Advice offered in Sabbatical Leave Final Reports:

Reflecting on your overall experience, do you have “words of wisdom” to offer to people preparing to take a sabbatical?

**Just do it**

“Don't put it off. This was my first sabbatical since coming to UST in 1995 – I should have done one a long time ago.”

**On planning the sabbatical**

“A sabbatical can be an opportunity for you to take on a new research direction, which can energize the rest of your career.”

“Plan well, start early and think about how your sabbatical can and will be used to position yourself for future professional development.”

“Have a realistic plan. I was advised not to take on too much during sabbatical, and this proved helpful. Even though I ended up working on a second unanticipated project, I think it’s important to spend time during sabbatical simply recharging. It’s my belief that faculty will be far better teachers, scholars and contributors to our campus community if we do this. When I returned to campus after my sabbatical, I felt reinvigorated and ready to take on new things.”

“If you have the opportunity to do something outside your usual research agenda or comfort zone, do so! You will learn more than you can imagine, not only about your professional pursuits, but about other work environments, different approaches to problems, and a great deal about yourself. And don’t over-plan. You won’t be able to complete the 10 years worth of work that you have been putting off!”

“I would try to do less. This was suggested as a criticism of my original proposal, which was subsequently scaled back. Still, in the end I came close to accomplishing everything I set out to do, but my office and house are still messier than they should be! Also, next time it would be nice to do an entire year, vs. 1 semester.”

“Try not to be overly ambitious as the time goes very quickly so pace yourself. It is important to stick to a few concrete aspects of your sabbatical work that you can achieve effectively. Don’t overestimate the amount of free time you will have as this can lead to unforeseen delays. Enjoy the time to think and be creative. Be sure you have taken into account the reduction in salary and how that will affect your day-to-day living.”

“It is important to have a clear plan for your work. If you feel that available time is insufficient to complete the whole agenda, the good idea is to focus on the part that is feasible to complete in a given time.”

“Work with others during the sabbatical. Most of my previous scholarly work has been done alone or with distant co-authors. It was exciting to have regular collaboration with others during the projects.”
“First, I would suggest that people take a lot of time to think through what they would like to accomplish with their sabbatical. It sounds a bit obvious, but there are a lot of different paths people can take with a sabbatical and it is worth researching the options that are out there. In my case, it was only by chance that I discovered a Fulbright was a realistic opportunity.

Second, and this follows the first, I would emphasize that people should make the most of their sabbatical opportunity. Again, this sounds obvious, but I think it is easy to look at a sabbatical as simply being some time away. But, as happened with me, there are opportunities out there that can really change your life, and I would suggest that people think about designing their sabbaticals around one of those opportunities.”

Half-year vs. Full-year
“My only suggestion would be to try to find the funding to take a yearlong sabbatical as one semester goes by very quickly in terms of being able to achieve all of your goals.”

“Before applying for my sabbatical, the words of wisdom that I received from other colleagues were to take a full year if it is financially possible. I heeded their advice and would recommend others to do the same. A full year allowed me to (1) focus in-depth on my sabbatical projects, (2) work on additional projects on the side, and (3) re-energize myself for teaching again. In all honesty, it has been really challenging to manage our financial commitments with the salary reduction (75% for two years). I completely understand my colleagues who cannot take a full year simply because of the financial implications. I now wonder whether I can financially manage another full-year sabbatical in the future.”

“Try to apply for a one-year sabbatical. One semester is just not enough.”

On time management during the sabbatical:
“If working from home, I suggest giving some thought to how to remain socially connected and physically active.”

“Stay away from campus as much as possible and limit time on UST email so as to be truly immersed in the research.”

“Schedule your sabbatical time as best you can and take advantage of the time. Reach out and make contact with others in your field. This is a great opportunity to achieve your research goals!”

“My advice would be to write every day for a set time.”

“Be flexible. Work hard. Try to start as many things as possible so you can continue to work on them when your busy teaching life resumes.”

“A schedule is a must, but you shouldn’t be afraid to break your schedule to pursue ideas and opportunities that come to you while you are on leave. Being on leave allows you to think, consider, and write in a way that is really difficulty to do when you are teaching full time. Take advantage of everything that presents itself to you.”
“My suggestion would be to pace oneself, making sure to work regularly/daily on the project so that progress is constant. On the contrary, falling behind can lead to frustration, anxiety and “writer’s block.”

“I learned during my first sabbatical and have reconfirmed over the years, that you should completely disengage yourself from the “normal” routine of the University. It is not necessarily the case that old habits are bad, simply that a sabbatical should allow, if not force, a person to focus on professional development to the exclusion of service, teaching or the politics of university life. For me, this meant largely staying away from campus and working at home.”

**On risk-taking**
“T would encourage people to take a risk and to get out of their normal day-to-day environment – to be true to the spirit of a sabbatical as a period of creativity and rejuvenation. This is a chance to do something different and doing things differently invites perspective taking. I learned simply from living in another state and from working at a different institution as two sorts of immersion experiences. I’ve always seen traveling as an education, and working at another institution invites a healthy cross-fertilization: the chance to learn from how others do things and the change to get out of one’s own practice patterns. In the language of Jon Kabat Zinn’s model of mindfulness, it offers a change to “fall awake.”

**On staying flexible**
“No matter how meticulously you plan for “everything,” things will still change. This is especially [true] if your research involves collaboration and human subjects. Therefore, it is essential to go into the sabbatical prepared to change directions or attend to other aspects of your research. Have a conference paper or article in draft form ready to revise; Prepare reading lists of related scholarship to explore that you don’t get to do during teaching; Stay engaged in any aspect of scholarship, and this will prevent you from the common trap of veering into an existential crisis (the “sabbatical slump”) that is often reported during sabbatical.”

“Be prepared to change course when research, writing and/or opportunities lead in new directions. Sabbatical application plans are almost always (and should be) broadly ambitious, but opportunities that arise in the actual process can often lead one to swifter outcomes and exciting new directions.”

“My words of wisdom would be simply to keep reading and writing, no matter on what, and even if it seems to be something that is not aligned with the proposed project, it will yield results.”

“Perhaps the most useful idea I could pass along is that the benefits you gain from the sabbatical may not be the ones you had planned.”

“Be prepared for unanticipated changes to the plan and critically examine if a new course of study makes sense for your particular talents and research agenda.”