



STAFF EMPLOYMENT MANUAL

Title: 5.0 Benefits

Chapter: 5.09 Unpaid Leaves of Absence

Issuance Status and Effective Date: July 2011

1. General

This policy provides regular full-time and regular part-time staff with different types of voluntary unpaid leaves of absence. Leaves may be granted or extended solely at the discretion of the University upon the request of the employee, and are not considered earned rights.

- a. An employee on an approved leave of absence will be returned to his/her same or equivalent position without a loss of pay or benefits whenever possible. This is contingent upon the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job, and upon there being no intervening change in staffing needs due to reorganization or economic conditions.

When there are changes in staffing needs which eliminate the position or alter its requirements so the employee is no longer qualified, the employee on a leave of absence will be notified as soon as possible. A reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the return of the employee in the most suitable position, if any, that may be available at the expiration of the leave, or earlier if the employee asks for early return under the circumstances.

- b. A staff member on an approved leave of absence or Family and Medical Leave will be required to use his/her allotted Personal Days and Vacation if and when the unpaid portion of the leave begins. Personal Days and Vacation will not be earned during any type of leave of absence.
- c. When an employee on an approved leave of absence accepts other employment, or fails to return on the first workday immediately following the end of the leave without approval, that employee will be deemed to have voluntarily resigned his/her employment with the University.
- d. An employee who is not working due to a medically certified leave of absence for nine consecutive months loses active employment status and becomes inactive/terminated (See also **5.07, Long-term Disability Insurance.**)
- e. The University reserves the right to change the Leave of Absence Policy as it deems necessary.

2. Leave of Absence: Personal Short-term

- a. Leaves of absence up to 30 days without pay for personal reasons may be granted upon the approval of the department head.
- b. Benefits continue during a personal short-term leave of absence. Regular deductions for benefit contributions that are missed during a short-term leave will accrue and be charged in arrears. The total amount of arrearred premiums will be deducted in next available pay cycle upon the employee's return to work.

- c. If the reason for a personal short-term leave of absence unexpectedly develops into a long-term requirement, the employee may seek to have the leave reprocessed as a long-term leave of absence. Any such requests will be subject to the guidelines described in section 3, below.

3. Leave of Absence: Personal Long-term

Leaves of absence for more than 30 days without pay for personal reasons may be granted by joint agreement of the employee and the University. Leaves are typically limited to four months in duration and are not granted to employees with less than one completed year of service. Exceptions are based on some benefit to the University, not solely on the benefit to the employee. The maximum leave granted, either initially or by extension, shall not exceed one year.

- a. Requests for personal leaves of absence and any extensions thereof must be made in writing.
- b. All leaves of absence for personal reasons in excess of 30 days require the approval of the appropriate Officer.
- c. New vacation eligibility will not begin until the employee has returned to work full time for 20 consecutive workdays, and a pro-rated adjustment will be made for the inactive period of employment during a leave of absence.
- d. Benefits during personal leaves of absence are either suspended or become the responsibility of the employee. Eligibility and, if applicable, accrual cease for the following:
 - Personal Days
 - Short-term Disability Insurance
 - Holiday Pay
 - Special paid days declared by the University
 - Vacation

Group medical, dental, life, long-term disability and other applicable insurance(s) may be continued according to the provisions of the plan document or contract involved, but the employee will be responsible for the full amount of all coverage-related premiums. Retirement annuity (TIAA-CREF) contributions are suspended for the duration of a personal leave of absence. Billing for insurance coverage(s) will be established for any leave of absence lasting more than four weeks. Monthly billing will be coordinated by the Bursar's Office.

Credit for service is not disrupted during an approved leave of absence.

4. Leaves of Absence: Illness/Injury

Establishment of a leave for illness/injury requires a physician's certification or other acceptable documentation of the disability. Leaves of absence for illness/injury terminate upon physician's release to regular duty, or if there is other evidence that the employee has recovered sufficiently to return to work, or when total disability is established.

- a. Absences due to illness/injury of five consecutive work days or less are treated as Personal Days.
- b. In consideration of the employee's attendance record, a physician's certification of ability to return to work may be required for absences of three or more consecutive work days.
- c. Benefits for leaves of absence for illness/injury are provided according to the practices for personal leaves, unless the employee is eligible for **Personal Days** as specified in **5.04**, and/or

Short-term Disability Insurance as specified in **5.06**. If and when the unpaid portion of the leave begins, the employee will become responsible for his/her portion of the monthly premium for applicable medical, dental and other insurance(s). Billing for insurance coverage(s) will be established for any leave of absence lasting more than four weeks. Monthly billing will be coordinated by the Bursar's Office.

- d. Workers' compensation absences are automatically considered an approved leave of absence and are granted without prejudice. If there is a conflict with state regulations, state regulations will prevail.
- e. Leaves of absence for illness/injury not covered under short-term disability or workers' compensation may be granted for the period of disability subject to the general provisions of this policy.

5. Return to Work Procedure

The return from an approved leave of absence is accomplished through an appropriate Personnel Action Form (PAF). Failure to report to work without approval on the first working day following any leave of absence is considered a voluntary resignation.

Merit increases do not become effective until the first day of return to work if an employee is on any type of leave.