



**Professional Leave 2026 – 2027
March 2026**

T. Chris Riley-Tillman, Provost and Executive Vice President, reports that he has approved the professional leaves listed below and that there will be no additional costs to the University for this program.

Carson College of Business

1. **Ming Chen**

Professor

School of Hospitality Business Management

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Conduct a project on nonlinear and asymmetric effects of women inclusion on hotel financial risks at Yunnan University. Collaborate with Yunnan University to research a strategic dilemma for hotels. Participate in several other research projects related to hospitality finance and tourism economics in collaboration with faculty members from Yunnan University of Finance and Economics, Yunnan University, Qufu Normal University, Beijing Sport University, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Guangxi University, and Xiamen University.

2. **Amrita Lahiri**

Associate Professor

Department of Management, Information Systems, and Entrepreneurship

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Investigate how field-level learning and institutional repair unfolded after governance failures in the U.S. opioid crisis. Combining computational text analysis with qualitative coding of archival documents, analyze evolving narratives among firms and regulators.

3. **Rohny Saylor**

Associate Professor

Department of Management, Information Systems, and Entrepreneurship

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Complete a collaborative research residency at the University of Victoria to advance three integrated projects on narrative institutional work, temporal legitimation via rhetorical history, and Indigenous cooperative entrepreneurship (pilot cohort of women in second-stage housing), with case-based teaching materials for Entrepreneurial Management, Innovation and Change, and Ethics, Teams, and Innovation.

4. **Soobin Seo**

Associate Professor

School of Hospitality Business Management

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Work on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in hospitality business education at WSU in terms of research, teaching, and grant funding. The objective is to investigate how AI can enhance teaching methodologies, improve student engagement, and prepare future hospitality professionals for a tech-driven industry. Engage with multiple academia and industry in US, Korea, and Europe, while seeking for relevant grant funding opportunities, developing efficient AI-driven curriculum model, and conducting AI-related research projects.

5. **Nancy Swanger**

Associate Professor

School of Hospitality Business Management

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Journal submission of "Serving up Support: Understanding the Needs and Experiences of Sandwich Caregivers." Co-direct a taskforce to achieve Age-Friendly University status. Explore a study abroad to Japan to tour senior living communities and schedule presentations on longevity.

College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences

6. **Henry Adams**

Associate Professor

School of the Environment

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Conduct research at New Mexico State University on post-wildfire reforestation and gain technical skills in nursery operations and landscape-scale tree planting. Facilitate a project on outplanting success and prepare to submit grant applications in a new research direction.

7. **Marcelo Diversi**

Professor

Department of Human Development

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Examine how Enlightenment ideals, human rights, and evolved human psychology shape modern political polarization. Develop evidence-based principles for fostering societal cooperation and reducing polarization, supported by archival research, literature review, and potential external fellowships.

8. **Jeb Owen**
Professor
Department of Entomology
Leave Period Requested: August 15, 2026 - May 31, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Investigate mosquitoes as bioindicators of fire- and soil-driven impacts on watershed health. Assess forest fire effects on mosquito ecology.
9. **Michael Phelps**
Assistant Professor
Department of Animal Sciences
Leave Period Requested: January 1 - June 30, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Advance training in the development of genomic tools and AI genome learning models to strengthen WSU's research capacity to engineer elite genetics in trout. Collaborate with researchers at the University of Washington and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.
10. **Sindhuja Sankaran**
Professor
Department of Biological Systems Engineering
Leave Period Requested: July 1 - December 31, 2026
Purpose of Leave: Develop an education framework to advance phenomics research. Develop strategic partnerships with international organizations to advance the development of technologies and tools in phenomics research.
11. **Tarah Sullivan**
Associate Professor
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
Leave Period Requested: January 1 - June 30, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Build soil and ecological research relationships with Indigenous communities around the PNW (Nez Perce, ShoBan, Umatilla, Coeur D'Alene, Spokane, etc.) to deepen the WSU land-grant mission.
12. **Zhiwu Zhang**
Professor
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
Leave Period Requested: July 5 - December 31, 2026
Purpose of Leave: Develop artificial intelligence algorithms for drone-based high-throughput plant phenotyping. Collaborate with colleagues at University of Tokyo to create new models that accelerate breeding efficiency, directly supporting a project on genomic selection in wheat.

College of Arts and Sciences

13. **John Blong**
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology
Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Study the impact of climate change on food practices and land use patterns in past hunting and gathering societies. Research includes field research in Alaska and project meetings with collaborators.
14. **Sukanta Bose**
Professor
Department of Physics and Astronomy
Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Prepare WSU's impact in Multi-Messenger Astronomy for the next 10 years. Facilitate upgrades to LIGO detectors to enable their next-generation science. Additionally, develop a course on AI applications.
15. **Jeremiah Busch**
Professor
School of Biological Sciences
Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Collaborate with University of Vienna to address the knowledge gap regarding the variability among plants in the production of aberrant gametes, which are needed to generate new polyploids.
16. **Blythe Duell***
Career-Track Professor (Scholarly)
Department of Psychology
Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Enhance expertise in mindfulness and stress reduction through advanced training and collaboration. These skills address rising student mental health challenges, improving resilience and academic success. Expand evidence-based strategies benefiting WSU students and future curricula.
17. **Luz Maria Gordillo**
Professor
Department of History
Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027
Purpose of Leave: Analyze how community-led tourism reshapes local economies through a case study of River Park in Puerto Vallarta. Integrate historical, economic, and ethnographic methods to study resilience, support a documentary, prepare conference presentations, and outline a peer-reviewed article on sustainable, community-centered tourism.

18. **Nanda Grow***

Career-Track Assistant Professor (Scholarly)

Department of Anthropology

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Develop career-readiness modules using WSU faculty fieldwork and research to demonstrate how anthropology builds concrete, transferable competencies valued across professions. Modules focus on Data Literacy, Ethics, Spatial Thinking, Intercultural Engagement, and Professional Communication, and will be shared across WSU campuses to strengthen student awareness of resume-ready skills.

19. **Michael Holloman**

Professor

Department of Art

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Implement educational programming for "Tell Clyfford I Said Hi": An Exhibition Curated by Children of the Colville Confederated Tribes. Continued curatorial consultation on the High Desert Museum's "By Hands Through Memory" exhibition.

20. **Rachel Horowitz**

Assistant Professor

Department of Anthropology

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Explore stone tool producers' role in economic competition while addressing the entanglement between economic and sociopolitical structures among the Classic Maya.

21. **Erik Johnson**

Professor

Department of Sociology

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Investigate the extent of intra-party variation in environmental support, and compare this to inter-party variation.

22. **Claudia Leeb**

Associate Professor

School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Draft a new book manuscript and three articles that explain why women are attracted to the far right, which defends policies that are aversive to women. Research locations include the Berkley Center for Right-Wing Studies and the Else-Frenkel-Brunswik Institute for Democracy Research in Germany.

23. **Hsin-Ya Liao**

Associate Professor

Department of Psychology

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Conduct a pilot study focused on the mental health needs of young adults, to be held over multiple time points. Pursue federal funding to test an AI-based self-affirmation anti-stigma intervention among young adults.

24. **Carmen Lugo-Lugo**

Professor

School of Languages, Cultures, and Race

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Write a book of short stories written in English titled The Many Timelines of a Puerto Rican in the Diaspora, exploring multiple embodiments of diasporic Puerto Ricans portrayed through one main character at different times/places within Puerto Rico, the U.S., and Europe. Additionally, work on a research article about contemporary U.S./Puerto Rico relations.

25. **Alair MacLean**

Professor

Department of Sociology

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Visit the Luxembourg Income Data Center to examine the factors shaping spatial inequality and polarization. Conduct research comparing how people's chances of poverty differed according to whether they lived in cities, suburbs, or rural areas using data from middle and high-income countries.

26. **Hallie Meredith**

Assistant Professor

Department of Art

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Participate in specialized digital training at Princeton and Oxford. Conduct museum research and complete a full manuscript for an academic monograph about 4th-7th century CE artisans accessible via so-called "mistakes" inscribed on body adornment.

27. **Brenna Miller***

Career-Track Assistant Professor (Teaching)

Department of History

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Develop active-learning teaching activities, in which students engage Artificial Intelligence in their exploration of history. Fifteen to twenty lessons will be content-focused and published as components of existing open access teaching materials. An additional set of ten adaptable activities will also be created for use by WSU History Department faculty. The project culminates in a departmental workshop and conference presentation on AI in history education.

28. **Linda Russo***

Career-Track Professor (Scholarly)

Department of English

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Cultivate a future-oriented pedagogy of constructive hope in the Environmental Humanities classroom and curriculum. Develop and integrate new teaching tools, create a new upper-division course, and take leadership on an English Department certificate.

29. **Brian Saam**

Professor

Department of Physics and Astronomy

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Collaborate with Northrop-Grumman and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to use optically polarized noble gases to further develop the NMR gyroscope, which is used for aircraft navigation.

30. **Jeffrey Sanders**

Professor

Department of History

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Advance a narrative history of strontium-90, tracing its scientific, environmental, and political life from early radiochemistry to Cold War fallout and community health activism. Complete archival research, draft core chapters, and prepare the manuscript for publication.

31. **Jennifer Schwartz**

Professor

Department of Sociology

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Produce a coauthored book on rural jail dynamics in Washington State, several peer-reviewed articles analyzing incarceration and re-entry patterns, and an extramural grant proposal, advancing scholarship and community-driven solutions to rural justice challenges.

32. **Jennifer Sherman**

Professor

Department of Sociology

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Write a coauthored book based on already-collected data focused on incarceration in rural Washington jails. Complete a book prospectus and outline to send to publishers and work on grant proposals to fund future projects.

33. **Jesse Spohnholz**

Professor

Department of History

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Research a sixteenth-century Dutch colony in Germany in the context of early European settlement building in the Americas and Asia.

34. **Erin Thornton**

Associate Professor

Department of Anthropology

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Conduct NSF-funded research at WSU and in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua.

Attend an international conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, to promote the international visibility of research on animal domestication.

35. **Jenny Zambrano**

Assistant Professor

School of Biological Sciences

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Assess whether a link between forest structure and local neighborhood exists to mitigate drought impacts. Further explore how forests respond to climate change.

College of Education, Sport, and Human Sciences

36. **Anne Cox**

Professor

Department of Kinesiology and Educational Psychology

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Conduct a multi-phase project utilizing community-engaged research methods to improve implementation of a prevention program in Pullman and Skagit County.

Identify how to adapt the program, engage in capacity-building, and create a sustainable model for instructor training.

37. **Shenghai Dai**

Associate Professor

Department of Kinesiology and Educational Psychology

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Develop national training curriculum to help students and researchers learn how to analyze large-scale survey and assessment data using statistical, machine learning, and AI approaches. The training institute includes workshops, online modules, and internships to build skills and expand research opportunities.

College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

38. **Salah Ahmed**

Professor

Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences

Leave Period Requested: July 1 - August 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: With collaborators, investigate novel factors driving cardiomyocyte hypertrophy and cardiac remodeling during rheumatoid arthritis, advancing cardiovascular disease prediction and treatment strategies.

College of Veterinary Medicine

39. **Suzanne Appleyard**

Professor

Department of Integrative Physiology and Neuroscience

Leave Period Requested: July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Collaborate with the University of Oxford to pursue a Wellcome Discovery Award, supporting collaborative studies.

40. **Gary Wayman**

Professor

Department of Integrative Physiology and Neuroscience

Leave Period Requested: July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Establish a Cambridge-centered multi-lab consortium investigating myokines and their roles in synaptic development, plasticity, and neuroprotection. Prepare a collaborative proposal for a Wellcome Trust Discovery Award to support this research network.

Edward R. Murrow College of Communication

41. **Bimbisar Irom**

Associate Professor

Department of Journalism and Media Production

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Collaborate with researchers from the London School of Economics and Georgetown University to understand how changes in "moral obligation" discourse in Western societies affect the well-being of migrants.

Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine

42. **Hans Haverkamp**

Associate Professor

Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Advance clinical exercise testing in patient care. Create a course on clinical exercise testing for the medical school curriculum. Research study investigating lung blood vessels during exercise. Submit grant advancing AI project assessing exercise lung function in patients.

43. **Mark VanDam**

Professor

Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Create a software tool to process a large dataset of raw audio. Data are part of an ongoing family of projects that could benefit the scientific community by a generalized tool to extract meaningful, particularly behavioral, data.

Libraries

44. **Samuel Lohmann**

Librarian 3

Libraries

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - June 30, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Complete translations of two mid-twentieth-century French poetic texts on "l'homme" ("man" or "the human"). Research and write a study of their historical context and contemporary significance. Provide a foundation for further publications including literary translations, criticism, and history of humanist rhetoric in library and information studies.

Voiland College of Engineering and Architecture

45. **Amit Bandyopadhyay**

Professor

School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Research projects focused on 3D printing or additive manufacturing AM of metals, ceramics, and their composites for both structural and biomedical applications. Build new contacts and establish collaborative relationships with leading groups around the world.

46. Susmita Bose

Professor

School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering

Leave Period Requested: August 16, 2026 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Research projects focused on 3D Printing of biomaterials and drug delivery. Build new contacts and establish collaborative relationships with leading groups around the world.

47. Yuehe Lin

Professor

School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Advance interdisciplinary research in flexible biosensors and bioelectronics. Visit collaborators to learn advanced fabrication methods, strengthen biomedical collaborations, and develop multi-institutional proposals that integrate materials science, engineering, and medicine.

48. Matthew Melcher

Associate Professor

School of Design and Construction

Leave Period Requested: August 1 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Engage with industry partners to advance knowledge of contemporary prefabrication and modular design and construction practices. Apply this knowledge to advance an innovative approach to modular construction for commercialization and industry adoption.

49. Alana Pulay

Associate Professor

School of Design and Construction

Leave Period Requested: January 1 - May 15, 2027

Purpose of Leave: Develop an open-access digital textbook for interior lighting and complete an applied study on circadian lighting in K-12 classrooms. Advance evidence-based lighting education, enhance design curriculum at WSU, and generate new research to support teaching, professional practice, and national leadership in lighting and learning environments.

50. Vahid Vahdat

Associate Professor

School of Design and Construction

Leave Period Requested: August 16 - December 31, 2026

Purpose of Leave: Develop a book chapter and full proposal for Architecture Theory: One Film at a Time. Advance an original method for interpreting architectural theory through film, aiming influence scholarship, pedagogy, and interdisciplinary discourse in architecture and media.