

Welcome to Column 13 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several anonymous sources. All columns are archived on our committee's page on the SWS website <http://newmedia.colorado.edu/~socwomen/about/career.html>

Disclaimer: The author of this column responds to both hypothetical questions and specific questions posed by SWS members. The situations addressed in the column are typically NOT reflective of the author's own personal life or current professional status.

July 24, 2006
HEY JANE!

"I have a sabbatical coming up, what are some interesting ways I could spend this time and what steps do I need to take to make it happen?"

JANE SAYS:

Sabbaticals are one of the wonderful perks of working in academia. Think of this as a time that you can catch up on work you've been *meaning* to do or as a time to delve into something new and different.

First of all, you should get to know your institution's policy well in advance of being eligible for sabbatical. Some things to find out include: When are you eligible - every seventh year is typical. Is it automatic or do you need to apply and if so when? Is there a rolling or flexible deadline or one firm deadline? It is not uncommon for the application deadline to be six months to a year in advance of the sabbatical. So be prepared to plan ahead. Who approves your application? It may be your department, dean, provost, president, or some combination of these. Is it a competitive process or is nearly everyone approved? Will you receive full pay or partial pay? A common formula is full pay for a semester (or quarter) or half pay for a year. Are you obligated to return to your institution for at least a semester (quarter) or year after your sabbatical? Do you need to produce a report of what you accomplished upon your return?

Next, you should investigate what types of activities are acceptable to engage in during your sabbatical and what criteria your institution uses to evaluate proposals. Examples of activities that are likely to be considered (depending on the institution) include those that focus on: scholarly enrichment, improved teaching, extended travel and study, or contribution to professional growth and expertise. Examples of activities that might not be acceptable (again depending on the institution) include: normal course preparation, rest and relaxation, or consulting projects that lead to a commercial product. In your proposal, you might consider 1) providing a clear work plan, 2) showing that your goals are congruent with the goals of your department, college, or university, 3) demonstrating how you will contribute to enhancing the university's reputation, and 4) explaining how your work will contribute to the educational experience of your students.

Once you've navigated all the rules for eligibility and criteria for proposals, it's time to decide what "do." You may choose to work on a current project or to start something new. Particularly for post-tenure sabbaticals it might be fun to take some time to consider new ideas or new directions. In choosing what to do, you will want to find out what kind of "output" is expected of you? Will you be expected to produce a book manuscript or a new article or two? Is it okay to use your time for data collection? Will you be expected to have developed a brand new course or is it okay to make substantial changes to existing courses?

If you need to supplement your salary in some way, there are a number of organizations that provide financial support or other types of support. To find out about these organizations, you might look at the foundations that are acknowledged in books and articles written by your colleagues. You might also check with your campus study abroad or global education office or the office of sponsored research or foundations relations office (what these offices are called and what kind of support they offer will vary widely from place to place). Here's a list of a few organizations that provide some type of support:

- * Sabbatical in the Park (National Park Services) -
<http://www.nature.nps.gov/Sabbaticals/>
- * Fulbright fellowships –
<http://www.cies.org/>
- * American Council of Fellows Program (for administrators) -
http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Fellows_Program1
- * Faculty Fellows Internship –
<http://www.ielnet.org/>
- * American Philosophical society fellowship -
<http://www.amphilsoc.org/gratns/sabbatical.htm>
- * Social Science Research Instructional Council –
<http://www.ssrlic.org>
- * Supreme Court Fellows Program -
<http://www.fellows.supremecourtus.gov/>
- * Newberry Library Fellowship in the Humanities -
<http://www.newberry.org/research/felshp/fellowshome.html>
- * Huntington Library Fellowships -
<http://www.huntington.org/ResearchDiv/Fellowships.html>
- * East-West Center for Asia Pacific Leadership Program
<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/res-vf.asp>
- * American Swedish Institute (Malmberg Scholarship and Study Program) -
<http://www.americanswedishinst.org/scholarship.htm>

So, you've worked hard to line up a great sabbatical opportunity and now it's here. You may be wondering, "how should I manage my time during sabbatical?" Of course, this will vary widely from person to person. Some people will focus 40+ hours a week on their research or writing. Often in order to adjust to a less structured environment, people

will make up “rules” for themselves – “I have to write for two hours before I can check my e-mail.” On the other hand, it is also not unusual for people to work about 20 hours a week on research/writing. Many people use part of this time to “catch up” on academic reading. Keep in mind that normally you spend a great deal of time each week teaching, attending meetings and doing administrative tasks. Also keep in mind that if you have traveled to another country or another city, that taking advantage of what the geographic area and local culture has to offer will likely sharpen your sociological imagination which will contribute to your teaching and give you new perspective on your research and writing. Just as during non-sabbatical time, it will be up to you to decide how to best balance your personal and professional goals, the needs of your family, your students and your colleagues, and all the other things that make up life.

For many people, staying away from the office is a must – one great reason to “go away” – but if you stay in town, you might choose to make it clear that you are not available for departmental activities. If you are supervising graduate students, you should let them know as soon as possible that you will be on sabbatical and make appropriate arrangements. If you are staying in town for your sabbatical, you might continue to work with graduate students, but may want to suggest meeting somewhere away from campus. Some students might be able to reach a particular milestone before you leave or may choose to wait until you return. You might arrange to participate in a conference call for exam, proposal or thesis or dissertation defenses. In some cases it might be best for the student to work with another faculty member. For students on the job market, you could consider writing a letter of recommendation ahead of time and leaving it on file with the department office manager. In the letter you can explain that you wrote it in advance because you are away and give instructions for how the hiring department might contact you with follow-up questions.

If you are planning to leave town, there will be a whole host of arrangements that need to be made. A major concern for you will probably be housing in your new destination as well as what to do with your own house or apartment while you are gone. You might find a graduate student or visiting faculty at your institution who would be able to rent or sublet your space while you are away. A cool source for looking into swapping homes is: <http://sabbaticalhomes.com/> If you have someone living in your home it will be important to set up some kind of contract outlining both your responsibilities and the renter’s (or guest’s) in terms of bills and care of the home. You will also need to make arrangements to make sure your bills are paid on time. On-line bill pay makes this much easier than in the past, but there may be some bills that don’t have that option available. And you may be traveling to a place where internet service is relatively inaccessible or unreliable.

Hopefully if your travel involves affiliation with an academic (or other) host institution, they will be willing to help you make arrangements for visas, housing, transportation, utilities, internet, and childcare, schooling, and/or pet care. Be forewarned that all of these arrangements can often be quite frustrating, but hopefully you will have a productive and fun sabbatical and it will all be worth it.

CAVEAT to all professional advice: Always check with your departmental colleagues, chair, dean, etc. to find out what the norms and expectations are in your institution. And consult with your professional mentors to determine what is most appropriate in your specific situation.

I hope this helps! Stay tuned next month for Question 14: “I am in a position where I occasionally have to help manage conflict between faculty members or between graduate students (or between faculty members and graduate students). Do you have any suggestions for dealing with these situations?”

-- Jane

Do you have a question for Jane? E-mail it to lara-foley@utulsa.edu.