

Memo from Dr.Sandy Shugart

March, 2010

Thanks for keeping me informed on the upcoming conversations concerning the future of sabbaticals at Valencia. I am so pleased we can fund these experiences and think they are even more important in light of the demanding work-loads our faculty have taken on in the past couple of years to assure students have access to courses they require.

Since you'll be looking at the policy and procedures, I'd like to offer just a couple of thoughts for the discussion group to consider.

First, I would love to see the program focus more on faculty renewal than on measurable value to Valencia. We already have a robust program of Endowed Teaching Chairs that rigorously requires value to Valencia. To me the goal of sabbaticals, going forward, should be renewal of faculty. This may mean tending the intellectual fires by studying, reading, or travelling in an area that is deep interest, but not directly related to the discipline taught. Others may want to teach in some exotic location for a term. Some may have a project of scholarship or creative work to do -finish that novel, sculpt that bust, whatever ... the point is to align sabbaticals with renewing the passion of faculty for learning, and thereby contribute to their roles as teachers. So rather than focusing on outcomes for the college, I'd like the program to verify that the professor on sabbatical is doing something that is deeply interesting and renewing to him/her as a learner. There are boundaries, of course, but they should be very broad and subject to good judgment. I believe this thrust aligns sabbaticals more with the tradition in the rest of higher education.

Second, I'd like to broaden participation. Even in our tight budget times, the cost of doing six or eight sabbaticals a year rather than two or three is manageable. Let's be inclusive as much as we can.

Third, I'd like the process to be as simple and painless as possible. If an eligible professor has a good plan for his/her renewal, that's enough for me. The selection process shouldn't feel like a grant competition, but like a planning exercise.

Finally, since we recently have not been able to predict the number of sabbaticals we can readily fund in any given year, I'd prefer the committee first verified that all the applicants are eligible and that they have acceptable plans. If a plan needs to be refined or strengthened, the committee could offer counsel and do a second review after revision. If we have more applications that we can fund, we'll need to find a way to rank the applications, but it could just as easily be on the number of years of labor without rest as on some criteria applied to the plan. I'd like to hear the committee's thoughts on the options that we could create here.