

SCS Guidelines on Leaves of Absence and Sabbaticals

February, 2010

This guideline is intended to supplement the Carnegie Mellon faculty policy on professional faculty leaves (<http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/FacLeaves.html>). It is not intended to create new policies, but instead to clarify the conditions under which a leave may be granted for SCS faculty members. University documents describe the policies for tenure-track faculty, and so these guidelines apply only to such faculty.

The university policies describe two categories of professional leaves:

- Unsupported. All funding for the leave is provided by outside sources.
- Supported. The university provides at least partial support. These are commonly referred to as “sabbaticals,” although that word does not appear in any CMU policy document. Typically, the university provides at most full-time support for one semester or half-time support for two semesters.

In general, requests for unsupported leaves of absence will be granted routinely. Some issues that will be considered include:

- To what extent does the leave provide an opportunity for professional development?
- How long has it been since the last leave? (The university policy states these will normally only be granted once in four years.)
- Are there satisfactory arrangements for covering the courses normally taught by the faculty member, for the advising of students, and for the management of ongoing research contracts?

Gaining approval for a supported leave is not routine. Unlike many other universities, Carnegie Mellon does not view sabbaticals as entitlements, and there are no general university funds budgeted to support them. However, we recognize that faculty can and should engage in such activities. If the support comes from departmental or school-level funds, then it is important to get the approval of the department head and the dean before making any commitments to a host organization. Some issues that will be considered include:

- To what extent does the leave provide an opportunity for professional development?
- How long has it been since the last leave? (The university policy states that supported leaves will only be granted once for every six years of university service.)
- Are there satisfactory arrangements for covering the courses normally taught by the faculty member, for the advising of students, and for the management of ongoing research contracts?
- Are there sufficient funds to cover the cost of this leave?
- Should Carnegie Mellon really be expected to pay for this activity?

- If the leave is to an academic institution, then a supported leave is the normal practice. Still, we encourage faculty to get support from the host institution and from outside sources (e.g., Fulbright, Guggenheim) as much as possible.
- If the leave is to a major company (Google, IBM, Microsoft, etc.), we would normally expect the company to pay the full cost of the leave. This could be done by hiring the faculty member as an employee (and therefore this would be an unsupported leave), or by providing a grant to Carnegie Mellon to cover the full cost (salary + benefits).
- If the leave is to a government organization, then we would expect the government to cover the full cost of the faculty member via an IPA or similar arrangement.
- If the leave is to a smaller, but established company (e.g., a startup company that has received funding), then we would expect the faculty member to take an unsupported leave. (Most likely, this would be the only way to deal with IP issues.)
- If the leave is for the purpose of starting a company, and little or no external funding has been obtained, then a supported leave might be considered. We would then expect the faculty member to agree to an IP and equity arrangement, based on the university policy on spinoff companies, with additional equity going to SCS that is incremental to that provided to the university.

It is our understanding that, when on a university-supported leave, the faculty member is still considered to be an employee of the university and subject to its IP provisions. You should take this into consideration before you accept such support and before you sign any kind of IP agreement with an outside company or institution.

Please contact your department head or the dean for any further clarifications.