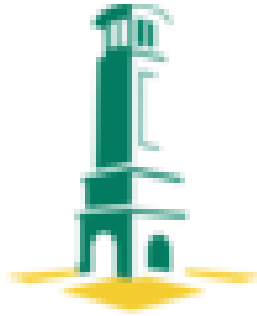


The Norfolk State University Senate Faculty Sabbatical Task Force



**NORFOLK STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

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2022-2023

January 17, 2023 Final Committee Report

## **Introduction**

Norfolk State University (NSU) Faculty Senate President Dr. Tony Atwater assembled the NSU Faculty Senate Sabbatical Task Force. The Task Force is a first-time committee to evaluate the current sabbatical policy articulation, address funding, and suggest a revised policy and application process. The Task Force began its work in March 2022 and believes that the sabbatical process is a significant aspect of the growth and development of a faculty scholar. A sabbatical program shows the institution's investment in the faculty member's retention to the school; it underscores the intrinsic value that the faculty as a constituent at the university commands and benefits directly and indirectly from the research activities of the scholar because:

“...the activities and products in which a faculty member engages during the sabbatical leave provide not only professional development and enrichment for the faculty member but also products, outcomes, and long-term effects for the higher education institution in which the faculty member is employed” (Gardner, 2022, p. 437).

Sabbaticals are not rest periods. A sabbatical is a period of uninterrupted research that enhances a faculty member's contribution to technical knowledge. A sabbatical period is how the university demonstrates investment in a faculty member's ability to engage in scholarly research, that improves the faculty member's growth and increased capacity for research services to the university.

As NSU plans to grow and expand as a university, it is favorable to incorporate a functioning, fully funded, and transparent sabbatical program, which currently, it does not have. The University does not have a current sabbatical application. The sabbatical program has been tenuous, unforthcoming, uneven, and dormant for almost two decades at NSU. Faculty with institutional memory recall that the process was not transparent within the past 20 years. Decisions about faculty sabbaticals were not always in writing, as faculty members were told verbally that they were not awarded a sabbatical. Funding was also a major prohibitive factor in awarding sabbaticals, which several administrations never prioritized. University budgets have demonstrated a lack of value for the faculty's quality of life, ignoring the need for scholarly research and reflection. The heavy teaching demands prevent many faculty from competing on the world stage for large grants and book publishing opportunities. The University's goal to seek a higher research status without a functioning and transparent sabbatical program compromises such a goal.

## **Impact of COVID**

Another factor rendering a sabbatical valuable is the impact of COVID-19. Although there is data to show that COVID-19 has impacted economically vulnerable African Americans, there should be consideration for how COVID-19 has impacted faculty of historically vulnerable groups. At NSU, the faculty have higher teaching loads and work very creatively to improve the academic skills of students, researching and writing is often a daunting task. “The impact on the institutional faculty and staff with the increase in

student enrollment during the pandemic also increased the number of students seeking out faculty assistance both personally and academically” (Jefferson, Hora, Pickens, Salzman, p. 25).

Increasing the trajectory of student learning and content mastery extends far beyond the classroom time. Providing copious feedback on papers, tutoring students in algebraic formulas, teaching academic habits and behaviors of higher education culture and traditional African American culture, teaching citation styles, theory integration, and rhetorical written and oral skills, etiquette, etc., does not happen only in the classroom. It is an exhaustive process to transform students who have been socialized into a Standard of Learning modality that involves only learning test content. The committed faculty at NSU upholds university general education competencies in courses, internships, service learning and experiential activities, as outlined in the NSU Catalog:

- Writing
- Information Technology Literacy
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Scientific Reasoning
- Oral Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Synthesizing Theory

In Sparta, in order to develop a prepared student for entrance in advance study or industry, faculty engagement with students means that the faculty spends far more time with students than at other universities, while maintaining rigor, and a commitment to their research agendas. There are more women faculty at NSU, who are also wives, mothers and caregivers. These factors are important in why creating and funding a sabbatical program is crucially important.

“The stress of COVID-19 can sap anyone’s emotional and psychic energy away from a focus on scholarship, but these extra caregiving responsibilities can compound the effect, reducing even further the amount of time and energy available for research and writing. While these obstacles apply to faculty engaging in research at any point in time, they are particularly harmful to research and writing during sabbaticals when the expectation is that faculty engage in sustained, in-depth research that requires uninterrupted, focused time to work”(Baker, 2020, p. 4).

This is the right time for NSU to commit itself and resources to a sabbatical program. Not only does it contribute to developing advanced researchers, such investment would also mitigate the impact COVID-19 has had upon writing, conceptual and discovery time, and grant proposal development. NSU would join the ranks of peer institutions and aspiring institutions that have sabbatical programs.

## **The Task Force**

The Task Force consists of four tenured faculty members and one tenure-track faculty member. The Senate President Dr. Tony Atwater assembled the Task Force, and charged it to study the current sabbatical policy, budgetary appropriation, with possible policy recommendations. The Task Force utilized a robust qualitative methodology to evaluate and gain clarity about the current sabbatical process. Such exploration included what is needed for a sabbatical program, to include policy articulation, distinct procedure, fairness and equity. We began work in March 2022 by reviewing the NSU policy on pages 79-81 of the NSU Teaching Faculty Handbook (2021). We also reviewed policies and procedures from peer institutions, such as Charles Drew University, Coppin State University, Hampton University, Howard Community College in Maryland, Howard University, Morgan State University, University of South Carolina, and Virginia State University. We also inquired about past sabbatical awards at NSU with the Associate Vice-Provost, Dr. Aurelia Williams. Dr. Williams informed the Task Force that within the past five years, no sabbaticals had been awarded, nor are there records available as to exactly when sabbaticals were awarded, to whom, and in which academic school or college. Sabbaticals were awarded under Provost Sandra DeLoatch, who retired in 2017.

## **Budgetary Appropriation**

The Task Force was also asked to investigate budgetary appropriations for university sabbaticals. One of the enduring issues underscoring the absence of a pliable sabbatical program is budgetary appropriation. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, instruction at 4-year public institutions is only 26% of the school's budget; see <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=75>. It begs the question as to why NSU's instructional appropriation for its primary mission is at such a low percentage level of NSU's instructional appropriation at that low percentage level. If NSU wishes to move to an Research 2 institution, then a comparison with R2's academic budget percentages and NSU is required. It would be impossible for NSU to acquire an R2 rating without a sabbatical process, a reduced teaching load, and a significant increase in monies appropriated to the academy. Moreover, keeping young faculty who want a robust academic career will not remain at NSU if it does not support a lower course load, a sabbatical program, and more institutional investment in faculty. Indeed, recruitment of faculty would be nearly impossible if NSU did not invest in these requirements because R2 universities mandate publications. If we are to be a research university where every full-time faculty member is expected to engage in research for tenure, promotion, and annual evaluations, an automatic sabbatical for all tenured associate and full professors is required. In that way, University-wide expectations for faculty productivity could increase, and accreditors and stakeholders would view the University's commitment to research as significant as opposed to sporadic and/or random.

In order to have a sustainable sabbatical program, NSU should allocate a discernable percentage of the budget for sabbatical on a yearly basis. This fund should be part of faculty development providing support to colleges/schools/departments to offset

the costs of providing sabbaticals to faculty. Also, the fund should be budgeted on a rolling basis to ensure that the funds are available when needed. Other sources of financial support for sabbatical funds will not replace but complement this fund. The University has benefitted from the national corporate community's philanthropic donations in the wake of the social justice issue of police brutality and systemic disparities. Thus, the Task Force asserts that there should be funding for sabbaticals in yearly budgets. Consideration for the size of Academic Colleges/Schools and the number of sabbaticals should be based upon seniority and size of College/School.

### **NSU Existing Sabbatical Policy**

The current NSU sabbatical policy articulation is as follows:

*7.3 SABBATICAL LEAVE The University does not have a “traditional” sabbatical leave policy; that is, a faculty member is not automatically eligible for consideration for sabbatical leave for the seventh year of full-time service at the University. However, pending the availability of funds and needs of the University, a limited number of sabbatical leaves may be awarded annually, with each school receiving equal representation, if one or more of the conditions set forth in Section 3.9 are met. The intent of the policy is to promote the continued professional and intellectual development of faculty. Tenured faculty are eligible to apply for a sabbatical of one semester or one year, provided they have completed or will be completing six (6) consecutive years of service at Norfolk State University at the end of the term in which the application is submitted.*

#### *7.3.1 Procedure*

- *Application for sabbatical must include a detailed proposal outlining the research/project to be undertaken, the expected outcomes, and a plan to cover the regular workload of the applicant.*
- *Application must be approved by the department chair, dean, Provost, and the Board of Visitors. Notice of approval will be sent through the supervisory channel.*
- *Applications for sabbaticals scheduled to begin in the fall semester must be submitted to the Provost by February 1 of the previous academic year and the spring semester by August 1 of the same academic year.*
- *Applications will be reviewed by the Faculty Recognition Review Committee. Recommendations will be submitted to the Provost for review and determination.*

#### *7.3.2 Conditions*

*Considering University priorities, a faculty member may be granted a sabbatical of one semester or one full year. A faculty member who is approved for one semester shall be assigned full-time to the research/project for that period and shall receive regular compensation from the University, provided that he or she*

*accepts no other remunerative employment during the semester. The department chair must agree that the courses normally taught by the faculty member can be covered by the department without additional full-time personnel. In other words, the faculty member will be counted as one full-time equivalent faculty member on the workload analysis, and the department must meet its normal faculty-student ratio as if the faculty member were teaching full time.*

*A faculty member who is approved for a one-year sabbatical assignment shall receive one-half compensation from the University during this period and may accept remunerative employment. If the department is meeting its stipulated faculty-student ratio, one-half of the normal compensation of the faculty member will be available to the department for the employment of additional personnel.*

*Within two months of the termination of a sabbatical, the faculty member shall submit through his or her department chair and dean a report to the Provost on his or her accomplishments during the assignment. Unless otherwise restricted by existing legal or other requirements, upon completion of leave, the faculty member will return to his or her original position or to one of similar status, pay, and benefits.*

*Faculty members whose requests are approved for sabbatical leave will receive a leave no longer than one year, and no extensions will be granted without re-application and approval.*

*The Provost may establish a limit on the number of sabbaticals to be awarded per Norfolk State University Teaching Faculty Handbook semester.*

As evident in the current policy, the process has too many contingencies and is devoid of an institutional commitment for supporting a sabbatical program. The Task Force suggests that the University appropriate funds for a sabbatical program that defines how many faculty may receive support each semester, and the process for selection based on years of service and productivity. Moreover, the program should have an institutionalized application, a balanced and unbiased process, and a faculty committee overseeing the review of applications. Faculty involvement and shared governance are foundational to transparency, as “faculty would welcome a greater role in institutional governance if given the opportunities and the incentives to participate” (Jones, 2011, p. 129).

The current NSU policy states that the Faculty Recognition Review Committee (Section 3.9, page 43) reviews sabbatical applications. According to the Teaching Faculty Handbook (2021), this is the same committee that evaluates faculty awards. This arrangement is biased; thus, the Task Force recommends that the Faculty Recognition Review Committee not be involved in the sabbatical process. The sabbatical review process should include a committee untethered and unencumbered from any other committee.

## **Recommended Sabbatical Policy**

The Task Force suggests the following revision to the sabbatical policy in the Teaching Faculty Handbook:

*To be considered for sabbatical leave at Norfolk State University, a faculty member must be a tenured associate professor or a tenured professor. Awards are based on seniority of service to the University (six or more years of service as a full-time faculty member), merit, and scholarship. A sabbatical leave would not upend one's yearly salary whether one is awarded a semester leave or full academic year leave. The granting of a sabbatical leave of absence is dependent upon workloads and other considerations explained to the faculty member in writing.*

#### **SABBATICAL LEAVE PROCEDURES**

*The faculty member must complete the Sabbatical Leave Application (Addendum I). Submit the completed form to the Department Chair, Dean, and Provost by February 1<sup>st</sup> for the fall semester only sabbaticals or September 1<sup>st</sup> for the spring semester only sabbatical. Deans must notify the faculty member requesting a sabbatical of the decision by the last day in February. When the request for sabbatical leave is approved, the faculty member must sign a statement agreeing to return to his/her position, as a teaching faculty member, at the University for two academic years at the end of the leave period.*

*Should the faculty member choose not to return for whatever reason, he/she will be liable to Norfolk State University for the full amount paid during the period of sabbatical leave. However, in the event of death or permanent disability due to ill health or an accident while on sabbatical leave, the University will not exercise its right of repayment. The faculty member returning from sabbatical leave shall submit a written report of their research or other scholarly or creative accomplishments to the chair of his/her department within three months of completing the leave. The Department Chair or Program Director (Social Work, Allied Health) will forward this report with his/her own written evaluation of whether adequate use was made of the time allotted to the Dean. The Dean will consult with the Department Chair to determine if the faculty member failed to submit a written report within the allotted time or if the faculty member inadequately used the sabbatical period. The Dean may require the faculty member to refund all or part of the monies that he/she received from the University while on sabbatical leave.*

*Academic Colleges/Schools vary in the size of faculty, the number of faculty seeking sabbaticals in departments with less than ten eligible faculty members, and there should only be one department member on leave in any given major semester. Any deviation from this policy may be made only under the most exceptional circumstances. If a faculty member is denied a sabbatical request, he/she may appeal the decision to the Provost within fifteen working days of receipt of the denial letter.*

*If a faculty member receives a denied sabbatical application, which should also include a completed rubric (Addendum III), and seeks an appeal, the Appeal form should*

*be completed (Addendum II) within fifteen days of the denied date. The Appeal form should be forwarded to the Faculty Sabbatical Committee and the Provost. Appeal decisions are final, yet the faculty member is encouraged to apply for the next sabbatical period. In order to track sabbaticals and funding amounts, a Sabbatical Effectiveness Data form (Addendum IV) is offered for consideration.*

### **Next Steps**

The Sabbatical Task Force suggests that the proposed policy recommendation and procedures be thoroughly vetted by the Senate and faculty at large. The intent of this work is for an active sabbatical program that is constantly fully funded, implemented per the guidelines, and updated on an annual basis. A sabbatical program's return on investment is to assist NSU in achieving R2 status and provide an opportunity for the Faculty Senate to partner with administration. This report is an important first step toward implementing a real sabbatical program with policy and procedures clearly outlined in the 2023 faculty handbook. We thank Dr. Atwater for assembling this Task Force.



## References

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- Norfolk State University Teaching Faculty Handbook, (2021). <https://www.nsu.edu/teachingfacultyhandbook.aspx>

*Addendum I  
Norfolk State University Application for Sabbatical Leave*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

School and Department \_\_\_\_\_

Present Salary \_\_\_\_\_

Employment at NSU: Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Years Employed \_\_\_\_\_

*LEAVE INFORMATION*

Period for which leave is requested: Beginning \_\_\_\_\_ End \_\_\_\_\_

Address during leave \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose and year of last leave (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Last Leave Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*PUBLICATIONS*

*Please provide a list the publications over the past 5 years*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*TITLE OF THE PROPOSED SABBATICAL PROJECT:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF SABBATICAL PROJECT*

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**EXPECTED BENEFITS OF SABBATICAL LEAVE:**

1) *To students:*

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2) *To your professional growth and academic discipline:*

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3) *To Norfolk State University:*

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4.) *Product outcomes (e.g., book or book contract, articles, grant, creative production, etc):*

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*Signed:* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Applicant) (Date)

*Decision:* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Approved*                      *Disapproved*

*Rationale* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Department Chairman/Academic Program Director)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dean)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Sabbatical Review Committee Chair)

*(Provost)*

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*(President – if application is approved)*

*Final approval for leave is subject to action of the Board of Visitors*

*Addendum II*  
*Faculty Sabbatical Appeals Form*

*Name* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rank* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

*School and Department* \_\_\_\_\_

*Appeal Explanation*

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature and Date

Faculty Review Committee Decision

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman's Signature and Date

Provost Decision

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Provost Signature and Date

*Addendum III*  
*Rubrics*

PREREQUISITES & RUBRIC FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE APPLICATION

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Prerequisites:

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| I.   | Years of service are adequate  |  |
| II.  | No more than 20% of department on leave time   |  |
| III. | Reason for sabbatical leave is not personal<br>(These are not handled by the Committee.) |  |
| IV.  | Application is complete with required  |  |

Quality of the application:

A.	Will strengthen the applicant's ability to fulfill duties at NSU	30
B.	Is carefully planned	
	1. Clarity of objective	25
	2. Adequate description of means	20
	3. Clarity of timetable	15
	4. Amount of time is appropriate	10
	<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100</b>

SABBATICAL LEAVE RANKING CRITERIA AND SCORING RUBRIC

Faculty \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**MERIT AND RIGOR:** Proposals are expected to incorporate activities of substance and quality, which demonstrate value and benefit to the applicant, students, research plan and university.

**CLARITY AND SPECIFICITY:** The nature, reasons, and importance of the sabbatical activities must be clearly explained. A well-developed proposal should provide the committee with a clear understanding of the objectives and scope of the project and include specific descriptions of sabbatical activities

**COHESIVENESS:** The proposal should demonstrate a cohesive relationship between the stated goals and objectives with the activities. The plan of activities must support the goals and objectives.

Criteria Scoring Rubric	Excellent 5 Points	Very Good 4 Points	Good 3 Points	Needs Improvement 2 Points	Does Not Meet Criteria 1 Point
<b>Benefit to Students</b> Details the manner in which students will benefit from the work done during the sabbatical leave.	Includes substantial information demonstrating how student learning will be enhanced.	Includes significant/clear information demonstrating how student learning will be enhanced.	Includes sufficient information with limited details to demonstrate how student learning will be enhanced.	Includes minimal information with no details to demonstrate how student learning will be enhanced.	Does not include information demonstrating how student learning will be enhanced.
<b>Benefit to Discipline/ School</b> Explains the relationship between your proposed area of study or work and your discipline or departmental responsibilities. Thoroughly describes the ways in which you and/or your academic discipline will benefit from this period of extended independent work.	<i>Includes substantial information demonstrating the benefit to the discipline/ department.</i>	<i>Includes significant/clear information demonstrating benefit to the discipline/ department.</i>	Includes sufficient information demonstrating benefit to the discipline/ department.	Includes minimal information demonstrating benefit to the discipline/ department.	Does not include information demonstrating benefit to the discipline/ department.
<b>Benefit to NSU</b> Demonstrates how the purpose or outcomes of this sabbatical project supports the College/ District mission, goals, and/or priorities.	Includes substantial information demonstrating benefit to NSU.	Includes significant/clear information demonstrating benefit to NSU.	Includes sufficient information demonstrating benefit to NSU.	Includes minimal information demonstrating benefit to NSU.	Does not include information demonstrating benefit to NSU.
<b>Appropriate and Detailed Timeline</b> Provides sufficient detail and specificity to demonstrate activities can be completed within timeframe.	Activities are exceptionally specific, thoughtful and detailed and justify the length of time requested.	Activities are very specific, thoughtful, and detailed.	Activities are specific, detailed, and thoughtful.	Activities are either not specific, detailed or thoughtful enough.	Activities are not specific, detailed, or thoughtful.
<b>Previous Sabbatical</b>	Candidate has never been granted a sabbatical leave.	Previous sabbatical leave taken more than 20 years prior.	Previous sabbatical leave taken within the past 10-20 years.	Previous sabbatical leave taken within the past 10 years.	
<b>Seniority</b>	Candidate has more than 20 years' experience	Candidate has 15-20 years' experience with NSU.		Candidate has less than 10 years' experience with NSU.	

Total \_\_\_\_\_

*Addendum IV*  
*Sabbatical Effectiveness Data*  
*Annual Report 2024*

**Dean:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>School &amp; Colleges</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Faculty Name(s)</b>	<b>NSU Funding Amount</b>	<b>Article Published (Title &amp; Journal Name/Date)</b>	<b>Book Published (Title &amp; Publisher Name)</b>	<b>Creative Production</b>
School of Graduate Studies & Research			\$			
College of Liberal Arts			\$			
College of Science, Engineering & Technology			\$			
School of Business			\$			
School of Education			\$			
Robert C. Nusbaum Honors College			\$			
The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work			\$			
Total:			\$			

**Deans submit Annual Report to the NSU Provost & the President.**

(This report is in support of Faculty Professional Development & NSU's R2 status)