

## Priority Letter: Scheduled Scholarly Research Leave (SSRL)

In Fall 2020, the Faculty Assembly in tandem with initiatives of Provost Agouris, established the Scheduled Scholarly Research Leave (SSRL) Working Group to examine the current policies and practices of the SSRL program. The report, delivered in March 2021, encourages the University to continue its investment in the SSRL program and recommends to develop a sustainable cost structure and operational model to support the program going forward.<sup>1</sup>

With SSRL program, the University invests in faculty scholarship which, in turn, sustains William & Mary's reputation as a pre-eminent public research university. The program aids in recruitment and retention of faculty; garners recognition of our internationally renowned teacher-scholars, and generates revenue through successful proposals for external funding. The SSRL program also allows faculty to meet several of the goals articulated in William & Mary's Vision 2026 strategic plan, including advancing research and scholarship of consequence, and forging global connections. Research-active faculty directly impact student experience, as they deepen curriculum and introduce innovation, expanding international awareness, elevating civic engagement, and inviting community-engaged teaching and learning.

These benefits come at a relatively low cost to the University. Using data on leaves and salary from A&S in 2019-20, the report estimates the net cost of the SSRL program to be \$940,000, or 2.9% of the total salary for tenured faculty. However, these figures overestimate the actual cost of the SSRL program because: 1) some schools do not replace faculty on SSRL; 2) chairs and directors in the A&S report that, particularly since 2019-20, fewer requests for faculty replacements have been approved; and, 3) many faculty receive grants that provide external funding to supplement or replace their salaries while on SSRL.

The Ad Hoc Committee made the following recommendations to support the SSRL program:

- The Provost and Deans read the March 2021 report on the SSRL program (see attached).
- The Provost annually certify that each unit has a written SSRL policy that contains an SSRL-specific definition of “research active.”
- The Provost create and maintain a centralized database of all SSRL policies and definitions of “research-active.”
- The Provost shall annually report to the Faculty Assembly the number, modes, and costs of SSRLs taken during the immediately preceding academic year.
- The University identify a stable source of funding for the replacement faculty necessary to ensure a sustainable curriculum.
- The Office of the Provost collaborate with William & Mary Communications to promote and celebrate the scholarly achievements that result from the SSRL Program.

The University has long recognized the benefits of the SSRL. We encourage the administration to re-double its efforts to regularize its policies and procedures, support replacement faculty, and publicize faculty research and its impact on the W&M community and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> [Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of The Faculty Assembly](#). Review of Scheduled Semester Leave Program. Presented to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Assembly on March 9, 2021. Presented to the Faculty Assembly and accepted by the Assembly on March 16, 2021.