

## Maximizing your sabbatical transcript

All right. So, today we're going to dive into something that I think is super relevant to a lot of our listeners. Uh, especially those of you who are, you know, mid-career faculty at a university. We're talking sabbaticals.

Yeah, those precious times.

Precious is right. And to help us kind of dissect this topic and figure out how to get the most out of that time, we're actually tapping into a resource that was created by faculty for faculty.

By us for us.

Exactly. It's called Level Up, a mid-career guide for faculty. And you can find the whole thing on the center for faculty excellence website. But for today, let's zero in on how to make that sabbatical truly count. You know, not just a break, but a launchpad.

Absolutely. Because, you know, a lot of faculty, they see sabbatical as this like chance to finally catch their breath, right? Which is important, don't get me wrong. But the level up guide really pushes us to think bigger. How can we use this time strategically to really level up our research, our teaching, our service to the university?

So, it's not just about like checking out for a while.

Yeah, not at all. It's about checking in, but with yourself and your long-term goals. And the guide starts with planning, like way before you even set foot off campus. It's like setting those goals, defining what you want to achieve. What would make this sabbatical a success for you?

Okay, so when we talk about goals, what are we talking about specifically? Like what makes a good sabbatical goal?

Well, think about those projects that always seem to get pushed aside during the semester. You know, the stuff that could really make a difference, but there's just never enough time. Maybe it's finally mastering that new research method. Maybe it's completing that book manuscript that's been sitting in a drawer. Or maybe it's even exploring a whole new area of your field.

Right. So, it's like dream big, but also be specific.

Exactly. The clearer your vision, the more focused you can be with your time and energy.

Now, once you've got those goals in place, the next thing the guide stresses is setting boundaries.

Ooh, boundaries. That sounds tough.

It can. Especially for faculty, right? We're so used to saying yes to every request. But sabbatical is about protecting your time and energy for the things that truly matter. That means getting comfortable with saying no to things that don't align with your goals. That out of office reply is just the beginning. It's really about creating that mental space for yourself.

So, it's like shifting your mindset almost.

For sure. Now, another thing the guide brings up is the need for structure. And I know that might sound kind of counterintuitive, right? Like Isn't sabbatical all about freedom and flexibility?

Right? That's what I was thinking.

But here's the thing. Going from a super structured semester to like wide open time, right, can be a bit jarring. So the guide suggests creating your own kind of loose structure. Maybe a weekly schedule that includes time for research, for writing, for learning, and of course for rest and fun, too.

That way you're not just drifting along. You're intentionally moving towards your goals.

I like that. So structure, but flexible structure,

right? Exactly. And speaking of learning, the guide really emphasizes using sabbatical as a time for dedicated professional development. This is your chance to fill those knowledge gaps to learn those skills that you've always wanted to learn.

So, are we talking like taking courses, workshops, what kind of learning opportunities does the guide recommend?

Yeah, all of that. There might be online courses, conferences, workshops, maybe even certifications that could boost your expertise. The key is to be intentional about it, to identify those areas where you want to grow and then find the right resources to support that growth.

So, it's not all about being a hermit in your office or at home, right? I mean, the guide also talks about the importance of networking during sabbatical.

Absolutely. Think about the people who are doing really cutting edge work in your field, maybe even in fields related to yours. Sabbatical is a great opportunity to reach out to those people, to attend conferences, to join professional groups. These connections can spark new ideas, lead to collaborations, and maybe even open doors to new opportunities. I love that. So, it's like networking with intention,

right? Now, something else that the guide mentions that I'm really excited about is the idea of pursuing passion projects during sabbatical. You know, those things that we're truly passionate about, but that we just never seem to find the time for.

I think everybody has those.

Absolutely. Whether it's writing a novel, volunteering in the community, or learning a new language, these projects can be incredibly fulfilling and can even bring unexpected benefits to our professional lives.

That's so interesting. So, it's not just about like checking off boxes on your CV. It's about reconnecting with what really drives you.

Exactly. Now, of course, the word sabbatical itself implies a break. And the guide definitely stresses the importance of reflection and recharge during this time.

Yeah. I mean, we got to come back refreshed, right?

Right. And sabbatical gives us this unique opportunity to step back from the daily pressures of academic life and just reflect, to think about our career path, about what we've accomplished, about what we want to achieve in the future. And this kind of reflection can lead to some really valuable insights.

So it's like using that time to really recalibrate.

Exactly. And speaking of capturing those insights, the guide recommends documenting your sabbatical journey. Whether it's keeping a journal, creating a portfolio of your work, or even just jotting down notes. This documentation helps you solidify what you've learned and experienced.

That makes sense. It's like creating a record of your growth, right? And it also gives you something concrete to share with your colleagues. When you get back, which can spark new conversations, new ideas, and maybe even new initiatives on campus.

So, it's like bringing back a little piece of your sabbatical to share.

Yeah, I like that. Now, finally, the guide emphasizes planning for your return for reintegration back into academic life

because it's not just about the time away. It's about how you use that time to make a difference when you come back.

Absolutely. Before your sabbatical ends, take some time to think about how you're going to apply all the new knowledge and skills you've gained. To your teaching, to your research, and to

your service to the university. A thoughtful transition plan can ensure that your sabbatical has a lasting impact on both you and the wider university community.

So, what we're hearing from this level up guide written by our fellow faculty, is that a well-planned sabbatical, one that's focused on clear goals, continuous learning, strategic networking, and dedicated time for reflection and recharge, can be an incredibly powerful catalyst for our professional growth. Absolutely. And that leads to a question for all of you listening. What is one area of your professional life that you would prioritize exploring or developing during a potential sabbatical? And how might that ultimately benefit both your work and the university community as a whole? For more great tips and insights from your peers, don't forget to check out the full LevelUp guide on the Center for Faculty Excellence website.

We'll see you next time for another deep dive.

Bye for now.