

Occasionally Asked Questions

Sabbatical and early leave program

- Wellesley College requires faculty members to make a “strenuous effort” to secure grant support for their sabbatical projects in order to qualify for a fully paid (Plan B) leave. In practice, what does this mean?

Faculty members applying for Plan B leave should ordinarily submit at least three timely and well-developed applications for external grant support.¹ Whenever possible, the grants applied for should include salary offset (i.e., funding that the College receives to replace all or part of the faculty member’s salary).
- Does the funding I am applying for need to cover the entire period of my sabbatical?

No, as long as it includes a portion of the leave period, a grant application can be counted as one of the three that constitute a strenuous effort.
- Can grants that cover the leave period but are not put together specifically for this leave application count? For example, can you count an NSF grant application made a year ago? 6 months ago?

As long as some part of the grant applied for provides funding to the College during the period of the leave, it can count as one of the three required applications. When possible, faculty members submitting major grant applications that will apply to sabbatical periods in the future should inform the Office of Sponsored Research at the time the grant application is submitted in order to streamline the leave application process.
- What if none of the three grants for which I am applying provide salary support and I could have applied for a salary-supported grant?

Wellesley’s generous sabbatical program relies on the willingness of faculty to make a strenuous effort to obtain salary offset or other funding and then to share that funding with the College. If a faculty member is eligible for grants that provide salary support or other funding directly to the College but chooses, for whatever reason, to apply only for grants that do not offer funding to the College, that fact may render the faculty member ineligible for a fully-funded Plan B leave.
- I have an existing grant that provides salary offset during my upcoming leave period. How should this grant be treated on my CFA leave application?

When applying for grants that will overlap a leave period, we ask that you budget for academic year salary during your intended leave period. If your existing grant does not include academic year salary during your leave, we may request that you work with the funder to reallocate some funding for the purposes of academic year salary support. This may include summer salary budgeted for the summer before and/or after an academic year leave. If you do not list any grant that falls during your leave as leave-related, any salary budgeted in that grant during your leave period may still be applied as salary offset. Unless your existing grant covers your full salary for the leave period, you will still be required to submit additional grant applications.

¹ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CFA will relax its normal strenuous search requirement for early leave applications submitted to the CFA in 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24. In those years, assistant professors will be required to submit only one salary-supporting application to an external grant agency in order to be eligible for a fully-paid early leave.

- What if I have already received a major grant for a previous leave?
Many major grant programs (like the NEH) allow the same recipient to receive multiple awards. We encourage you to consult with the Office of Sponsored Research regarding the possibility of a repeat award from specific funders before ruling out another application to any programs.
- Is it permissible to resubmit an application to the same program for a single leave and have it count as two applications?
If you apply for funding during a leave period, and that application is unsuccessful, you may “count” a new application to that same program as a second application, if it is revised and improved. This is only possible in cases when the first application is submitted early enough that there is time for a decision and new application that would also provide funding during the leave period. This option is intended for applications that would provide substantial salary or other financial support to the College if successful.
- One of my grants has an application deadline in the summer before my sabbatical begins. What is the latest deadline possible to allow a grant application to count toward my leave?
All applications normally must be submitted before June 1 preceding the academic year in which the leave will commence (if the leave begins in the fall) or before December 1 (if the leave begins in the spring). If the granting agency’s own internal deadline is later than this date, you must submit an early application to them before the relevant deadline and provide a copy to the Office of Sponsored Research. The College normally cannot pay salary during the sabbatical unless all three required grant applications have been provided to the Office of Sponsored Research by these deadlines, even if the sabbatical has been provisionally approved by the CFA.
- My discipline is a collaborative one, and my grant applications are the result of work done by a team and are being filed jointly. Are there specific requirements for such applications?
The CFA, which approves sabbatical applications, understands that collaboration is the norm in many disciplines. Jointly filed applications, provided they meet all other requirements of the College’s sabbatical program, are welcome. Please be very clear, however, in distinguishing your own contribution to the expected outcome of the grant when you make your application, and provide full information about the identities of your collaborators. The expectation is that the grant, if awarded, would result in salary support for each Wellesley College applicant.
- My field is not one in which salary support is ordinarily part of grant awards. How can I meet the requirements of a fully paid leave?
We encourage all applicants to consult with the Office of Sponsored Research to identify possible outside funding applications. If, after consulting with the Office of Sponsored Research, you determine that you are not eligible for three grants appropriate for your project that would each provide salary support, you may apply for a fully-paid sabbatical leave by including grants that do not offer salary offset. You should apply for as many grants as possible that include salary offset, and you should still complete three applications. If your CFA application will include one or more grants that do not include salary offset, you are encouraged to apply for grants that would afford another substantive benefit to the College by way of indirect funds, equipment, institutional or departmental programs, interdisciplinary or collaborative applications (possibly multi-institutional) and/or student support. Grants intended only to provide funding to the applicant and not the College (like fellowships to cover travel and residence in another location) may be included on a leave application when there are not three suitable options that would provide funding to the

College, but an application with only these types of funding sources normally will not meet the strenuous search standard.

- What happens if one of my salary-supporting grants will only pay me directly, rather than the College? In these circumstances, the Provost's Office normally will arrange for the College to receive funding from you via a payroll deduction, with no impact on your gross pay or the College's retirement contribution. The Office of Sponsored Research and Provost's Office can provide more detailed information about this policy.
- What should I do if three grants are not available? Under what circumstances might a person submit only two?
If, after consulting with the Office of Sponsored Research, you determine that you are not eligible for three suitable grants, you may apply for a sabbatical leave with just two. The Director of the Office of Sponsored Research should confirm to the CFA that such a conversation has taken place and that your strenuous search has not produced three suitable funding possibilities.
- I am eligible for one semester of sabbatical leave, but many of the grants for which I might apply require a year-long commitment. Can I count such grants toward my required three?
You should apply only for grants that you are able and willing to accept. It defeats the purpose of our program if you decline successful grant awards. If you are eligible for only one semester of leave, you should apply only for grants that can be held for a single semester or you should be prepared to request to take unpaid leave to meet the year-long commitment required. If you decline one of the three grants on which your sabbatical approval was based, the CFA may retroactively deny Plan B sabbatical support.
- I am applying for a calendar year leave. May I apply for grants that require me to be on leave for the full academic year?
Again, you should apply only for grants you are able and willing to accept. If your leave is planned for a calendar year and you would not be able to reschedule it across an academic year, whether due to your eligibility or to department staffing needs, you should not apply for academic-year grants.
- Some grants for which I am eligible require successful applicants to relocate and be in residence at a distant location. Can I count such an application as one of my three?
Yes, as long as you are willing to relocate. Again, you should only apply for grants you would be willing to accept. As indicated above, if you decline one of the three grants on which your sabbatical approval was based, the CFA may retroactively deny Plan B sabbatical support.
- Some funders require a pre-application or a letter of inquiry in order to be selected to submit a full grant application. Do such pre-applications count as one of the three proposals required for a strenuous search?
Typically these pre-applications can be done well in advance of the leave application deadline, giving you time to find out if you are selected to submit a full application. The CFA expects you to do this if at all possible. If it is not possible, the CFA decides whether or not to count pre-applications on a case by case basis, depending on the availability of other grants, the apparent likelihood the grant will be successful, and the fullness of detail in the pre-application letter or form(s). In some science fields a sequence of preliminary, followed by full, invited proposals is

starting to be the norm; in such fields, where a panel of experts reviews the preliminary proposal, the CFA will normally regard a preliminary proposal as one of the required three applications.

- Can the Mellon New Directions Program be one of the three funding sources?

Yes. The Mellon New Directions Program does provide salary offset, and so an application to this program can be included as one of the three required proposals.

- I received a grant from an institution to attend a semester-long workshop during my leave that includes a stipend that is strictly for reimbursement of local expenses (rent, food). Will I be required to share this portion of my grant with the College as salary offset?

The answer to this question is determined on a case-by-case basis, but normally, since such a stipend is not salary but rather a per diem for reimbursement for local expenses, it will not be used as salary offset.

- I was awarded one of the three grants listed on my application. Do I still have to apply to the other two agencies?

Yes, unless the grant you were awarded is for full salary, you must still apply for the remaining grants listed in your application.

- If I apply for additional salary-supporting grants beyond those listed on my CFA leave application, and one or more of those grants are successful, will I be required to share any portion of those grants as salary offset with the College?

Normally, any salary offset awarded during the leave period should be shared with the College, even if the relevant grant application was not specifically required by the CFA.

- If I am not ready to apply for grant support, can I still have a fully paid sabbatical?

Yes, if you "cash in" two semesters of leave eligibility, you can take a one-semester fully paid sabbatical under a modified Plan A without a strenuous search to secure funding.

- I am eligible for sabbatical leave but uncertain as to whether I will be returning to the College after my leave. Can I still take the sabbatical leave for which I qualify?

Leaves with pay (sabbatical or early leaves) are provided as an investment in a faculty member's future professional contributions to the College. Accordingly, a faculty member on paid leave is required to return to active teaching for at least two years following completion of the sabbatical leave (one year in the case of an early leave) unless the Provost indicates otherwise in writing to the faculty member.

- I am currently on sabbatical leave, and an opportunity elsewhere has arisen that I find so attractive that I am considering not returning to the College. What are my options?

As stated above, a faculty member is required to return to the College after sabbatical leave for two years or be subject to a penalty, calculated in the amount of 65% of their annual base salary.

- I am getting ready to apply for my last sabbatical leave before retirement. Am I still required to make a strenuous search for outside funding in order to qualify for a Plan B leave?

The College operates a "last leave" policy for faculty who are close to retirement. Under the terms of this policy, a faculty member who has discussed retirement plans with the Provost may apply for

a Plan B sabbatical without meeting the requirement of a strenuous search for outside funding. A faculty member who has applied for and received a last leave under this policy is not eligible to apply for any further sabbatical leaves from the College.

- I've just taken my last College-supported sabbatical leave. Am I required to return to teach at the College for a specified period of time?

Yes, normally. The Provost encourages faculty taking last leaves to meet with him at the time the leave application is due to discuss expectations about returning to the College. Unless a special agreement is reached to waive this requirement, you must return to the College for two years after taking your last leave.