

Empowering Instructional Academic Staff to Advance Education

June 12, 2008

In the summer of 2007, ASEC requested CEBC to investigate an academic staff sabbatical policy for the UW-Madison. This report provides background information on faculty sabbaticals and selected sabbatical programs at other universities.

In the process of studying academic staff sabbaticals, the motivating problem that a sabbatical policy would address was found to be that instructional academic staff do not have time for course development and enhancement. This makes it very difficult for academic staff to contribute to meeting the UW's strategic objective of advancing education.

Sabbaticals provide one approach to addressing that problem, but they would be highly constrained by tight university budgets. Based on the need for a policy to address the problem and the budget constraints on the university as a whole, the CEBC approved the following recommendation to ASEC:

Recommendation to ASEC

CEBC recommends that ASEC take appropriate steps to advocate for the establishment of a policy at the UW-Madison that colleges, schools and departments pursue all opportunities for allowing a temporary reassignment of duties for instructional academic staff to enable them sufficient time for instruction enhancement, course and curriculum development, or course redesign. This policy will empower instructional academic staff to reach the UW-Madison's strategic objective of advancing education.

Issues and Options

The UW-Madison relies heavily on academic staff to meet student and parent expectations for a quality educational experience, and, over the last five years, are increasingly doing so vis-à-vis faculty instructors. In October 2007, there were 1500 FTE instructional academic staff and 2033 faculty members on campus.¹ Since 2000, the FTE instructional academic staff and faculty have risen by 13% and 1.4% respectively. As shown in Table 1, academic staff were used in all categories of classes. In terms of sections taught per instructor, academic staff are more intensively used than faculty principally due to their more extensive use in undergraduate education.²

¹ Academic Planning & Analysis, *2007-2008 Data Digest*, p. 29.

² *Ibid*, p. 42.

Table 1: Fall 2007 Semester Course Sections, by Section Type and Instructor Category

| Section Type | Faculty | Academic Staff | Graduate Asst. |
|--------------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| Lecture | 1657 | 967 | 504 |
| Discussion | 135 | 168 | 2420 |
| Laboratory | 288 | 493 | 632 |
| Seminar | 427 | 136 | 4 |
| Field | 140 | 469 | 27 |
| Conference | 3023 | 358 | 6 |

Source: Academic Planning & Analysis, 2007-2008 *Data Digest*, p. 45.

Figure 1 shows that in recent years, academic staff are increasing their contribution relative to faculty in UW-Madison’s classroom instruction.

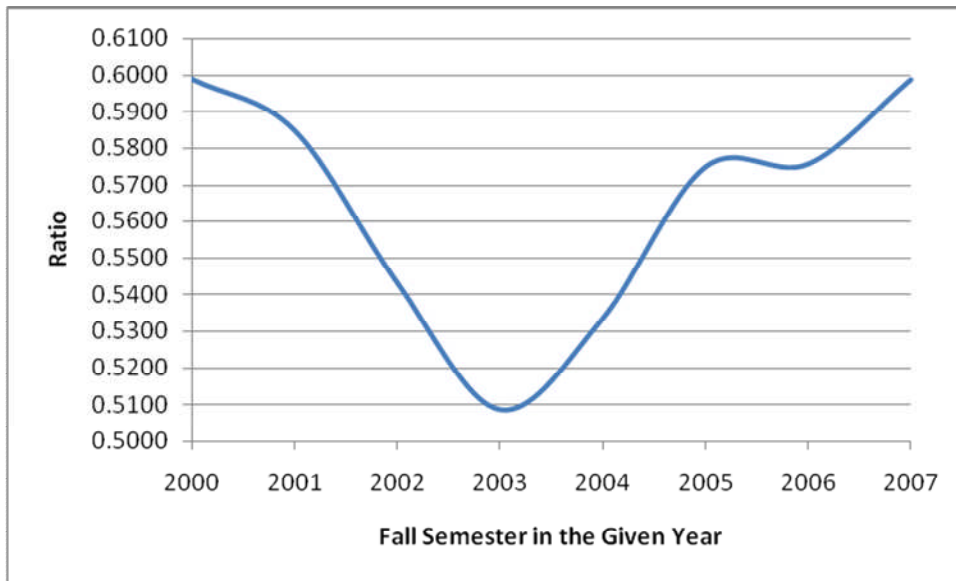


Figure 1: Ratio of Academic Staff to Faculty Lecture Sections Taught in the Fall Semester in the Given Year

(Source: Academic Planning & Analysis, 2007-2008 *Data Digest*, p. 45)

In conversations with instructional academic staff, the CEBC has become aware of the major challenge that long-term instructional academic staff have in keeping their courses up-to-date and technologically current. The courses academic staff teach are critical elements of academic degree programs. The courses are often in the core of the curriculum. Capstone and other “practice” classes, such as in product design or professional services, come with the expectation that these classes will help students transition seamlessly into a post-graduation job environment with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Not only do students expect to get the knowledge and skills necessary for post-graduation jobs, they expect instructors to use the best pedagogical techniques and instructional technology. CEBC has learned from senior instructional staff that it is very difficult to be the best teacher possible for the students due to teaching and administrative loads. Course development and enhancement must either be done on the instructor's own free time, or not done at all. This is not a "it would be nice if..." situation; it is a real detriment to excellence in instruction on this campus.

The policy question is how to give instructional academic staff the release time they need from normal responsibilities to work on instruction enhancement, course and curriculum development, or course redesign. Faculty are able to get that release time through paid sabbaticals. Other institutions around the country provide programs with release time for academic staff; some of them are described in this report. These programs are called various names such as sabbaticals, paid leave of absence, study leaves, professional development leave and special project leave.

The UW-Madison does not offer academic staff sabbaticals. It appears that it would take a legislative change followed by a Board of Regents policy statement to get staff sabbaticals in the same way that the faculty sabbatical program has been established. However, since budget constraints are severe, senior UW-Madison administrators do not believe that there would be funds for a university program to provide paid sabbaticals for academic staff.

It is the CEBC's view that there are alternatives to paid sabbaticals that would still address the problem of giving release time to instructional academic staff. Departments may be able to rearrange their budgets and teaching schedules to provide time away from teaching to academic staff members through release time or a temporary reassignment of duties.

How a department (or instructional unit) is able to provide a temporary reassignment of duties will be dependent entirely on what arrangements the department or instructional unit can make given its particular situation. The issue is how to provide the incentive or motivation for department heads to actually take the initiative to help their academic staff. Clearly taking that initiative will require changes such as temporary reduced course offerings, rescheduling of courses, extra teaching load for someone, and perhaps even financial resources.

What is needed is a campus-wide policy and program that identifies ownership of the problem (e.g., department or unit heads and deans), and provides the justification for helping instructional academic staff the incentives to do so. To find the right policy and program will take a collaborative effort among faculty, staff and administrators. We are recommending that ASEC take the lead in that collaborative effort on behalf of instructional staff and their students.

Background on Sabbaticals

Faculty Sabbatical Program

The faculty sabbatical program originates from state statutes (Chapter 36, University System, Section 11 on the powers and duties of the Board of Regents) and is administered UW-System-wide, with each campus developing its own guidelines based on the Board of Regents' Guidelines in Academic Planning Statement #3.3 (ACPS 3.3): <http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/acps/acps3-3.pdf>. Wisconsin Statute 36.11(17) states:

(17) SABBATICAL LEAVE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL FACULTY. The board may grant sabbatical leave of up to one year to instructional faculty, in order to recognize and enhance teaching efforts and excellence, under rules and procedures adopted by the board, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) Sabbatical leave may be granted only to those faculty members who have completed 6 or more years, or the equivalent, of full-time instructional service in the system.
- (b) Only one sabbatical leave may be granted for each 6 years of full-time instructional service in the system with preference given to those who have been making significant contributions to teaching and have not had a leave of absence except under s. 103.10, regardless of source of funding, in the previous 4 years.
- (c) Sabbatical leave shall be granted for the purposes of enhancing teaching, course and curriculum development or conducting research or any other scholarly activities related to instructional programs within the field of expertise of the faculty member taking such leave.
- (d) Sabbatical leave shall be approved by appropriate faculty and administrative committees.
- (e) A faculty member shall receive compensation while on sabbatical leave, but such compensation, when combined with outside compensation earned while on leave, shall not exceed the full compensation normally received from the system.
- (f) The faculty member taking a sabbatical leave shall agree to return to the institution from which leave was granted for at least one year after the termination of the sabbatical or return any compensation received from the system during the sabbatical.
- (g) Funding for the sabbatical leave program shall be provided from the existing general operations appropriation for the system.

ACPS #3 gives system policies for a “system-wide program of faculty development and renewal.” ACPS #3.1 provides guidelines for institutional development and implementation of a comprehensive program of faculty development and renewal. ACPS #3.2 establishes a program facilitating intra-system faculty transfer and exchange. ACPS #3.3 on faculty sabbaticals was first approved in May 1977. The last revision was in the Summer of 2003.

There are highlights of ACPS 3.3:

1. Purpose: The purpose of the faculty sabbatical program is to enable recipients to be engaged in intensive study in order to become more effective teachers and scholars and to enhance their services to the University. This privilege should be granted to faculty members on the merit of their past academic contributions.
2. Two types of sabbaticals
 - A faculty member may take a sabbatical leave for an academic year and receive from the institution financial support at any level up to sixty-five percent of his/her full compensation for that period, in accordance with institutional policies.
 - A faculty member may take a sabbatical leave for one semester of the academic year and receive from the institution financial support at any level up to a maximum of his/her full compensation for that period.
3. Selected additional policy items
 - In the administration of faculty sabbaticals, the UW System will report earnings, creditable service, and contributions to the Wisconsin Retirement System at the full-time rate, based on the rate of pay in effect immediately prior to the beginning of the sabbatical. In addition, leave benefits will continue to accrue at the rate in effect immediately prior to the sabbatical.
 - A faculty member may receive and is encouraged to seek supplementary grants or other awards while on sabbatical leave, but such compensation, when combined with the amount of institutional compensation, shall not exceed the full compensation normally received from his/her institution for that period.
 - A faculty member must specify all grants or other awards applied for or to be received during the leave in his/her application for the sabbatical program.
 - Each institution will establish the specific application requirements and selection procedures for the faculty sabbatical program in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes 36.11(17). The selection procedures should provide joint faculty and administrative review and approval, should ensure faculty proposal selection under nondiscriminatory principles, should certify that the quality of program offerings will not be reduced below acceptable standards or that delay or interference with necessary departmental and university functions will not be occasioned by the absence of those faculty on sabbatical leave, and should take into consideration the institution's capacity to fiscally support the sabbatical program.
 - The formal call for faculty sabbatical proposals for the academic year 18 months hence will be announced by the chancellors in March of each year. Institutional selections for the faculty sabbatical program should be communicated in writing by the chancellors to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by November 15 of each year.

- Formal announcement of those faculty members receiving sabbatical awards will be made annually at the December meeting of the Board of Regents.

Below is a link to the web site describing the UW-Madison faculty sabbatical leave program, for which there is a call for applications each year.

<http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/grants/facsabblyprog.html>

Note that Steve Lund administers the sabbatical program.

The UW-Madison's stated purpose for faculty sabbaticals is stated as:

To enable faculty members to engage in intensive study in order to become more effective teachers and scholars and to enhance their services to the University. Sabbatical leave may be granted for the purpose of enhancing teaching, course and curriculum development, or conducting research or any other scholarly activities related to **instructional** programs within the field of expertise of the faculty member.

The UW-Madison eligibility for the sabbatical is described as:

The faculty member must be an instructor, assistant professor, associate professor or professor in any UW-Madison school/college or department; and have completed six or more years of full-time instructional service, or the equivalent, at the University of Wisconsin (excluding leaves of absence, regardless of funding source), and not have taken a sabbatical in the UW System during those six years.

Preference shall be given to those making significant contributions to **teaching** and those who have not had a leave of absence, regardless of funding source, during the prior four years.

The policy clarifies that support for the faculty sabbatical comes from the school, college, or department. In general, the UW-Madison's sabbatical leave policy complies with the Wisconsin Statutes and the relevant Board of Regents' policy.

Faculty Use of Sabbaticals

Table 2 summarizes faculty use of sabbaticals since 2001. Over the last three years, the average number of faculty taking sabbaticals was 108. There are approximately 2,200 faculty, although only tenured faculty are eligible, so that brings it down to about 1,700 eligible. As a result, the rate of use of sabbaticals is 6.4% per year. The direct cost of the salaries paid under the faculty sabbatical program was a little over four million dollars last year paid out of 101 funds.

Table 2: Use of Sabbaticals by UW-Madison Faculty

| YEAR | AWARDED | CANCELLED | TOTAL |
|---------|---------|-----------|-------|
| 2001-02 | 90 | 6 | 84 |
| 2002-03 | 94 | 5 | 89 |
| 2003-04 | 84 | 6 | 78 |
| 2004-05 | 112 | 15 | 97 |
| 2005-06 | 110 | 4 | 106 |
| 2006-07 | 103 | 11 | *92 |
| 2007-08 | 132 | 7 | 125 |
| 2008-09 | 141 | | |

Staff

Colleen McCabe among others have said that the UW-Madison does not offer academic staff sabbaticals, although it has been discussed in the past. It appears that it would take a legislative change followed by a Board of Regents policy statement to get staff sabbaticals in the same way that the faculty program is set-up.

Staff Programs at Other Universities

Here are examples of programs offered to academic staff at other universities – most of which are sabbatical programs. This research was conducted using a Google Search. Research is still needed on other programs to give instructional staff time to advance for course development. Additional research on these selected programs could also be conducted to get program details.

University of Michigan

Univ. of Michigan gives "Regular Instructional Staff, Primary Research Staff, Primary Librarians, and Primary Curatorial Staff" "Scholarly Activity Leaves" to permit acceptance of temporary appointments at other institutions or prestigious fellowships. Here is a link to the policy: <http://spg.umich.edu/pdf/201.30-4.pdf>.

Univ. of Kansas

"Sabbatical leaves are authorized for members of the unclassified academic staff who hold full-time line appointments supported by state funds under the terms of the policy of the University with regard to sabbatical leaves and governed by regulations of the Board of Regents." This policy is described in the Univ. of Kansas' Handbook for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff available at <http://www2.kumc.edu/aa/fa/pdf/Handbook.pdf>.

Indiana University

Indiana University has a program of sabbatical leaves for faculty members and librarians described at <http://www.indiana.edu/~deanfac/acadguid/f.html#rlsp1>.

Penn State University

At Penn State, senior scientists, senior research associates and research associates are eligible for sabbaticals. Details can be found at <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/OHR/hr17.html%20>.

Arkansas State University

The Arkansas State Senate has a position paper on professional sabbatical leave at <http://staffsenate.astate.edu/>. It appears to have been adopted.

University of Massachusetts

At the Univ. of Massachusetts, staff at the level of instructor or above are eligible for sabbatical leave for "... purpose of the sabbatical leave is to provide uninterrupted opportunity at regular intervals to members of the professional staff for teaching improvement, writing, research, professional improvement, scholarly pursuits, or to gain new information and experience in order to remain current in one's field." The policy is described at <http://www.umb.edu/administration/vcaap/policies/sabbatical.html>.

Montana State University System

Montana State Univ. offers sabbaticals to staff members subject to budget limitations. Details are at http://www2.montana.edu/policy/faculty_handbook/fh1200.html#1220.

Northern Illinois University

Supportive professional staff members may apply for sabbaticals at NIU. More information is at <http://www.niu.edu/provost/policies/appm/II18.shtml#sabbatic>.

Estimated Cost of a Academic Staff Sabbatical Program

To get some sense of the possible scale and cost of an academic staff program, it is necessary to specify the eligibility criteria. For instance, it might be assumed that a limited staff sabbatical program would only be for staff with a title that includes Lecturer, Faculty Associate or Faculty Assistant, and that title is not qualified by the word "Assistant". At the UW-Madison, there are about 800 - 1000 staff that fit that description. Assuming a 6.4% annual participation, would result in about 50 staff receiving sabbaticals per year. Assuming (1) \$50,000 as the average salary (excluding benefits); (2) 65% coverage of that salary while an academic staff member is on sabbatical; and (3) sabbatical lasts 1/3 of the year or 4 month, then the estimated salary cost of an academic staff sabbatical program would be about one-half of a million dollars.