Guidelines on Reassigned Time for Faculty

Faculty members are expected to remain highly competent in their disciplines and to maintain familiarity with recent scholarship. They often need sustained and dedicated periods of time to carry out tasks related to the teaching, research, creative activity, or external activities related to their positions. Reassigned Time for these activities may be supported by state or other funds available from the institution or from external sources. Campuses that provide such opportunities to faculty must have appropriate policies governing the awarding of Reassigned Time, in order to ensure equity in submitting and consistency in approving requests for Reassigned Time.

These guidelines are intended to assist campuses in creating such policies and reflect common practices at UNC and other higher education institutions across the country. Campus policies may vary from these guidelines, since leaves are contingent on the availability of funds at the institution and review and approval procedures need to be consistent with the campus administrative structure.

I. Eligibility

Campuses should define the pool of faculty eligible for Reassigned Time. In some cases, untenured faculty may be provided released time during their probationary period; the Reassigned Time policy generally does not apply to faculty with whom hiring agreements have been made that include such released time.

In general, faculty eligible for Reassigned Time should understand the following expectations:

1. The faculty member is tenured and full-time at the rank of assistant professor or above. Campuses may consider applications for Reassigned Time from tenure-track faculty members in their last probationary year; if the proposal is approved, the Reassigned Time will be contingent upon the applicant receiving tenure. The University of North Carolina School of the Arts will have a different definition for eligibility because that institution does not award tenure.

2. The period of Reassigned Time will count as time toward promotion, contract (in the case of NCSA), and post-tenure review.

3. When applying for Reassigned Time, the faculty member must submit a proposal and the appropriate materials in accordance with campus policies.

4. Reassigned Time is neither deferred compensation nor an entitlement based upon length of service but is granted on the merits of the individual proposal upon the recommendation of the appropriate committees and administrators.

5. Faculty on Reassigned Time are eligible for consideration for merit salary increases, promotion, and one-time payments or any other salary adjustments approved by the General Assembly, the Board of Governors, or the institution.

6. Faculty on Reassigned Time will continue to receive university contributions for the State Health Plan. They will also continue to receive the University's contributions for the N.C. Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System or the UNC Optional Retirement Program under the conditions outlined in Section VII below. Other benefits may be continued during this period, in accordance with the policy adopted by the campus.

7. Faculty members on Reassigned Time are expected to devote full-time to the approved project.

8. If circumstances require that a substantial change be made in the project after it has been approved, the faculty member should obtain approval of the changes in accordance with campus procedures.

II. Duration and Compensation

Campuses should develop guidelines that include the duration and compensation for periods of Reassigned Time.

1. Duration

Faculty will generally be awarded Reassigned Time for either one or two semesters for 9-month academic-year appointments or for six or twelve months for 12-month appointments. (UNCSA may have a different schedule.)

2. Compensation

Campus policies on compensation for Reassigned Time may vary depending on availability of funds. In general, faculty will be granted leave for a full academic year or for twelve-months for no less than 50% of the annual salary or leave for one semester or six months for full salary. Campuses may decide to award only academic year or calendar -year leaves if funds are not available for single semester or six month leaves. Faculty awarded Reassigned Time are expected to work full-time on their approved project.

Salary funds released by Reassigned Time appointments should be aggregated at the appropriate level (college or institution) to be used for replacement faculty as necessary. The source of funds for replacement needs to be determined prior to approval of the Reassigned Time.

III. Supplemental Pay

Campuses should develop guidelines addressing the salary and other compensation faculty may receive from the institution and from other sources during the period of Reassigned Time.

1. In some cases, faculty may be receiving partial salary from an external source. In these cases, the faculty member's total salary should not exceed the approved annual salary for the period of Reassigned Time, not including funds awarded to cover living expenses and travel for Reassigned Time spent away from campus as well as secretarial assistance, research, publication, and other expenses related to the approved project.

2. Compensation for salary and expenses from all sources should be addressed in the proposal and approved before the leave is granted. If the amount or source of compensation changes, this change should be approved by the appropriate administrators through the External Professional Activities for Pay policy (see 300.2.2). A person on Reassigned Time may not receive supplemental salary funds through the university.

IV. University Obligations and Return to Service

1. Faculty on Reassigned Time should agree to take leave or resign from campus obligations such as department, college, and campus committees during the time of the Reassigned Time. However, faculty may be expected to maintain contact with graduate advisees or to make other arrangements to ensure that students' progress will not be disrupted. Faculty may also participate in the department faculty evaluation process (for annual reviews or hiring) if the department bylaws provide this opportunity.

2. Campus policies must include a provision for continuing service to the institution following the end of the Reassigned Time period. Faculty who receive Reassigned Time should be required to return to service at the university or be required to repay the salary received during the period of leave. Typically, such policies require that faculty return to the university for twice the period of the Reassigned Time that was granted For example, a 9-month faculty member who was granted Reassigned Time with full pay for one academic semester, at the end of the Reassigned Time period, might be expected to return to work with that campus for a minimum of two semesters or he or she will be required to repay the salary received during the Reassigned Time period.

3. The N.C. Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System requires that employees on approved leave of absence for educational purposes return to service as a contributing member for at least three years; otherwise, service credit earned during leave of absence will be cancelled. (See Section VII, "Benefits Continuation.")

4. A faculty member on Reassigned Time who accepts a position at another post-secondary institution or any other paid employment that was not included in the proposal or approved through the External Professional Activities for Pay policy (see 300.2.2) will be considered to have abandoned his or her contract and should be terminated.

V. Report

Campus policies should include a provision for reporting on the outcomes of the Reassigned Time. This could include a report required at the end of the first semester following the leave that addresses the accomplishment of the purposes stated in the application for Reassigned Time. Campuses may wish to require a public forum or presentation following the Reassigned Time. If a faculty member fails to submit the required report, he or she should not be considered for subsequent Reassigned Time. Campuses may determine additional consequences in such cases.

VI. Further Service and Subsequent Reassigned Time

Campuses should establish a defined period of time before faculty members are eligible to apply for additional Reassigned Time. Typically, six years of further service is required before a faculty member is eligible to apply for another leave. Leaves of absence without pay not exceeding one year may be counted as service toward eligibility for additional Reassigned Time if the leave of absence without pay is related to scholarly responsibilities.

VII. Benefits Continuation

1. Retirement.

A. N.C. Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS)

For faculty who are on Reassigned Time, this period will be considered as an approved leave of absence for educational purposes.

During the Reassigned Time with full pay, the University will continue making the employer contribution to TSERS and the faculty member will continue making his or her pre-tax contribution to TSERS through payroll deduction.

During the Reassigned Time with partial pay, if the faculty member wishes to continue making his or her retirement contribution, the University will continue making the employer contribution. The employer and employee contributions are based on the faculty member's base rate of pay in effect immediately preceding the reassignment. The faculty member's contribution shall be on an after-tax basis and monthly payment must be made timely by the faculty member, by personal payment, to the campus human resources/benefits office, for transmission to the State Retirement System.

In accordance with State law, if a faculty member is on an approved leave of absence for educational purposes with partial pay, service credit may be purchased if retirement contributions are paid by the 15th of the month following the month for which service credit is allowed. If contributions are not made by the 15th of the month, a penalty of 1% of the combined employer and employee contributions per month shall be assessed by the Retirement System. In addition, unless the faculty member returns to service as a contributing member within 12 months after completion of his or her educational program and contributes to the Retirement System for at least three more years (except in the event of death or disability), contributions will be refunded and the service credits canceled. Regardless of when the educational program was completed, the maximum

allowable credit for educational leave or interrupted service for education purposes is six years over the course of one's career.

In advance of the Reassigned Time, a letter must be sent to TSERS by the campus human resources/benefits office requesting permission for the faculty member to continue his or her retirement contributions while on Reassigned Time, along with an "Application to Purchase Service Credits for Educational Leave or Interrupted Service for Educational Purposes," Form 263. This form is available on the TSERS website.

NOTE: Coverage under the State's Disability Income Plan and the Death Benefit will continue for eligible members of TSERS during the Reassigned Time period.

B. UNC Optional Retirement Program

If a faculty member participates in the UNC Optional Retirement Program (ORP), the same procedures as outlined above for TSERS members apply, including the six year maximum allowable credit limit. (See TSERS discussion above). However, employer and employee contributions are payable to the appropriate ORP carrier instead of to the Retirement System. Please note that a letter requesting permission for the faculty member to continue making contributions to the ORP must be submitted by the campus human resources/benefits office to the State Retirement System in advance of the Reassigned Time so that the six year maximum allowable credit limit can be tracked. At the present time, the ORP does not track whether a faculty member who takes a leave of absence for educational purposes at less than full pay returns to work for at least three years.

NOTE: Coverage under the State's Disability Income Plan will continue for eligible participants of the ORP during the Reassigned Time period.

2. State Health Plan

A faculty member who is on Reassigned Time is eligible and should continue to receive the University's contribution for State Health Plan coverage, whether on full pay or partial pay. The employee's contributions for dependents' coverage will continue to be payroll deducted from the faculty member's paycheck on a before-tax basis.

3. Other Benefits

A faculty member should contact his or her campus human resources/benefits office for information about continuation of other benefits while on Reassigned Time.

VIII. Application Process

1. The college/institution should have a uniform application process which may include the following information, depending on the project:

- Curriculum vitae
- Description of the project
- Expectations for supplemental funding for expenses and/or salary
- Invitations to other institutions, award letters for fellowships, or other supporting documentation
- Potential enhancement of the faculty member's effectiveness in teaching, scholarship, or service

- Potential value to the teaching, scholarship, or service program of the department
- Contribution to knowledge in the field of study
- Value to public or professional service at the institutional, state, or national level
- Expected outcomes, e.g., book, article, creative expression, new academic or outreach program.

2. Written information on the application process and deadlines for applications should be disseminated to all eligible faculty members, through a faculty manual or other accessible documents.

3. In general, applications should be evaluated in writing by no fewer than three persons, within or external to the department or university, who are competent to judge the proposal.

4. On most campuses, the dean will be responsible for approving or denying applications, although campuses may choose to have final approval by the Chief Academic Officer.

5. Campuses must identify an appropriate appeal process if a proposal is denied.

6. Department administrators must assure the dean or Chief Academic Officer that teaching and advising in the department will be maintained during the faculty member's absence.

7. Decisions about granting Reassigned Time must be made with a clear understanding of the source of funds to maintain the instructional expectations of the department.

8. Deans should be responsible for providing the Chief Academic Officer with a list of applications and results of the process annually.

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