



**To:** Deans and Department Heads/Chairs/School Directors

**From:** Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs *RF*  
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**Cc:** President and Provost  
Academic Affairs Council  
Associate Deans for Research and Faculty Affairs  
Faculty Senate President and Vice President  
Human Resource Division Directors

**Date:** May 1, 2023

**Subject: Use of Special Leave to Support Faculty Receiving Prestigious and Highly Prestigious Awards and Fellowships**

- Purpose.** To provide support to recipients of prestigious and highly prestigious awards, both for the benefit of the faculty member and as a motivator to help increase the University's share of these awards.
- Background.** When considering applying for a prestigious or highly prestigious award or fellowship, one challenge faculty face is arranging the necessary leave to be able to participate in the requisite activities of the award. In the past, on an *ad hoc* basis, Faculty Affairs has worked with individual faculty members to use Special Leave (Faculty Handbook [Section 2.14.2](#)) to help them take advantage of these opportunities. However, it is likely that many faculty are not aware of this option and may have passed up opportunities to apply for prestigious or highly prestigious awards or fellowships as a result.
- Solution.** In the coming year, Faculty Affairs will be promoting and more widely communicating the availability of Special Leaves for recipients of prestigious and highly prestigious awards. We will work with faculty members and their department and college to appropriately structure and use Special Leave to support their participation in the prestigious or highly prestigious award activities. In so doing, we will abide by the following principles:
  - > *We will work to ensure there is no financial "penalty" to the faculty member for taking this opportunity, especially as it relates to the additional costs that would be incurred while they are in residence elsewhere while maintaining their primary residence.*

Per the Faculty Handbook language related to research leaves, recipients of a special leave "may receive additional compensation from other approved sources up to a total equal to their annual salary from the university. They may also obtain additional funds from external sources to cover expenses for travel, research, administrative assistance, and the purchase of relevant materials. Documentation of all external earnings and expected

payments is required and must be reviewed and approved by the department head, chair, or school director and provost.”

- > *Wherever possible, we protect a faculty member’s eligibility for taking a research leave, so they do not have to use their earned research leave to take advantage of their award opportunity.*

This does not mean that faculty member is then entitled to take their regular research leave whenever they want but it will preserve their eligibility to do so when it is amenable to the department/college.

- > *We will recognize and try to account for the financial needs of the department in covering classes or other responsibilities while the faculty member is in residence elsewhere.*

Each award or fellowship is unique, and the use of Special Leave allows flexibility in both the length of leave and percentage of salary paid by Virginia Tech to the faculty member, as well as being available to faculty who are not otherwise eligible for research leave (i.e., non-tenure track, pre-tenure, not enough years of service).

- > *We will prioritize the use of Special Leaves for faculty who receive prestigious and highly prestigious awards as defined by the AAU.*

A listing of prestigious and highly prestigious awards and fellowships (using data from Academic Analytics) can be found on the [Faculty Affairs External Awards and Fellowships website](#).

We welcome your collaboration in communicating the availability of Special Leaves broadly to your faculty as a way to support faculty members seeking out prestigious and highly prestigious awards and fellowships even when a traditional research leave is not available to them.

Please let us know if you have any questions.