IX. Policies and Guidance

1. Procedures for Reviewing and Approving Major Policy and Planning Initiatives

Major policy and planning recommendations from the Faculty Senate, standing committees, task forces, and other groups will be reviewed and approved through a series of four clearly defined steps:

1. A written draft shall be prepared and approved by the proposing group and submitted to the Governing Council (GC).
   - The GC will circulate the draft proposal to the following for review and written comment: department chairs, Faculty Senate, and other individuals and groups (as appropriate)
   - Written comments shall be returned within 45 days
   - A representative of the proposing group shall discuss the draft proposal at meetings of these reviewing groups if requested

2. After considering written and other comments, the proposing group shall develop and approve a final draft proposal and advance it to the GC, with copies of the written comments.

3. The GC shall review the proposal, revise it if considered necessary, and then take a formal vote to approve it or reject it. Written justification for changes or for rejection shall be returned to the committee of origin.

4. Policy and planning proposals approved by the GC are subject to the approval of the Dean and, in certain matters, by other University officials or committees.
2. Guidance on Use of Discretionary Funds

Summary and Purpose
To provide guidance for determining which expenses may be charged to discretionary funds which are defined as start-up funds, special faculty support funds (such as innovation funds or awards), and any Dean’s allocation funds. These funds should not include pilot funds, conference fee funds or any funds, which are intended for well-defined or restricted use only. The purpose of this guidance is to ensure sound and consistent business practices, timely and accurate recording of expenses, and compliance with tax regulations under the Internal Revenue Code.

Allowable Expenses
Faculty discretionary funds are available to pay for expenses incurred in support of professional activities performed while at SPH. These guidelines do not address expenses related to sponsored research, which are specified by the University and Federal A-133 guidelines.

Typical costs charged to discretionary funds include salary and fringe for research assistants, postdoctoral fellows, or students; professional travel; laboratory and office supplies; publication fees; costs of equipment, books, journals, and electronic resources; and services purchased from research support facilities or other professional support services. Additionally, discretionary funds can be used for faculty salary coverage if approved by the faculty member. With approval from the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement, faculty may be allowed to transfer discretionary funds to another faculty member (e.g. from PI to Co-PIs, from senior faculty to junior faculty, etc). All expenses from discretionary funds need to be fully documented with reference to the professional activity being conducted.

Unallowable Expenses
Discretionary funds are not considered personal compensation and cannot be used to fund overbase payments to a faculty member. In addition, the following items/services may not be purchased using these funds: personal items, personal travel, gifts, or donations. Cell phones are considered personal items, unless purchased to be used exclusively for a specific professional purpose (e.g. a research project).

Unlike personal compensation, discretionary funds are not subject to personal income tax, and therefore may not be spent for any purpose considered personal.

Durable Assets
Durable assets are defined as tangible goods that yield service or benefits over a number of years. Durable assets purchased with discretionary funds are the property of SPH and are permanently retained by SPH. Examples of durable assets include computers, scientific equipment, printers, scanners, etc. Under certain circumstances, upon leaving or retiring from the University, a faculty member may be able to acquire equipment or other items previously purchased with discretionary funds. Items determined eligible for purchase will carry fair market value. Faculty should contact the Associate Dean for Administration to request the purchase of durable assets well in advance of the date of departure from the University.

Unallowable Durable Assets
The following durable assets may not be purchased with discretionary funds: furniture and furnishings, rare books (books with a purchase price above $500), and works of art.

Retirement or Departure of a Faculty Member
Any unspent balances, durable assets, or items of value remain with the School upon the retirement or departure of a faculty member. Ordinarily, no expenditures may be made from discretionary funds after the end of a faculty member’s appointment term. Faculty members considering leaving the School should consult with the Associate Dean for Administration and their department administrator on the disposition
of their remaining discretionary funds. Emeritus faculty may continue to use unspent balances from their discretionary funds to support their research and scholarly activities.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The faculty member or their designee is responsible for:
- Ensuring that expenses charged to discretionary funds are in accordance with this guidance.
- Consulting with the Associate Dean for Administration on any questions related to this policy.

The department administrator is responsible for:
- Ensuring appropriate preparation and approval of requests.
- Raising questions about whether expenses are allowable with SPH Director of Finance.

The SPH finance office is responsible for:
- Ensuring that expenses charged to discretionary funds are fair and equitable to the individual and the University, and ensuring that expenses are made in accordance with this guidance.
3. External Professional Activities

As per the BU Faculty Handbook, faculty are allowed to engage in external professional activities (bu.edu/handbook/ethics/external-professional-activity/). By definition, this policy refers to activities that are external to BU, and as per the policy: "A faculty member may not make use of the name of Boston University or more than minimal use of its facilities, personnel, or equipment in support of external activities." External professional activity is generally limited to twenty percent of the faculty member's total professional effort during their contract year.

For activities conducted external to BU, funds should be paid directly to the faculty member (with no BU involvement). For activities conducted internal to BU, projects should be administered through the Office of Sponsored Programs.

If a faculty member would like to deposit funds earned via external activities into their personal discretionary account at SPH, then after they receive payment directly (with no BU involvement), he/she may donate the funds through our SPH Development Office. The faculty member may direct the funds to support their own research and the funds will be deposited to his/her own discretionary account. However, according to University policy, such contributions do not qualify as a gift and do not carry typical tax benefits because the donation is specified for their direct personal benefit. Any funds contained within discretionary accounts will fall under the guidelines for the proper use of discretionary funds outlined in Section IX.2 including donated funds.
4. Intergovernmental Personnel Agreements

The Boston University School of Public Health is committed to ensuring that our researchers are put in the best possible position to be productive and successful.

As part of this commitment, we strive to provide resources and minimize barriers for faculty to pursue and obtain external funding to support their work. Examples of resources include discretionary funds, pilot awards, grant writing workshops, and sabbaticals. To minimize barriers, we do not place restrictions on awards based on the potential to recover indirect costs. However, due to the administrative and financial implications for our community, there are two restrictions on the use of Intergovernmental Personnel Agreements (IPAs) for coverage at SPH.

As of January 1, 2019, we will only approve IPAs for faculty (new or renewal) up to a maximum coverage of 20% FTE per faculty member. This was first communicated in early 2018, but start date of the new policy was delayed so that faculty would have time to adjust salary coverage as appropriate. The need for this change is driven by the fact that every approval of an IPA is equivalent to approving a grant with a 0% indirect rate. We hope everyone will agree that this approach represents a reasonable compromise in the spirit of fairness and consistency, still allowing support from IPAs to represent a portion of the external funding portfolio.

Staff at SPH can no longer be supported via IPAs. There are many administrative, financial, and legal complexities associated with supporting staff via IPAs. For this reason, we are no longer able to support IPAs for staff at SPH – only faculty.

The form provided by the BU Office of Sponsored Programs for initiating an IPA for SPH faculty is available at bu.edu/researchsupport/formsandpolicies/form-library/.
5. Guidelines for Faculty Leaves

a. Faculty Sabbatical Leaves

Overview
The Boston University School of Public Health (SPH) grants sabbatical leaves for the purpose of encouraging faculty members to engage in scholarly research or other activities leading to professional growth and an increased capacity for service to the University. After each period of at least six years of full-time service at Boston University, faculty members may be considered for a sabbatical leave consisting of one half year at full salary coverage or one full year at 50% salary coverage. To make sabbatical leave possible, responsibilities within the department will be adjusted to take account of the faculty member’s absence. A faculty member on sabbatical leave retains all employee benefits during the leave period.

Eligibility
Full-time faculty members with standard professorial titles (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor) or with Clinical, Research, or of the Practice modifiers of those titles, as well as Lecturers, are eligible for sabbatical leaves. Faculty members may apply for a sabbatical leave after each period of at least six years of full-time service at Boston University. For the purpose of eligibility, full-time is defined as a minimum of 75% effort. Periods of service that include a paid or unpaid leave of absence, a Workload Reduction for Primary Caregivers, or a sabbatical leave does not count towards service eligibility. Faculty members who have received a letter of warning or a notice of non-continuance are not eligible for sabbatical leave until returning to a status of good standing.

Application Process
A request for a sabbatical leave must be submitted for consideration at least six months prior to the proposed start date. The request shall be made in the form of a letter to the department chair that includes the following: (a) a proposed plan for scholarly work or other activity leading to professional growth, (b) a summary of their main responsibilities that will require coverage during their absence, and (c) a summary of their projects/activities and percent coverage that will be supported by outside funders (i.e. NIH, CDC, VA, USAID, foundations, etc.) during the sabbatical leave.

The expectation is that faculty members will continue externally funded activities during the sabbatical leave if the activities are important to the faculty member’s professional growth or are essential to the successful completion of a project. However, in some cases, given the particular nature of the funded activities, it may be acceptable to reassign externally funded activities if it is either (a) not be possible to perform the activities while on sabbatical or (b) not in the best interest of the faculty member’s career development to continue the activities while on sabbatical.

Obtaining external funds to support a sabbatical (via fellowship, grant, Intergovernmental Personnel Agreement, etc) is encouraged but not required. If the sabbatical leave is to be supported by a funding mechanism that prohibits the continuation of other funded activities (e.g. American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellowship), then these details should also be described in the letter.

Decision
The department chair will review the merits of the request with respect to the faculty member’s goals for professional growth and explore options for reassigning the faculty member’s responsibilities during the sabbatical. Within four weeks of receiving the request, the department chair will inform the faculty member of his/her recommendation and forward the request letter and their recommendation to the Dean. The Dean will review the merits of the request and, after consultation with the chair, inform the faculty member of the decision to approve or deny the request. The faculty member will receive a written explanation for the decision.

If approved, the faculty member must agree to return to full-time service for at least one year following the conclusion of the sabbatical leave. If the sabbatical leave will involve a relocation or a suspension of externally
funded activities, then the faculty member should coordinate with the principal investigator and outside funder of each affected project.

A sabbatical request may be denied based on merit and past performance in which case the written explanation will provide feedback intended to help the faculty member improve their sabbatical plan and ensure that the proposed activities allow them to achieve their professional development goals. After considering feedback, the faculty member may submit a revised request without prejudice within one year of denial.

A sabbatical request may be denied because it is not possible for the department to reassign responsibilities during the absence. If a meritorious request is denied for this reason, the applicant and the chair shall devise a plan that would facilitate the coverage of department need to allow the sabbatical in future. In the event that sabbatical is thereafter granted, the year or years of denial on the basis of departmental needs will be credited toward eligibility for the subsequent sabbatical.

A sabbatical request may be denied because there are insufficient resources available at SPH to fund the sabbatical. Unlike the Charles River Campus, SPH utilizes a school-based budgeting system. SPH may establish a cap on the number and/or dollar amount of sabbaticals that will be approved in a given fiscal year. Any caps should be set with the aim of balancing the important role that sabbaticals play in faculty development with the need to responsibly manage the annual budget of the school.

The Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement will receive a copy of each sabbatical decision letter from the Dean to maintain records of all sabbatical applications and approvals. A summary of the data will be reviewed periodically by the Faculty Development Committee and shared annually with SPH faculty.

b. Faculty Vacation Time

Faculty may take up to one month of vacation per year and may be scheduled at a faculty member’s discretion. Faculty are encouraged to arrange for any necessary coverage in advance and notify their department chair and department administrator of their absence. Vacation time does not carry over year-to-year and faculty are not compensated for accrued vacation when they leave Boston University.

c. Faculty Sick Leave

Faculty sick leave follows Massachusetts state law: employees are eligible for a minimum of one hour of earned sick leave for every thirty hours worked and can accrue and use up to forty hours per calendar year. For more information, see bu.edu/hr/policies/federal-and-state-laws/massachusetts-earned-sick-time-law/.

d. Family Medical Leave (FMLA)

In addition to or in conjunction with other leave policies, leave of up to twelve weeks per year may be available to a faculty member for illness or care of a family member (spouse, parent, or child), birth of a child, or placement of a child with the family for adoption or foster care. For more information, see bu.edu/handbook/leaves-absences/faculty-personal-and-family-leave-policies/.

e. Childbirth Leave and Primary Care Giver Workload Reduction Policy

Boston University has several policies that describe the support provided to professorial faculty, lecturers, and instructors who become the primary care giver of a new child through birth, adoption, foster care or guardianship placement, or newly established legal custodial care. The support may take the form of unpaid leave, Paid Absence for Childbirth, and/or Paid Workload Reduction, depending on the individual’s needs and eligibility. Each of these policies are detailed at bu.edu/handbook/leaves-absences/faculty-personal-and-family-leave-policies/.
After reviewing the available policies, faculty should discuss their plans with their department chair and complete the appropriate paperwork with the Faculty Resources Office.
6. Faculty Grievance Policy

Faculty are encouraged to first resolve any grievances with their department chair or the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement. If the grievance remains unresolved, faculty should bring the grievance to the Dean. In cases when the grievance may not be resolved in consultation with SPH faculty and administration, faculty should consult the Boston University faculty grievance policy: bu.edu/handbook/human-resources/grievance-procedure/. Faculty may also consult the University ombuds, an independent and confidential resource available on both the Charles River and Medical campuses: bu.edu/ombuds/.
7. Principles Guiding Use of Space at SPH

The Boston University School of Public Health is primarily based in the Talbot and Crosstown Buildings, with additional space on the 9th floor of the Fuller Building and 4th floor of the R Building (BUSM). We are continuously evaluating the space we have available, balancing our space needs with costs involved in managing our space. To the end of ensuring that all our space decisions are consistent with our values as a school, the following principles guide decisions we make around space.

1. Space is a public good; no single unit owns space and we should be nimble and flexible enough to accommodate shifts and growths in particular areas of the school.

2. All space decisions, in all units, need to be reviewed by the Dean's Office before being implemented to ensure consistency with agreed upon principles. All space-related requests should be directed the SPH Manager of Facilities and Building Operations who will assess the implications and confer with the Dean.

3. Full-time faculty and director-level staff (central or departmental) should have individual offices.

4. Non-director level staff (central or departmental) and part-time faculty who do not need a private office should share offices.

5. Individual offices or relevant private conversation space will be made available for staff or faculty who regularly engage in conversations that would benefit from privacy.

6. If full-time doctoral students or research staff have space, it should be in the form of a cubicle or work station in shared offices that are optimally configured for this purpose.

7. Insofar as possible we will preserve contiguity of research groups to enhance collaboration.

8. All conference rooms should be open to the school community for scheduling via a central system. While we should have sufficient conference rooms for our need, we want to make sure that we do not have redundant conference room space to ensure sufficient office and work space.