

## VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

## A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

*In joint session with*

## B. Finance, Audit and Facilities Committee

Graduate and Professional Student Leave of Absence Policy – Approve Quarterly Leave Policy and Application Fee

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is the recommendation of the administration and the Finance, Audit and Facilities Committee and Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the Regents institute a quarterly leave policy for graduate and professional students with a fee of \$25 per quarter.

BACKGROUND:

1. A graduate or professional student may request a leave of absence for a period from one quarter to one full year.
2. A \$35 fee is required.
3. At any given time, about 7-8 percent of UW graduate or professional students are on leave (~840 to 950).

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE:

1. Shortening degree completion times. National studies show that successful degree completion is mostly closely tied to continuous enrollment/registration (rather than leaves of absence or other interruptions of studies.). Degree completion rates are increasingly important (both in terms of national rankings and for local effectiveness and efficiency). A quarterly leave policy asks graduate and professional students to re-assess their academic plans on a regular basis, and thus should facilitate degree completion. A quarterly leave policy, in contrast to the current year-long option, will make it more difficult for students to drift along without substantive academic planning.
2. Peer practices. Our peers allow leaves of one term (usually a semester); year-long leaves are very rare (indeed, we cannot find evidence of any year-long leaves among comparable public institutions).
3. Nominal fee. The \$25 fee is a nominal one; it will defray the costs incurred to the University in processing the leave, and should not create a financial hardship for students going on leave. (Over the course of one year, the current leave fee is \$35; for a similar period of time under the

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new policy, the total cost would be \$75 – with no charge for summer quarter, which is consistent with general university policy).

#### PROCESS/IMPLEMENTATION:

We will need several months to communicate the change in leave policy, and to set up procedures for processing the leaves. Consequently, this new leave policy would go into effect May 1, 2011.

#### REVIEW AND APPROVALS:

These recommendations have been reviewed and approved by the Interim President, Interim Provost, and the Board of Deans and Chancellors. Gerald Baldasty also met with Sarah Reyneveld (GPSS) and with a representative of the UW Attorney General's office, and representatives of the UW Office of Planning and Budgeting.