

Planning for a Regenerative and Productive Sabbatical: September 2016

This advice has been compiled over many years and comes from members of the Sabbatical Committee as well as faculty who completed successful sabbaticals.

Advice about your proposal

- Explain clearly your purpose, outcomes, and why it is important for you, for your discipline, and for the university that you complete your proposed project(s). Write it for a multi-disciplinary committee.
- Communicate with your College representative on the sabbatical committee early in your proposal writing process. When you have a draft, ask their advice regarding clarity of purpose, outcomes, etc.
- One of the criteria that committee members will ponder is “*Can this individual, given their prior work, experience, and expertise, complete this project?*” Your proposal, especially the project timeline, should convince them that you can.
- Letters of support are important – they should be detailed and show that the letter writer has an understanding of the project and its importance.
- Articulate contingency plans if you are awaiting decisions about external funding, teaching opportunities, awards (e.g. Fulbright Scholarship), etc. “*If I do not receive an invitation to use the lab facilities at XYZ, then I plan to...*”
- Review past successful proposals from your department/discipline before getting started on yours.
- Once you have submitted your proposal, follow the approval process to monitor progress and ensure that the committee will have a complete proposal to consider.

Advice about choosing a one semester or full-year sabbatical

- Think early, carefully, and thoughtfully about the implications, pros and cons of semester and full-year sabbaticals.
- Develop a reasonable time line to complete your project and determine whether one semester will be sufficient.
- When considering a full-year sabbatical, consider ways in which you can supplement your income (while receiving 65% of your salary) either through savings or paid work related to your project.
- Talk with your department chair about how your classes and other obligations will be covered by someone else while you are away.

Advice about making the most of your time away

- If you choose to stay in Boise for your sabbatical, think about the degree to which you want to stay connected to your department.
- If you need to work in your office, do it on weekends when you will be less distracted by colleagues, students, etc. Better yet, create a home office that makes coming on campus a rarity.
- Temper your generosity with self-interest in order to achieve your goals.
- Create an email management plan.
- Articulate milestones for yourself.
- Create a different work routine for yourself that includes time for reflection.
- Build in a shift in direction for your work.
- Consider taking a class from a colleague (with his/her permission).
- Talk with your family about what it means to be on sabbatical: You're not on vacation; you're approaching your work differently. While you may have more flexibility to participate in family activities, a sabbatical is not "time off."

Advice about being accountable for your sabbatical productivity

- Plan to submit the required post-sabbatical report as soon as possible; the time clock toward your next sabbatical won't start until you do.
- Make your report meaningful: Describe what you did, with what results, why you changed direction (if you did), etc.
- If you are an associate professor and would like to be promoted to full, give a copy of your sabbatical report to your department's promotion committee.
- Think of your sabbatical as taking a different approach to your work and allowing time to focus on one or more specific aspects of it: "R&R" is a great, but it is not the sole purpose of a sabbatical.

Advice about transitioning away and transitioning back

- Start planning and organizing your sabbatical activities as soon as you are approved for the leave.
- Build in some "decompression" time at the start so that you are refreshed and at your best to begin your project(s).
- Plan in advance with your department chair and colleagues who will pick up your service commitments, student mentoring, and other activities while you are away.
- Wrap up your sabbatical activities during your sabbatical so that you can focus on re-entry when you return.
- When you have the flexibility to do so, negotiate a workload that allows for reasonable re-entry when you return.

Best General Advice

- Do it! Take a sabbatical whenever you're eligible. It's good for all interested parties.