SP.26.01
November 9, 2026

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND SENATE PROCEDURES
(Second Reading; Information)

SP.26.01 Proposed Revision to the *Statutes*, Article IX, Section 7a – Sabbatical Leaves and Unpaid Leaves of Absence for Members of the Faculty (ST-90)

BACKGROUND
On April 22, 2025, the University Senates Conference (USC) transmitted ST-90 to our Senate. Containing potential amendments to the *Statutes*, Article IX, Section 7.a, it was originally proposed by the Chicago Senate. These proposed changes would expand the list of those eligible to apply for sabbatical leaves to include non-tenure system faculty with certain modified professor titles, as well as instructors and lecturers. The Chicago Senate's background statement argues that the number and proportion of academic staff ineligible for tenure has risen, that these individuals engage in teaching, research, and service, and that many spend their entire careers as faculty at a University of Illinois campus without being eligible to apply for a paid sabbatical.

Per the *Statutes*, Article XIII, Section 8.a.1, proposed amendments to the *Statutes* initiated by a Senate are then considered by each Senate, which "may act on the proposed amendment in accord with its own established procedures, including the right to concur, to modify, or to reject any proposed amendment or proposed statutory text". The Senate Committee on University Statutes and Senate Procedures (SP) began its consideration of ST-90 in fall 2025 under the agenda item SP.26.01. Throughout the fall and early spring, SP solicited input from the Senate Committees on the Budget (BG), Faculty and Academic Staff Benefits (FB), and General University Policy (GP), as well as the Office of the Provost and Council of Deans (via the Provost). That input, including the Office of the Provost April 2, 2026 presentation to SP, is attached. The proposed textual changes are straightforward, though questions of the impact of these changes on our campus may not be.

Context:

- The *Statutes* describe sabbatical leave as "study, research, or other pursuit, the object of which is to increase the faculty member's usefulness to the system" (Article IX, Section 7.a.).
- The *Statutes* state that a sabbatical "may be granted" on the recommendation of the department head or chair with the concurrence of the dean, "subject to approval by the chancellor/vice president, the president, and the Board of Trustees" (Article IX, Section 7.a.); and that recommending officers understand the department will, so far as is

practicable, carry on work that must continue during the leave "without increase in the departmental budget" (Article IX, Section 7.b).

- This amendment only changes who is eligible to apply.
- Provost Communication #19, which currently applies to tenure system faculty, lists criteria in section 2.1 as follows:

    - "How each activity will improve the applicant's capabilities for carrying out the objectives of the academic unit and the University.
    - How the proposal relates to the campus goal of excellence in teaching, research, and service.
    - Where appropriate, how the proposed activity will help the applicant to better serve particular needs of the State of Illinois and the nation."

The Senate held a first reading of SP.26.01 on October 19, 2026. A summary of the discussion will appear in the minutes of the October 19, 2026, Senate meeting. Senators have been asked to consider the following questions regarding the proposed changes in ST-90:

- **What is the usefulness to the University for non-tenure system faculty to be eligible for sabbatical leave?**
- **Do you suggest any changes to the wording of the proposed *Statutes* amendment?**
- **If the *Statutes* are revised, what role should the Senate have in shaping the implementation on our campus?**

SP received input from FB[1], GP, and the Office of the Provost, and each body's full response is attached. The data and feedback received reflect the nuanced perspectives and interests represented by these bodies. While both committees note implementation concerns, FB is supportive and GP opposes the amendment. The Office of the Provost's presentation provided information and data, including models of potential impact, but did not state a position on ST-90.

Two senators commented at the October 19, 2026, first reading, and SP has since received written feedback from two more senators as well. Much like the input from the committees consulted, this feedback addressed both the revision itself and its implementation. The

[1] FB submitted a preliminary memo with a summary of their comments on November 21, 2025. A revised memo dated September 15, 2026 (attached), written by FB's former chair with the current chair copied, states: "This memo to SP replaces the preliminary version of FB.26.02 that had been sent to SP Chair David Dalpiaz in November 2025." The revised memo reflects FB's discussions through April 28, 2026, and notes that "[s]poradic attendance of some elected members complicated discussions and precluded a vote formalizing recommendations during the spring." The revised memo was prepared before FB's first meeting of the 2026-27 year and shared with FB members in Box.

comments below are selected from the committee responses and senator feedback; each committee's full response is attached.

Comments and Feedback on Proposed Revision to the *Statutes*

- FB's memo states that it "is supportive of the concept and purpose of ST-90, with qualifications." In their recommendations they assert that "[t]he status quo is insufficient" and recommend a formal, standardized process, with institutional support ideally codified in the *Statutes*. They further recommend including eligibility for all specialized faculty title categories after the required service duration with the reasoning that "every argument that has been suggested for restricting eligibility by titles…can be rebutted with counter arguments just as rational and compelling." They also suggest considering a term other than "sabbatical." FB notes that the University now lags many peer institutions in providing such a process, reducing recruitment and retention.
- GP does not support ST-90 as presented and commented that "[t]he background statement of the revision gives no rationale for why faculty members who are not in a tenure-track position should be eligible for sabbatical support," nor how teaching-focused faculty would increase "the faculty member's usefulness to the system" during a sabbatical. They disagree with Chicago's assessment that there is "no statutory connection between sabbatical leaves with pay and tenure status" and assert that the current *Statutes* define faculty as only those on tenure track (Article II, Section 3. A.(1)). They note that although this Senate approved broadening this definition in SP.26.02 (Faculty Role in Governance, ST-91), it is still under review with USC. They further assert that Provost Communication #25, Section 8 provides for paid release from teaching duties.
- At the first reading, a senator commented that the revision is a small statutory change that concerns eligibility only, and that implementation is decided at the campus level. They also commented that sabbaticals could give specialized faculty time to develop new courses and revise curricula, in response to student and disciplinary interest. A senator expressed support for ST-90 in solidarity with Chicago colleagues. They further expressed a desire to finalize and send our feedback to USC to allow larger revisions to the *Statutes* to move forward. In written feedback responding to GP's comment on rationale, a senator commented that faculty renewal through sabbaticals or sabbatical-like leave supports the University's long-term success and sustainability, and that the positive effects it has on retention of non-tenure-track faculty will be crucial to that success. Additional written feedback identified potential statutory language for USC to consider as it reconciles ST-90 with other proposed revisions to the *Statutes*.[2]

[2] Over the 2021-25 academic years, the Urbana-Champaign Senate independently considered other proposed revisions to the *Statutes* (ST-83) that also contained potential changes to the definition of "faculty." In 2024, the Senate voted to reject or modify many of its changes (SP.22.01), and in 2025 to reject ST-83 in full (SP.25.02). Further, the Urbana-Champaign Senate approved SP.25.01 on November 10, 2025 (designated ST-94 by USC), a proposed revision to the *Statutes* that would modify Article II, Section 3.a.(2) to incorporate the term "principal" as a modifier for instructors and lecturers. ST-90 lists the titles of eligible faculty in Article IX, Section 7a, and those titles would need to be reconciled with the "principal" modifier if both ST-90 and ST-94 were approved by all three senates.

Comments and Feedback on Implementation and Potential Impacts

- FB's concerns are primarily about implementation details and effects, and they recommend an ad hoc committee to work with the Office of the Provost on implementation planning, with most of its members elected from multiple specialized faculty titles. They also suggest using "broad-based merit criteria" instead of titles when determining prioritization.
- If implemented, GP highlights that the Office of the Provost estimates about 70 specialized faculty on sabbatical per year[3] under a more inclusive model and about 20 under a less inclusive one ("Extending Sabbatical Leaves to Specialized Faculty", page 8), and that the "impact on students…should be a priority consideration." They assert that because sabbaticals are not centrally funded, units bear the cost of coverage, and the budgetary constraints may result in units approving fewer requests for sabbaticals overall. GP also expressed concern that, where positions are not temporarily filled, a semester's leave for specialized faculty whose duties are primarily teaching could significantly affect a unit's teaching mission and student access to required courses. They state that the Executive Vice Provost anticipates minimal impact on Provost Communications.
- Feedback during the first reading included encouragement to consider the more inclusive of the two models referenced by GP (memo, page 2); a suggestion that the campus should consider ways to support the cost differentials that fall on individual units; and a suggestion that the Senate discuss what role it should have in implementation.
- SP notes that ST-90, if adopted into the *Statutes*, would require edits to the relevant Provost Communications as well as additional departmental guidance around sabbatical approval.

SP invites further feedback from the Senate on any of the information shared.

RECOMMENDATION FROM UIC ST-90

Text to be deleted is ~~struck through~~ and text to be added is <u>underlined</u>.

PROPOSED REVISION TO THE *STATUTES*, ARTICLE IX, SECTION 7.a – SABBATICAL LEAVES AND UNPAID LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY

[3] The Office of the Provost estimates approximately 70 annual sabbaticals under the more inclusive model, assuming that all 412 specialized faculty meeting the modeled eligibility criteria take one semester of sabbatical leave every six years (412 ÷ 6 ≈ 69 annually). Applying the upper end of the 60–65% utilization rate observed among eligible tenured faculty yields approximately 45 additional sabbaticals annually (69 × 65% ≈ 45). Assuming these leaves supplement rather than displace existing sabbaticals, the annual total would increase from 159 to approximately 204 (159 + 45) using 2024–25 figures, or from 145 to approximately 190 (145 + 45) using 2025–26 figures. Actual utilization rates among specialized faculty may differ, and these illustrative estimates are intended only to convey the potential scale of SP.26.01's impact, rather than predict actual sabbatical uptake or approvals.

Section 7. Sabbatical Leaves and Unpaid Leaves of Absence for Members of the Faculty

a. On the recommendation of the head or chair of a department with the concurrence of the dean of the college or on recommendation of the dean or director of an independent university unit and subject to approval by the chancellor/vice president, the president, and the Board of Trustees, a member of the faculty who has the rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor, or the rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor modified by "teaching," "research," or "clinical," or the rank of instructor or lecturer with or without "senior" modification and who has served the University of Illinois System for the periods indicated below on full-time appointment ~~as an assistant professor or in higher rank~~ since the faculty member's original appointment or since the termination of that faculty member's last leave on salary is eligible to apply for and may be granted a sabbatical leave of absence with pay for the purpose of study, research, or other pursuit, the object of which is to increase the faculty member's usefulness to the system. The following options are available:

(1) After completion of eight appointment years of full-time service:

Two semesters at 2/3 salary

Or

One semester at full salary

(2) After completion of six appointment years of full-time service:

Two semesters at ½ salary

Or

One semester at full salary

(3) After completion of three or four appointment years of full-time service, in cases where the interest of the department and the University of Illinois System would clearly be served thereby, and provided that granting of leave does not involve expense to the system in excess of the portion of salary which is released in consequence of taking such leave, the following options are available:

After three years: One semester at ½ salary

After four years: One semester at 2/3 salary

(4) Faculty on "Y" (11 month) appointments may be granted sabbatical leaves, subject to the other general conditions of this section as follows: After completion of nine years of full-time service, three-fourths of an appointment year at full pay; after completion of eight years of full-time service, one appointment year at two-thirds pay or two-thirds of an appointment year at full pay; after completion of six years of full-time service, one appointment year at half pay or one-half appointment year at full pay; after completion of four years, one-half appointment year at two-thirds pay; after completion of three years, one-half appointment year at half pay or one-fourth appointment year at full pay.

UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND SENATE PROCEDURES
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