

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE  
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number 4919S  
Date of Senate Approval 04/04/19

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Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

**FWDC 7: Fellowship Awards, Professional Development Leaves, and Associated Benefits**  
**Faculty Handbook Section [4.1.4](#)**

**Effective date:** Immediately

**Summary:** This document (1) Clarifies the impact of faculty professional development leaves on benefits, notably health insurance and retirement, and (2) Affirms our practice of awarding Professional Development Leave (PDL) to a faculty member awarded a Fulbright Scholarship or other similar fellowship which requires release from teaching responsibilities at UNC Asheville (under the same terms as PDLs awarded through our annual application processes), and provides the option of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) for faculty who prefer that choice.

**Rationale:** (1) Questions have arisen about the impact of various leaves on benefits; we believe that it is important to clarify the impact of professional development leave on benefits so that faculty members requesting leave are fully aware. Benefits are unaffected so long as total compensation remains above 75% of the base salary. Below that level, the university is no longer allowed to continue retirement contributions. However, the university will continue to make its contribution to health insurance for any PDL, regardless of pay. Finally, if a fellowship recipient chooses to take LWOP instead of PDL, while the university is not required to continue health insurance benefits, we believe that when LWOP is granted to enable acceptance of a fellowship or similar opportunity, we should continue health insurance benefits.

(2) In recent years, several members of the faculty have been awarded Fulbrights or other fellowships which required them to be away from UNC Asheville for a semester or a year, but did not provide financial support equivalent to their salary here. Academic Affairs has not had a policy to determine how to support faculty who receive such awards and has dealt with each on an ad hoc basis.

This policy commits the university to offer paid leave to support faculty who receive fellowships under the same terms as internally-awarded PDLs. In many cases, including all semester-long programs, awardees may experience an increase in overall income when the PDL is combined with the stipends associated with an award; we believe that the extraordinary nature of these awards, along with the fact that many faculty members will continue to maintain their household here, justifies that increase. In the case of a full-year fellowship which offers a stipend less than half of the faculty member's salary, a PDL at half-pay will at least cushion the financial impact, making it easier to accept the award.

Finally, this policy stipulates that these PDLs affect eligibility for future internally-awarded PDLs in the same way as those awarded under 4.1.4. Faculty members also have the option of taking LWOP which does not affect their eligibility for future PDLs in any way.

**Revise 4.1.4 as follows:**

**4.1.4 Professional Development Leave** (formerly Off-Campus Scholarly Assignment [SD1488S](#)) amended by [SD5404S](#) and [SD4506S](#) (Revised by Academic Affairs April 2015)

Professional Development Leaves (PDLs) are a means by which UNC Asheville supports continued professional growth for its faculty. Such assignments provide institutional encouragement and support to the faculty in developing, maintaining, and broadening academic and instructional competencies that are valued by the individual faculty member, the academic program, and by the university.

Given the importance of professional development projects to faculty renewal and professional growth, departments and programs are encouraged to develop long-term plans for distributing this resource to all eligible faculty members while maintaining the ability to deliver the unit's curriculum and contribute in the delivery of the university's Liberal Arts Curriculum (LAC). The success of this planning requires that faculty members involve their chair or program director in all aspects of the PDL proposal development process, which includes but is not limited to developing the project, identifying discrete and measurable deliverables for the project, creating a means of assessing the PDL's success, identifying possible sources of financial support, and determining the most appropriate year and semester for the leave.

All full-time faculty members who have served at UNC Asheville for a minimum of four years (tenure-track faculty members beyond reappointment and lecturers) are eligible; however, typically, PDLs will be granted only to faculty members with tenure. No faculty member will normally be eligible to receive a professional development assignment more than once every six years; exceptions may be negotiated for extraordinary opportunities that may arise.

A professional development assignment may be granted for up to one full year. The university will support the recipient with either one semester at full salary or two semesters at half salary. Funding from external agencies to support a leave may be paid to the faculty member through university payroll, if allowable by the funding agency, supplementing the salary associated with the leave. Health insurance ~~and full~~ benefits are maintained in either case. However, if total compensation paid through university payroll, including external sources, falls below 75% of the base salary, the university is required to suspend retirement benefits. Faculty members are advised to consult with Human Resources for details and options.

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**Insert 4.1.4.1:**

**4.1.4.1 Fulbright Awards and other Fellowships**

A full-time member of the faculty who is named as a Fulbright Scholar or awarded a similar fellowship which implies release from teaching responsibilities at UNC Asheville will have the option of requesting a fellowship Professional Development Leave (PDL) from the Provost, outside of the process described above in 4.1.4. Granting of this request will be contingent on budgetary constraints. If the request is granted, all provisions for internally-awarded PDLs

described in 4.1.4 apply, with the exception of eligibility being limited to once every six years. As fellowships represent extraordinary opportunities, prior PDLs taken do not affect eligibility for an initial fellowship PDL. However, a PDL to support a fellowship implies that the recipient will not be eligible for another one, either internally-awarded or associated with another fellowship, until six years have passed from the fellowship PDL.

Fellowship recipients also have the option of requesting Leave Without Pay (LWOP) (see [4.2.2.2](#)) to enable acceptance of the award. This LWOP will be with benefits, so that the university continues its contribution to health insurance premiums.

In order to be eligible for a PDL in support of a fellowship, awardees must have alerted the Provost, the appropriate Chair and Dean, and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs of their intention to apply in advance; otherwise, the faculty member will be awarded LWOP with benefits instead. Faculty members interested in applying to be a Fulbright Scholar or for a similar fellowship or award which implies release from teaching at UNC Asheville for a semester or a year are encouraged to consult with the University Grants Manager for assistance and support.