

Occasionally Asked Questions

Sabbatical and early leave program

- Wellesley College requires faculty members to make a “strenuous effort” to secure grant support for their sabbatical projects in order to qualify for a fully paid (Plan B) leave. In practice, what does this mean?

Faculty members applying for Plan B leave should ordinarily make at least three timely and well supported grant applications. Whenever possible, the grants applied for should include salary offset.
- Does the funding I am applying for need to cover the entire period of my sabbatical?

No, as long as it covers a portion of the leave period, a grant application can be counted as one of the three that constitute a strenuous effort.
- Can grants that cover the leave period but are not put together specifically for this leave application count? For example, can you count an NSF grant application made a year ago? 6 months ago?

As long as some part of the grant applied for covers the period of the leave, it can count as one of the three required applications. If a faculty member eligible for leave in the future is making a current application for a major grant that will apply to the sabbatical period coming up, it will streamline the approval process if that faculty member informs the CFA at the time the grant application is submitted.
- How does the College apportion summer salary included in a sabbatical (i.e. what amount, if any, does the College take)?

The faculty member can keep the summer salary if the grant pays overhead.
- What if a funding agency offers summer salary only – can that grant be counted as one of the required three? And in such a case is the summer salary used as salary offset?

Yes, a grant that offers only summer salary can be counted as one of the three, and the faculty member is still permitted to keep the salary as long as the grant pays overhead.
- Does the faculty member who obtains an outside grant accrue any benefit from his or her success at gaining funding, or does the College always sweep the entire grant as salary offset?

Any funds appropriate for use as salary offset obtained by faculty members as a result of their applications for outside funding under Plan B will be used by the College as salary offset. However, faculty members who are awarded grants or fellowships providing salary offset of \$6,000 or more are given research accounts by the College -- \$1,500 for salary offset less than or equal to \$15,000; \$2,500 for salary offset greater than \$15,000 -- to be used during the year of the leave.
- If I miss the deadline for a major funding opportunity, can my sabbatical application still be successful?

Yes, provided that you find an alternative source that provides salary support and still present the three required applications, your sabbatical application will be eligible for a Plan B leave.

- What if none of the three grants for which I am applying provide salary support and I could have applied for a salary-supported grant?
Wellesley's generous sabbatical program relies on the willingness of faculty to make a strenuous effort to obtain salary offset and then to share that offset with the College. If a faculty member is eligible for a salary-supported grant but chooses, for whatever reason, to apply only for grants that do not offer salary offset, that fact may be held against the applicant for a Plan B leave.
- Can I exclude certain funding opportunities on philosophical or religious grounds?
Yes, but only if you can find three other funding sources that provide salary support for which you do feel comfortable applying.
- One of my grants has an application deadline in the summer before my sabbatical begins. What is the latest deadline possible to allow a grant application to count toward my leave?
As long as the grant applied for provides support for some part of the period of your leave, that grant can count as one of your three. But all applications must be submitted before June 1 of the academic year in which the leave will commence, if the leave begins in the fall, or before December 1, if the leave begins in the spring. If the granting agency's own internal deadline is later than this date, you must submit an early application before the relevant deadline directly to the Provost's Office. The College cannot pay sabbatical salary unless all three required grant applications have been filed in the Provost's Office by these deadlines, even if the sabbatical has been provisionally approved by the CFA.
- My discipline is a collaborative one, and my grant applications are the result of work done by a team and are being filed jointly. Are there specific requirements for such applications?
The CFA, which approves sabbatical applications, understands that collaboration is the norm in many disciplines. Jointly filed applications, provided they meet all other requirements of the College's sabbatical program, are welcome. Please be very clear, however, in distinguishing your own contribution to the expected outcome of the grant when you make your application, and provide full information about the identities of your collaborators. The expectation is that the grant, if awarded, would result in salary support for each Wellesley College applicant.
- My field is not one in which salary support is ordinarily part of grant awards. How can I meet the requirements of a fully paid leave?
If, after consulting with the Office of Sponsored Research, you confirm that you are not eligible for three salary-supported grants, you may apply for a fully paid sabbatical leave by including grants that do not offer salary offset. The Director of the Office of Sponsored Research should send the CFA a letter verifying that such a conversation has taken place and that your strenuous search has not produced the required three salary-supported grant possibilities. You should apply for as many grants as possible that include salary offset, and you should still make three applications.
- What should I do if three grants are not available? Under what circumstances might a person submit only two?
If, after consulting with the Office of Sponsored Research, you determine that you are not eligible for three grants, you may apply for a sabbatical leave with just two. The Director of the Office of Sponsored Research should send the CFA a letter verifying that such a conversation has taken place and that your strenuous search has not produced the required three grant possibilities.

- I am eligible for one semester of sabbatical leave, but many of the grants for which I might apply require a year-long commitment. Can I count such grants toward my required three?
You should apply only for grants that you are able and willing to accept. It defeats the purpose of shared offset if you decline successful grant awards. If you are eligible for only one semester of leave, you should therefore apply only for grants that can be held for a single semester unless you are willing to take unpaid leave to meet the year-long commitment required by a particular grant. If you decline one of the three grants on which your sabbatical approval was based, the CFA may retroactively deny Plan B sabbatical support.
- Some grants for which I am eligible require successful applicants to relocate and be in residence at a distant location. I'm not sure I would be willing to move to hold such a grant. Can I count such an application as one of my three?
Again, you should only apply for grants you would be willing to accept. As indicated above, if you decline one of the three grants on which your sabbatical approval was based, the CFA may retroactively deny Plan B sabbatical support.
- In my field, one often has to make a pre-application in order to be selected to submit a full grant application. Do such pre-applications count as one of the three proposals required for a strenuous search?
The CFA decides whether or not to count pre-applications on a case by case basis, depending on the availability of other grants, the apparent likelihood the grant will be successful, and the fullness of detail in the pre-application letter. In some science fields a sequence of preliminary, followed by full, invited proposals is starting to be the norm; in such fields, where a panel of experts reviews the preliminary proposal, the CFA will normally regard a preliminary proposal as one of the required three applications.
- Can an application to the Newhouse Center for the Humanities be one of the three required proposals?
No. The NCH does not provide salary support to Wellesley College faculty members, and so an application to the NCH cannot be one of the three required proposals.
- Can the Mellon New Directions Program be one of the three funding sources?
Yes. The Mellon New Directions Program does provide salary offset, and so an application to this program can be included as one of the three required proposals.
- I received a grant from an institution to attend a semester-long workshop during my leave that includes a stipend that is strictly for reimbursement of local expenses (rent, food). Will I be required to share this portion of my grant with the College as salary offset?
The answer to this question is determined on a case-by-case basis, but normally, since such a stipend is not salary but rather a per diem for reimbursement for local expenses, it will not be used as salary offset.
- I was awarded one of the three grants listed on my application. Do I still have to apply to the other two agencies?
Yes, unless the grant you were awarded is for full salary, you must still apply for the remaining grants listed in your application.

- If I am not ready to apply for grant support, can I still have a fully paid sabbatical?
Yes, if you "cash in" two semesters of leave eligibility, you can take a one-semester fully paid sabbatical under a modified Plan A (half pay) without making strenuous attempts to secure funding.
- I am getting ready to apply for my last sabbatical leave before retirement. Am I still required to make a strenuous search for outside funding in order to qualify for a Plan B leave?
The College operates a "last leave" policy for faculty who are close to retirement. Under the terms of this policy, a faculty member who has indicated in writing to the Provost the date of his/her retirement may apply for a Plan B sabbatical without meeting the requirement of a strenuous search for outside funding. A faculty member who has applied for and received a last leave under this policy is not eligible to apply for any further sabbatical leaves from the College.
- I've just taken my last College-supported sabbatical leave. Am I required to return to teach at the College for a specified period of time?
According to legislation, a faculty member must agree to return to the College for at least two years following a sabbatical. Any exceptions to this policy are determined by the Provost.