

2026 URTPS Sabbatical Guidelines (revised Spring 2026)

A. Helpful information about the sabbatical process

The number of sabbaticals awarded each year is based on the number of faculty eligible for sabbaticals in that year. According to the SSU Sabbatical Policy, “SSU shall grant no fewer than twelve percent (12%) of the total number of campus faculty unit employees eligible to apply for a one-semester leave.” Since the number of eligible faculty varies somewhat from year to year, the number of sabbaticals awarded also varies, but has generally been close to 13 or 14 per year. For the 2026–2027 academic year, 12 sabbaticals were awarded.

In any given cycle, it is unpredictable how many people will actually apply. On rare occasions, there have been few enough applicants that all requests could be granted. More typically, we receive anywhere from one and a half to two times as many requests as can be filled. The result is that sabbaticals can be relatively easy to obtain one year and very difficult the next.

In years when there are more applications than can be granted, the minimum of 12% of eligible faculty holds, regardless of the quality of the applications. In other words, in a year with many exceptionally strong applications, it would be possible for an application to receive a very high score and still be turned down because there were other applications with even higher scores.

B. How scores are calculated

The SSU sabbatical policy states that scores are based on three weighted criteria:

1. Merit of the project (40%)
2. Nature and quality of the applicant's past service to the university (30%)
3. Years of eligibility since the last sabbatical leave at Sonoma State University (30%)

The merit of the project concerns the proposed activity to be carried out during the sabbatical. While this criterion is the most highly weighted of the three, it is not the only factor. Included in the determination of the project’s merit are: (1) the feasibility of the project; (2) the need for a sabbatical in order to complete the project; (3) the importance of the project to the applicant and to the university; (4) whether the project is time-bound and cannot be deferred without compromising its feasibility or scholarly value; and (5) a past record of scholarship that inspires confidence in the applicant’s ability to complete the project.

Past service to the university specifically refers to department, school, and university service—not to professional or community service. This should be service since the last sabbatical, if there has been a previous sabbatical.

C. Guidelines for a Successful Sabbatical Proposal

1. Write a clear narrative explaining the project you are proposing, including details, specific plans, timelines, and outlines of writing, research, professional development, creative projects, etc. If there is particular time urgency to the project (e.g., a collaboration opportunity, timing of a grant proposal, a book contract), please include this information. Also include information about the value of the sabbatical to you personally as an instructor and scholar (for instance, articles used as materials in class), as well as to the university at large.
2. The project narrative should be written in such a way that both the project itself and its significance are clear to readers with a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds.
3. Include a section of the narrative that covers service since the last sabbatical.
4. Submit a current CV, highlighting (literally highlighting, in a color that stands out) scholarship and service since the last sabbatical (or since the hiring date, if there has not been a prior sabbatical). Note that past scholarship gives an indication of the likelihood that an applicant will be able to complete the proposed project.
5. Avoid submitting proposals that are dependent upon external factors beyond the applicant's control (e.g., projects that require collaborators at SSU or external institutions to also be awarded sabbaticals; projects that require funding or grants to be awarded; etc.).
6. If you are not granted a sabbatical, you are always welcome to request feedback from the committee. This will help you strengthen your proposal in the next cycle. If you simply resubmit the same proposal in subsequent years, your "years since last sabbatical" score will improve, but your "merit" and "service" scores will not.
7. Sabbaticals are intended for work that is beyond the scope of activities a faculty member normally engages in during the academic year, as expressed in CBA 27.1: "A sabbatical leave is for the purpose of enhancing the university educational environment and facilitating the professional development of eligible faculty unit employees by affording opportunities for sustained focus on research, scholarly and creative activity, instructional improvement, or professional currency."

D. For Department Chairs applying for a sabbatical

When the applicant is a Department Chair, they must also, in their role as Chair, provide a written statement of the impact of the sabbatical on the department. The SSU Sabbatical Policy states: “The Department Chair shall forward the proposal along with a written statement to the Dean of the School or Library regarding possible effects on the curriculum and operation of the department should the sabbatical be granted (CBA 27.6).” This is a straightforward factual statement, not an evaluative document.