

**Arkansas State University Staff Senate  
Position Paper on Professional Sabbatical Leave**

**REVISED**

**Summary:** The Staff Senate recommends the University adopt a compensated leave policy for non-faculty staff members similar in intent and design to the current policy governing faculty compensated leave.

**Background:** Universities have granted sabbatical leave to faculty members since the late 19th century. In the 1970's and 80's corporations began to experiment with sabbatical programs as a means of attracting and retaining employees and boosting productivity. In recent years organizations such as Du Pont, L.L. Bean, Nike, Ralston Purina, Wells Fargo, IBM, and Xerox have established such programs. According to the Society for Human Resource Management in 1998 20% of U.S. companies offered some type of sabbatical leave. Following this trend universities including Pennsylvania State University, the University of California, Seattle Pacific University and Boise State University have begun to extend sabbatical leave privileges to their non-faculty staff.

The Staff Senate recommends the attached policy as a mechanism for establishing such a program at Arkansas State University. The Senate notes the increasing professionalism of the University's staff and views this policy as an incentive for staff members to continue to develop their professional competencies and hence their value to ASU. Historically, informal arrangements have allowed staff members in certain circumstances to take compensated leave for professional activities. The Senate endorses this policy as a means of formalizing these arrangements and extending their availability to all staff members.

**Examples:** The circumstances in which staff members might seek compensated leave under this policy are a varied as the types of non-faculty positions we have on our campus. The underlying requirements will be a demonstrable enhancement of the staff member's professional capabilities. Employees from offices across campus might enroll in doctoral programs either at ASU or other universities and request leave under this policy to conduct research for their dissertation. An accountant in the controller's office might request leave under this program to allow her to prepare for the CPA exam. Or a carpenter in the physical plant might seek leave under this policy to allow him to serve on a mission project that will also enhance his ability to do his work at the University.

**Funding:** This policy does not contemplate a funding mechanism for non-faculty sabbatical leave. The policy assumes that the duties and responsibilities of staff members approved for sabbatical leave will be temporarily re-assigned or absorbed by others within their office or department. In situations where funding issues arise, the policy assumes they will be resolved internally before the application for sabbatical leave is forwarded to the Staff Leave Committee for consideration

**Conclusion:** The Staff Senate recommends this policy as a means of encouraging non-faculty staff members to engage in professional activities that may be outside the traditional scope of their duties but nonetheless enhance their capabilities and competencies and hence their value to Arkansas State University. Questions or comments on this policy may be directed to Carol Barnhill, ASU Staff Senate President or Russ Hannah, Chair, Staff Senate Professional Sabbatical Leave Committee.

## **Compensated Staff Leave**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the compensated leave program is to provide opportunities for eligible staff members to engage in professional activities that enhance their capabilities at Arkansas State University while continuing to receive compensation. Such activities, in turn also enhance the staff members' service to the university. In accordance with this purpose compensated leave may be granted for public service, research, or other professional activities, graduate study leading to advanced degrees, or further study to upgrade specific competencies.

**Eligibility:** Staff members may apply for compensated leave under the following options. When approved, compensated leave will be granted on the basis of the contracted salary for the year during which the leave is in effect and in compliance with the terms of the options used:

- OPTION I:** After six years of continuous service, staff members may be approved for six months of compensated leave for research, public service, or other professional activities deemed of value to the university's mission. Compensation shall be calculated at the rate of 10 percent for each year of service to the university not to exceed 50 percent of contracted salary.
- OPTION II:** After six years of continuous service, staff members who have been accepted into an accredited graduate program compatible with the mission of the university, may be granted an academic year's leave of absence for the purpose of graduate study. Compensation shall be at the rate of 10 percent for each year of service to Arkansas State University, not to exceed 50 percent of the contracted salary.
- OPTION III:** At the recommendation of the Staff Leave Committee and the discretion of the university's president, compensated leave at full salary may be granted to staff members for professional activities deemed of exceptional value to the university's mission.

**Staff Leave Committee:** The University's president shall establish and appoint a Staff Leave Committee in accordance with the university's principles of shared governance. The Committee shall be charged with developing specific processes for administering this policy.

**Application for Leave:** Detailed plans for the period of the leave shall be submitted to the Staff Leave Committee for review and approval. A letter of support from the appropriate university vice president or other senior administrator must accompany the application. After screening the applications, the Committee will submit the plans recommended for approval to the university president for final approval.

**Notification of Approval/Disapproval of Request for Leave:** The chair of the Staff Leave Committee will advise in writing the staff member who requested leave concerning the action taken and the reason for approval of denial of the leave. Appeal of the committee's recommendation may be made to the university's president.

**Obligation to Return:** The individual granted a compensated leave is obligated to return to the university for at least one full year. Should the individual fail to meet this obligation, the individual shall repay all compensation received during the leave.

**Obligation to Report Upon Return:** Individuals granted compensated leave shall file with the Office of Human Resources and the Committee a report on their activities while on leave.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**ACTION ITEM:** Arkansas State University - Jonesboro requests authority to establish a Compensated Staff Leave Policy.

**ISSUE:** Arkansas State University employs a number of professional-non faculty employees who could significantly benefit from a compensated leave program.

**BACKGROUND:**

The University has attempted over the years to afford, when feasible, staff employees the same opportunities as faculty. Faculty has had access to a compensated leave program for a number of years.

Such a leave program would provide opportunities for eligible staff members with at least six years of continuous service to ASU to engage in professional actions that enhance their capabilities at Arkansas State University such as the following:

- research, public service, or other professional activities in support of the university's mission
- advanced degree completion in a discipline important to the university
- other activities determined to be of exceptional value to the university's mission

The employee would apply for such leave through his or her supervisor. The respective vice president would be required to provide a letter of support before the request would be considered further and send it to a Staff Leave Committee for ultimate recommendation to the university president. The President's approval would be the final authority to approve the leave and establish any conditions of such a leave.

Graduate degree completion approval would be limited in salary eligibility as follows:


- the employee would be eligible to receive 10% of his or her annual pay for each year of service to ASU
- the maximum pay allowable would be 50% of the existing salary level

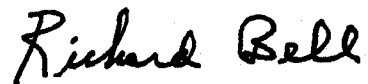
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ASU wishes to provide similar benefits to all its employees. Toward that end, ASU provided equal health care benefits to all its employees in 1989 and provided tax sheltered annuities to all its employees in 1995. This benefit would provide similar opportunities to both faculty and staff for professional development under a compensated leave program.

RECOMMENDATION/RESOLUTION:

Whereas Arkansas State University continues to provide similar opportunities for all its employees. Be it resolved that effective January 1, 2002, staff employees who have six continuous years of service may be eligible for one of the three options for compensated leave.

  
Mr. John Paul Hammerschmidt, Secretary

  
Mr. Richard Bell, Chair