



College of Science and Mathematics

2026-2027 EDUCATIONAL LEAVE: GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

PURPOSE: Faculty in the College of Science and Mathematics (CSM) may apply for educational leave in order to pursue professional development in scholarship or teaching related to their discipline. Educational leaves should be designed to provide an enriching experience that augments or expands a faculty member's expertise in an area of interest. Because an educational leave is meant to provide support for a focused period of time away from one's regular roles and responsibilities, faculty are encouraged to consider the value of an off-campus arrangement for part or all of their leave.

Educational leaves represent an investment of time and resources by the faculty member, the academic department, and the university. While professional development of the individual is the primary intended outcome, educational leave projects should be aligned with and contribute to the objectives of the department and university. Applicants should carefully consider the impact of their educational leave accomplishments on departmental practice, such as new research opportunities for students, new research collaborations or expanded research networks, novel teaching approaches, or improved capacity for contributing to new courses or curricula.

Note that educational leaves are not typically granted for the purpose of completing degree requirements or preparing publications describing previously completed work. Applicants are encouraged to speak to the CSM dean about eligibility of their leave proposals prior to submission.

TERMS OF EDUCATIONAL LEAVE: The terms of the educational leave enable a faculty member to elect one full academic year (nine months) at one-half salary or one semester (fall or spring) at full salary for that semester. If the applicant teaches in the summer in lieu of the fall or spring as part of the applicant's contract, the summer may be used for the educational leave. Faculty members are encouraged to conduct their leave activities at an off-campus site. If the one semester option is taken, the remaining semester of that year may not be applied to the accumulation of the six years of service required for educational leave eligibility. With either option, the University will continue to contribute its full share of all established fringe benefits. There is no restriction on the additional earnings of a faculty member while he/she is on an educational leave.

An applicant is expected to follow through with an educational leave once the application is approved and the leave is awarded. If educational leave plans change, the Office of the CSM Dean must be notified immediately so that another candidate may be able to take advantage of the opportunity.

A recipient of an educational leave is expected to return to full-time service at the university for at least one academic year after the leave is completed. The university may require the repayment of the salary paid during such leave if the faculty member fails to return and fulfill this responsibility.

Educational leave may be withheld whenever it is felt that the absence of the candidate for leave would be seriously detrimental to the interests of the department, college or university.

ELIGIBILITY: Educational leave (JMU Faculty Handbook III.J.1.a) is awarded to instructional faculty members by a competitive process within each college.

To be eligible for CSM educational leave the candidate must:

1. Be a full-time faculty member or academic unit head.
2. Be in at least their sixth year of full-time continuous service at James Madison University at the time of application.
4. Complete an additional six full years of continuous service before a subsequent Educational Leave may be awarded with the leave activities to be pursued during the seventh year.
5. Not serve on the CSM Faculty Research and Awards Committee (FRAC).

APPLICATION SUBMISSION: The proposal must be developed in close consultation with the applicant's academic unit head. The applicant must submit **a single PDF file of the full proposal electronically to the dean's office (emuriabd@jmu.edu) by 12:00 pm noon, EDT, November 3, 2025.** Please include the last name of the applicant in the filename. The academic unit head must submit a letter of evaluation under separate cover by the same deadline (see below). **Only full proposals received by this date/time will be considered.**

Proposals must include the following sections:

- I. **Project Summary page** (available for download separately on the CSM Educational Leave web page). This summary must include a short and descriptive project title and a one paragraph (~250 word) abstract including a statement of project objective(s) and the strategy for pursuing them.
- II. **Project Narrative** (~1,250 words; 12 point font). The project narratives will vary with the specific focus and intentions of the applicant. An applicant should not presume extensive knowledge of the subjects, innovations, or strategies on the part of the reviewers. The applicant should therefore provide specific and concise information on the project stated in plain, non-technical language. There is no required format for the narrative; however, the following points should be addressed:
 - Relevant background and motivation for proposed project, including summary of outcomes of previous educational leave projects
 - Objectives and potential for success of proposed activities
 - Description of project activities including timeline and relevant details such as location, collaborators, access to facilities, equipment, or other needed resources
 - Description of impact to applicant, as well as to departmental and/or college-wide objectives
 - Plan for evaluating project impact, and for disseminating project results

III. **Budget and budget justification** (2 page maximum). Applicants should work closely with their academic unit head, who must in turn coordinate carefully with the dean to assure availability of funds and development of a plan for class coverage.

IV. **Curriculum Vitae or resume** (10 page maximum).

The applicant shall provide an up-to-date summary of professional activities and accomplishments, including:

1. Degrees earned and date of conferral.
2. Citation of publications.
3. List of papers presented at professional meetings or other professional presentations.
4. List of academic honors, awards, or fellowships, and dates received.
5. Other pertinent experiences and current activities.

DEPARTMENTAL ENDORSEMENT: In addition to the full proposal, the applicant's academic unit head (AUH) must submit a letter evaluating the merit of the proposed project. A signed copy of the AUH letter must be submitted under separate cover, or emailed as an attachment to the dean's office (emuriabd@jmu.edu) by **12:00 pm noon, EDT, November 3, 2025**.

As academic leader of the department, the AUH should prepare a letter evaluating the applicant's proposal based on the following:

- potential for the proposed project to be a positive professional development opportunity for the applicant;
- contribution of the applicant's proposed objectives to departmental and/or institutional objectives;
- impact of the applicant's proposed absence on departmental functions including teaching, research and service activities if the leave is approved. The letter should confirm arrangements for covering the applicant's teaching and service loads in their absence.
- The letter **must include one** of the following statements:
 - *I have reviewed the applicant's proposal and endorse their plan for educational leave during the proposed period.*
 - *I have reviewed the applicant's proposal and am not able to endorse their plan during the proposed period.*

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: The CSM Dean's Office will notify all applicants of final decisions by mid-December, 2025. Applicants whose educational leave proposals are not funded are eligible to apply during the next funding cycle.

The award of educational leaves will be based on the following criteria:

1. Proposals must be written in a clear and concise manner and must adhere to the proscribed format.
2. CSM educational leave proposals will be evaluated by the Faculty Research and Awards Committee (FRAC) and Associate Dean. Proposal review will be guided by the **CSM Educational Leave – Review Criteria** (see Appendix – this document).
3. Based on panel summary feedback, final determination of awarding will be made by the CSM Dean.
4. Proposals involving the use of human subjects must include confirmation of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as described in policy number I:01:06.
5. Projects involving use of live, vertebrate animals must include confirmation of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approval, as described in policy number VI:01:02.

Funding for all approved educational leaves will be made available for the term indicated in the proposal. Approved educational leaves may not be rescheduled except by approval of the Dean.

FINAL PROJECT REPORT: At the completion of the educational leave interval, an evaluative report describing project accomplishments and impact must be submitted to the awardee's academic unit head and the CSM dean's office. This final report is due no later than 30 days after completion of the leave. Note that year-long leaves are completed at the end of the spring semester and thus the final report is due 30 days after the end of the spring semester. **The project report will be considered in the subsequent annual evaluation and will weigh heavily in any consideration of merit-based salary adjustments.**

The final project report must include:

1. description of accomplishments, new projects or collaborations formed, and new skills or products developed during the leave period,
2. the impact of the project on the leave recipient, and contributions to their home department, the college, and the university,
3. planned future activities related to the project that expand or extend the impact and contributions of the leave.

In addition to the final project report, educational leave recipients are expected to present their work to the university community through standard departmental and/or college venues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Any and all presentations, publications, disseminations or products resulting from leave-supported activities should acknowledge institutional support by including the following statement: *"This work was supported by a grant to [recipient name] from the James Madison University Program of Grants for Faculty Assistance."*

EDUCATIONAL LEAVE CHECK LIST:

- Project Summary page including signature, title, and abstract (attach page)
- Narrative (1250 words max.; 12 point font)
- Relevant background and motivation for proposed project, including summary of outcomes of previous educational leave projects
- Objectives and potential for success of proposed activities
- Description of project activities including timeline and relevant details such as location, collaborators, access to facilities, equipment, or other needed resources
- Description of impact to applicant, as well as to departmental and/or college-wide objectives
- Plan for evaluating project impact, and for disseminating project results
- Applicants are advised to carefully consider the CSM Educational Leave – Review Criteria while writing their narrative (see Appendix – this document).
- Budget and budget justification (2 page max)
- CV or resume (10 page max)
- Signed departmental endorsement, submitted by AUH under separate cover.

APPENDIX

CSM EDUCATIONAL LEAVE – REVIEW CRITERIA

NOTES FOR APPLICANTS. CSM Educational Leave Proposals will be evaluated by the FRAC and Associate Dean. Based on panel summary feedback, final determination of awarding will be made by the CSM Dean. The FRAC is composed of one faculty representative from each department/school. A clear application will be written at a level easily understood by a general professional STEM audience. Applicants are encouraged to briefly explain discipline specific terminology and techniques. The FRAC may consult relevant Academic Unit Heads to ensure technical details of the applicant's scholarship and pedagogy are well understood by the review panel.

Faculty applicants are invited to discuss this document or the review procedure with their Academic Unit Head, their FRAC representatives, and/or the Associate Dean.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FAC REVIEWERS. Reviewers, please score the strengths and weaknesses of each application in each of the following three categories (A-C). In addition to numerical scores, committee members and Associate Dean will provide a summary evaluation to the CSM Dean.

Category A – Scholarship and/or Teaching. Please assess the proposed scholarship and/or teaching activities. Is there a strong argument for how leave time makes the proposed activities possible, and in ways that would not be possible, feasible, or reasonable without the support? Does the applicant provide a timetable for the proposed activities that appears feasible with the resources described?

A-1 – Sustainable Scholarship. Does the proposal clearly articulate how educational leave will foster development, expansion, and/or continuation of a sustainable program of scholarship? Does the applicant describe what sustainable means for their program (*i.e.* seeking or resubmitting federal grants; research partnerships and/or collaborations; simply having sufficient time to focus on study)?

A-2 – Growth as an Educator. Does the proposal clearly describe how educational leave will foster their continued development as an educator? Does the applicant provide a convincing argument that leave time would positively impact new research opportunities for students, novel teaching approaches, or improved capacity for contributing to new courses or curricula.

Category B – Measures of Productivity. Does the proposal describe a well-articulated and clear plan for products¹ and outcomes that will directly result from educational leave? If these products and outcomes are new, has an anticipated completion date or timetable been described? For continuation projects, does the proposal clearly explain how and why educational leave will significantly and positively impact project development and/or completion?

Category C – Impact of Proposed Activities. Does the proposal make a convincing argument for how the outcomes and products of educational leave would positively impact the applicant's discipline, department, and the university? These impacts may include novel scholarship in theoretical or applied areas of research, new pedagogical research, new avenues of student involvement, collaborations, or community outreach (or many others). Does the proposal articulate a strategy of how the products/outcomes described in Category B will be assessed, disseminated, and/or realized? Does the level of engagement/impact appear to be a logical match for the proposed activities?

Reviewers will apply the following numerical ranking scale to each of the criteria above:

5 = Excellent: Outstanding proposal in all respects; deserves highest priority for support.
4 = Very Good: High quality proposal in nearly all respects; should be supported if at all possible.
3 = Good: A quality proposal, worthy of support.
2 = Fair: Proposal lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed in this category.
1 = Poor: Proposal has serious deficiencies in this category.

Note: Split ratings are allowed, *i.e.* Excellent/Very Good = 4.5, Good/Fair = 2.5, etc. The lowest possible summed score from a single reviewer would be a “3” (all Poor). The highest possible summed score from a single reviewer would be a “15” (all Excellent).

Reviewers will submit their numerical scores *prior* to coming to the review meeting. At this meeting, the committee will discuss each proposal, seek clarifications, ask questions, etc. Reviewers may change their numerical rankings during this discussion based on new information or understanding. The committee will provide numerical rankings² and a written summary feedback of strengths and weaknesses for each proposal to the CSM Dean, who will consider the committee’s input and make the final funding decisions.

Confidentiality. The CSM receives proposals in confidence and protects the confidentiality of their contents. For this reason, reviewers must not copy, quote from, or otherwise use or disclose to anyone, including faculty colleagues, graduate or undergraduate students, post-doctoral or research associates, any material from any proposal you are asked to review. When you have completed your review, please be certain to destroy copies of the proposal in your possession³.

Footnotes.

- 1 – Products: Scholarly and/or teaching products including publications, grant proposals, course materials, data sets, assessment tools, software, hardware, new teaching preps or course redesigns, direction or leading of workshops, patents, copyrights, etc. This list is a guide and not exhaustive.
- 2 – Composite (averaged across reviewers) and by-category scores will be provided to the Dean for final evaluation.
- 3 – Modified from NSF Confidentiality Statement: https://www.nsf.gov/pdf/about/participant/NSF_Form_1230P.pdf