The University [Academic Personnel Standard Practice Guide](#) 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 Principle 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.”

Demonstration of Need: At the Provost’s luncheon for Lecturers on November 7, a series of questions were discussed by attendees in small groups. As the Google document summarizing these discussions – available from the Provost’s Office – demonstrates, 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 sufficient scholarship and professional development that will allow reappointment and promotion under the guidelines outlined in the [Academic Personnel Standard Practice Guide](#).

Costs: Similar to calculations and costs associated with tenure-track sabbatical leave.

Peer Institutions: Research needs to be done to better understand how this issue is dealt with at other state institutions and among our benchmark institutions.