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Investment in Intellectual Capital and Academic Reputation

By Susan E. Sadler

In response to a recommendation from UPAC (the University Planning Advisory Council), Provost Robert Coombe and FEAC (the Faculty and Educational Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees) are considering different possible options for enhancing the faculty sabbatical leave package. The Provost has approached the Senate, asking that a plan be formulated for sabbatical leave enhancement – a creative plan by which the University might make a tangible investment in faculty development that could improve our collective “academic reputation.” Currently, members of the faculty are eligible for sabbatical leave after every 6 years of full time service to the University. The pay structure for faculty with 9-month appointments and teaching responsibilities under the quarter calendar are the following: 1 quarter of sabbatical leave with full pay, 2 quarters of sabbatical at 7/9 annual salary, or 3 quarters of leave at half the annual salary. Faculty with appointments on the 9-month semester calendar are eligible for 1 semester of leave at full pay or 2 semesters of leave at half pay. The fractional portions of salary remuneration are budgeted over the academic year during which the sabbatical leave is scheduled. The original proposal from UPAC was to increase the standard sabbatical leave for faculty teaching on the quarter calendar from one quarter at full pay to two quarters at full pay. The Provost has charged the Faculty Senate with the responsibility of developing a plan by which sabbatical applications, review of applications, and the awarding of an extended leave package might be managed in order to optimize benefit to both the University and the faculty if this increased leave structure were to become a reality.

An *ad hoc* committee with members from the Executive, Academic Planning, Financial Planning and Personnel Committees of the Faculty Senate has worked to formulate suggestions for subtle changes in the sabbatical leave guidelines and application form with the goal of increasing the reflective assessment of each faculty member as we weigh and measure our accomplishments during past sabbaticals with an eye toward what might be accomplished during the next sabbatical. Sabbatical leave reports might

take on a new and increased importance. In each required sabbatical report, faculty might be asked to delineate how the “*sabbatical has or will strengthen the future teaching and scholarship of the recipient.*”¹ Each application for sabbatical leave might be required to include a “*one-page assessment of any previous DU formal sabbatical in light of the ways this [the previous] sabbatical has strengthened the teaching and scholarship of the recipient. ... This one page would be accompanied by a copy of the report ... filed upon return from the previous DU sabbatical.*”¹ The goal would be to increase reflective self-assessment on the part of each faculty person as ideas and plans are being formulated and proposed for the next sabbatical opportunity. The *ad hoc* committee has also considered the possibility of divisional sabbatical review committees “*with the responsibility for reviewing, suggesting enhancements, and making recommendations concerning sabbatical applications between the Chair’s review (if available) and submission to the Dean.*”¹ This additional level of faculty review within the applicant’s academic/professional area might ensure a more uniform quality of sabbatical proposals. It may be that, instead of requiring the formation of an additional faculty committee, this responsibility could be assigned to an existing committee within each division/school.

The Faculty Senate realizes the level of financial commitment that is required to support this type of sabbatical enhancement. Budgetary calculations using different scenarios involving different possible numbers of participating faculty show the potential cost to the

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University to be between \$300,000 - \$500,000 annually. In our economic climate that demands conservative budget

planning, it is not clear that the University could sustain its support for ALL eligible faculty with two-quarter sabbatical leave at full pay. Continuing discussions with the Provost have suggested that there may be other alternatives. For instance, one alternative might involve a selection process by which perhaps half of eligible faculty would be awarded a 2-quarter sabbatical leave at full pay for particularly extensive or noteworthy sabbatical projects. The remainder of eligible applicants would be awarded a 1-quarter leave at full pay. While this possibility could engender some level of beneficial and welcomed faculty development, some of us on the *ad hoc* committee were disturbed by the potentially painful consequence of any selection process. In a multifaceted University such as ours -- one that supports research and scholarly endeavors in the arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences *and* professional programs, overall faculty morale could be hurt by a competitive process in which half of eligible (and deserving) faculty would be deemed losers in a competition designed to weigh the apparent contribution of one's academic endeavors over another's. Is it reasonable to "commodify" and compare a musician's artistic accomplishments against a mathematician's advancement of theoretical symbolic logic or a social worker's contributions to community programming? By what measures are the judgments and rankings of sabbatical applications to be made? Moreover, if the goal is to test whether or not extended sabbatical leave at full pay strengthens the faculty's and University's academic reputations, then groups of applicants should be randomly selected for 1- or 2-quarter sabbatical leave with full salary support. Even more difficult is the question of what measures and time frames for measuring increased reputation should be implemented in the assessment scheme?

If the University's goal is to increase its investment in "academic capital," isn't there a more equitable way to achieve the same end? As another alternative, why not consider leaving the sabbatical leave salary structure as is but propose that *all* faculty who qualify for sabbatical leave be eligible to apply for a travel/supply stipend to support the scholarly enterprise during the sabbatical leave. These funds would be available to support travel and research projects up to the following limits:

<i>Sabbatical length</i>	Possible stipend
1 qtr	\$2000
(1 semester)	\$3000
2 qtrs	\$4000
3 qtrs (or 2 semesters)	\$6000

Line item budgets would be approved at the time that the sabbatical application is approved. Faculty would be responsible for tracking their own budgets through their respective departments/divisions with standard expenditure reimbursement approval forms and signatory authorities. These stipends would be competitive in the sense that only well-planned, scholarly proposals would be awarded an additional sabbatical stipend. These stipends could replace

the present "merit awards," or the existing "merit awards" could continue to reward outstanding proposals.

If one assumes that the average numbers of approved sabbaticals will remain relatively constant, the cost to the University will be on the order of \$120,000 annually (if these stipends replace the existing merit awards) or approximately \$132,500 (if the merit awards are continued). At a fraction of the projected cost for extending leave to 2 quarters with full pay, the University could make a substantial investment in the scholarly enterprise of our faculty and engender a much more collegial sense of community between and across disciplines.

Such a sabbatical stipend structure would stretch the working capital of both the University and each faculty member on sabbatical. The University would not be required to pay fringe, since travel/supply stipends are not salary items. The faculty would not have to pay taxes on these funds, so the stipend award represents a "real" dollar investment in sabbatical expenses. The availability of travel funds has the potential to significantly contribute to strengthening the University's reputation by supporting all eligible faculty members in their efforts to present seminars, build collaborations, and work with colleagues at other Universities both in the United States and abroad. The supply budget would equitably support the scholarly efforts of faculty who primarily teach at the undergraduate or graduate level. All sabbatical projects could benefit from the supplemental support of travel and supplies. The University would be making a much more egalitarian investment in our intellectual capital -- an investment that could strengthen all of the academic fibers of our University.

¹Quotes drawn from a working draft by the Faculty Senate Personnel Committee are presented in italics.

Student Course Evaluations

By Helga S. Watt (hwatt@du.edu)
 Chair of the Student Relations Committee
 Faculty Senate

The Student Relations Committee of the Faculty Senate is considering the system of student course evaluations now in place at our University. We have collected the different forms and learned about the recent attempts at reform.

In 1996 the Student Relations Committee in cooperation with the Office of Assessment proposed a new form with only four items recommended for all courses:

- A. I have accomplished a great deal in this course
1. strongly agree
 2. agree
 3. disagree
 4. strongly disagree
- B. In my opinion, the workload relative to the credit earned for this class was
1. far too heavy
 2. somewhat too heavy
 3. about right
 4. somewhat too light
 5. far too light

C. Overall this instructor is an excellent teacher.

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. disagree
4. strongly disagree

D. Overall this is an excellent course.

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. disagree
4. strongly disagree
- 5.

Three items used a four-point and one a five-point scale. Further “customized” questions and requests for written comments were to be designed by each unit.

Although the Faculty Senate approved this reform, only the Department of Engineering, the Department of Languages and Literatures, the Women’s College and the Thematic Core Courses adopted the new instrument and decided on additional questions appropriate to their subjects. The Daniels College of Business devised its own form with a five-point scale. All other courses still use the old form with eleven identical items rated on a five-point scale. The old form also asks students for personal information (class, area of major, percentage of classes attended, GPA, gender, whether the class is elective or required, and expected grade) while the new form requests no such information.

On May 8, 1998, the Faculty Senate passed a motion from the Academic Planning Committee on teaching valuations. It affirms the responsibility of the Senate to set rules and to oversee the evaluation process; it also specifies how the numerical results and written comments are to be reported to instructors and their unit heads and made available to higher administrators and appropriate committees. This policy does not endorse any particular form but leaves the design or approval of the forms to the Office of Assessment while allowing for additional assessment by individual instructors and units. Since then there has been no further progress toward a revision of the evaluation system. We are, however, advancing on the technology front as more and more units are switching to on-line evaluations.

Although this is a controversial subject, the present situation can be improved. It should be possible to agree on some basic questions (not necessarily the ones outlined above) and on a common rating scale. We also need to have a discussion about the use of course evaluations for salary decisions and promotion and tenure. It is evident that this process must not be the only assessment of teaching quality. The Student Relations Committee cannot deal with this issue in a vacuum; other Faculty Senate committees and University constituencies need to be involved. We hope to start a constructive process and would be grateful for comments and suggestions.

A word from the President ~ on Sabbatical Policy

By Leon G. Giles, President
Faculty Senate

Faculty sabbaticals are a long and valued tradition in institutions of higher education, including the University of Denver. Sabbaticals provide faculty with the opportunity to renew, enrich, and share their intellectual capital without the daily regimentation of class schedules and committee meetings. The institution benefits as well because of the scholarship resulting from these leaves and the affect of a refreshed faculty when returning to the classroom. Although the benefits of sabbaticals to both faculty and institution have not historically been rigorously assessed, their persistent and universal use suggests that significant benefits accrue from their availability. Most faculty and university administrators recognize that sabbaticals play an important role in recruiting new faculty in an increasingly competitive market, retaining those faculty, and contributing to their career-long development.

It should not be a surprise, however, that during this time of increased focus on outcomes assessment, productivity, accountability, and quality improvement that sabbatical policies are being re-evaluated at some institutions. It is also not surprising that in considering these issues, the question sometimes emerges of whether sabbaticals are an entitlement or a merit-based benefit. This bipolar characterization does not seem to capture the intent of the sabbatical. Isn't it more enlightened to argue that a sabbatical is a reasonable expectation of employment, but one contingent on an activity grounded in the career development requirements of the individual and the advancement of the goals of the institution?

We are fortunate that the Provost's request to the Faculty Senate to review and recommend changes to strengthen the sabbatical policy is more in line with this latter philosophy. Our task is to consider ways to enhance sabbatical support while improving the effectiveness of the faculty member's effort, rather than focusing solely on eligibility, outcomes expectations and assessment, and accountability. Susan Sadler's article in this issue of the *Forum* discusses several alternatives being considered by the Senate for achieving these objectives.

The Senate can use your assistance in this matter. Although the Senate is surveying sabbatical policies and procedures at a number of institutions, your experiences and knowledge of sabbatical policies, requirements, procedures, and expectations at other universities will be useful to us. I urge you to discuss this with your unit's senator.

The College of Law returns to University Park Campus

By Arthur Best
Chair of the College of Law Building Committee
Professor of Law

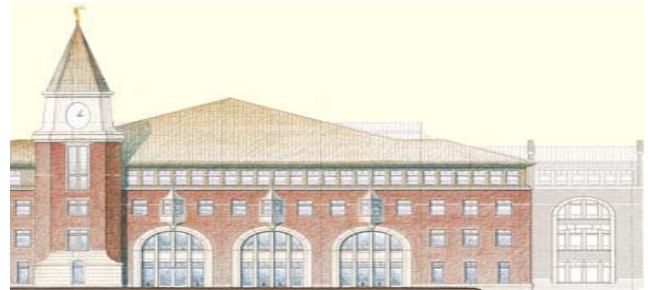
Memo from the College of Law community to everybody else at DU: when we move from our old campus to University Park this summer, we hope you'll like having us around. We are looking forward to being good neighbors, and we expect that we will all benefit from lots of new connections for teaching, scholarship, and student life. The new building's architecture is designed to facilitate a new style of legal education. Its location will do that, too, since we expect it to facilitate scholarly partnerships among the faculty and a variety of academic opportunities for all of the students in the University.

The law faculty, aided by a Strategic Planning Committee and led by Dean Mary Ricketson, developed building plans that emphasize collaborative learning. Naturally, the internet and the law school network will be accessible throughout the building. There will be lots of small study rooms and small gathering places to help students work together in cooperative groups. Our clinical programs, where students represent clients who otherwise could not afford legal help, will have facilities that manifest the respect we feel for those clients. The clinic will have the modern and efficient aspects of a high quality law firm setting. Supporting these innovations will be a beautiful library and a number of large classrooms set up to maximize interaction among all the participants in each class.

The College of Law has been a leader among American law schools for interdisciplinary research. Being near our colleagues in so many fields that can illuminate the workings of the legal system will help us continue that tradition and improve on it. For undergraduate students, some on the law school faculty are hopeful that a six-year joint degree program can be set up. Run well, that type of program might attract students that neither the undergraduate program nor the law school would otherwise have enrolled. If there are settings in undergraduate courses where participation for some classes by a law school professor would be a plus, we would like to make that happen. On the graduate level, we hope that the joint degrees we offer in cooperation with a number of other DU units will become more attractive, when students can meet with faculty more easily and can get a better sense of what each of the participating schools is really like.

There will be a food service facility in the southwest corner of the first floor, with a number of tables outside on a terrace. Faculty, students and staff are hoping that lots of people from the University community will join us there, so that we can get to know each other better. The law faculty will make sure to invite faculty from other units to join us when there are scholarly presentations by visitors and to participate with us in our own works-in-progress sessions. The University Architect and so many others are

accomplishing what seemed almost impossible -- the very quick design and incredibly swift construction of a beautiful and effective law school building. This autumn, we'll be in it, and we hope you will be with us for some of the formal opening ceremonies and for lots of non-formal visits.



Provost's Conference on Serving the Public Good, May 1-2, 2003

Dean Saitta

Co-Convenor of UPAC Public Good Task Force
As reported in the last *Faculty Forum*, the University Planning Advisory Council (UPAC) Public Good Task Force has been brainstorming about ways to further DU's commitment to serving the public good. An all-campus Provost's Conference scheduled for May 1-2, 2003 will help to accomplish this. This is to be a working conference designed to identify new strategies for achieving the University's public good vision and to plan investments of financial resources in the near and long term. The centerpiece of the conference is five moderated sessions on different aspects of public good work including (1) Diversifying DU, (2) Institutional Outreach, (3) Public Scholarship, (4) Teaching and Learning, and (5) Volunteerism. A final integrative session will compare notes and distill recommendations. An announcement has already been made to the university community containing conference details and contact information for interested participants.

The sub-committee on Benefits of the Personnel Committee has added to their agenda the item of tuition benefits at peer colleges and universities for the children of faculty and staff. As the feasibility study begins for the Benefits Advisory Committee to Human Resources, some input from you would be helpful to their study. If you are particularly interested in this benefit, please email your comments to Chip Reichardt (creichar@du.edu) in Psychology.

Do you have children who will be thinking about college in 1-5 years? 5-10 years? 10-15 years? 15-20 years?

Because such a benefit would involve real costs (money which would have to be re-directed from other benefits), would you support this benefit even if it would not help you directly?

Thanks for taking the time to voice your interest in this potential benefit.