

**Focused Study Leave Program  
For Eligible Penn State Faculty Physicians Employed by the Penn State Milton S. Hershey  
Medical Center**

Approved by the Board of Directors, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center 9/29/00

Revised and Updated 5/1/05

Revised and Updated 3/1/08

**Background**

The focused study leave program provides a leave of absence with pay for faculty physicians employed by MSHMC to foster individual physician career development in alignment with the strategic plan of the academic health center.

Originally conceived by the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center Corporation, the program allows a focused period of study, clinical experience or research, which might result in the development of new clinical therapeutic and preventive options for patients, pursuit of new directions and skills in research, or scholarly pursuits to advance the education mission. This opportunity differs from a sabbatical leave in that the focused study leave must clearly be supportive of the strategic focus of the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center/College of Medicine in meeting its missions as defined in its strategic plan.

An important aspect of the focused study leave is that such an opportunity will, in general, be stimulated by the needs and future directions of College of Medicine/Milton S. Hershey Medical Center as defined by the strategic planning process, as well as the needs and interests of individual faculty members. Department Chairs, Division Chiefs, and Institute Directors will be encouraged to identify individuals in their units who could take advantage of the opportunity of the focused study leave to gain expertise in areas that have been designated for development. Such areas include, but are not limited to, rapidly developing new technologies, new therapeutic directions, clinical outcomes research, healthcare quality and improvement, and health administration leadership opportunities. Talented physicians will be encouraged to pursue novel, forward-looking approaches to improve their future clinical practice, research endeavors, and scholarship of teaching and learning.

A select number of awards will be granted each year following review of applications. In general, funded study leaves will be granted for up to a 3-month period, and multiple leave applications from any one clinical unit during the same academic year will be discouraged. Exceptions will be considered if a compelling rationale is presented.

**Compensation**

Physicians granted study leave would continue to receive their regular base salary during this period. Funding will be derived from departmental reserves through academic enrichment funds. Funding from alternative sources will be explored based on compelling circumstances within an individual department. Individual physicians are encouraged to apply for external funding to support the additional costs incurred by the study leave.

## **Procedure**

1. The organization has defined strategy in the Strategic Plan. It is expected that Focused Study Leaves will support strategic needs for the ensuing 3-5 year period.
2. Individual applications will require the explicit support of the Department Chair, and such support will be indicated in a cover letter to the application. The application should address the clinical impact of the absence of the individual physician applicant, and the plans to address this absence during the period of study leave.
3. The Dean will consider the recommendations of the department or division head or unit director in the final review and approval process.
4. A specific application packet is available through the Office of Professional Development website at <http://www.hmc.psu.edu/opd/faculty/sabbatical/index.htm>. The deadline for applications is December 31 for leaves planned during the following academic year.

## **Eligible Participants**

All full-time faculty physicians of Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center are eligible. Physicians granted study leaves would be required to remain on the full-time staff of Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center for a period of at least two years following the completion of the leave. In the event that a physician does not remain on the full-time staff for this entire period, the physician concerned will be required to reimburse Penn State College of Medicine/Milton S. Hershey Medical Center an amount equivalent to the salary paid during the approved study leave.

## **Merit Consideration**

All targeted study leaves are competitive, with recipients chosen on the basis of the quality of their proposals. Because funds for faculty replacements and the financial needs of the Focused Study Leave Program itself are limited, the determination of recipients is based strictly on considerations defined in terms of the applicant's potential and promise of the proposed activity. Purely mechanical considerations such as rank, length of service, number of publications, or total quantity of patient care activity will not be used independently to define merit.

## **Relevant Bibliography**

Shaughnessy S: Sabbaticals in group practice. *Group Practice* 27:8-10, 1978.

Rountree GD: Renew your career - take a sabbatical. *Hosp Health Serv Adm* 24:67-80, 1979.

Gray JD: Notes from a sabbatical. *Pharos* 49:24-25, 1986.

Tait I: Take a sabbatical from general practice. *Br Med J* 295:644-646, 1987.

Reuler JB: Sabbatical. *JAMA* 261:408-410, 1989.

Biebuyck JF: Report on Outcome of Sabbaticals: College of Medicine, The Pennsylvania State University, 1975-1995.