

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAVE OF ABSENCE

PURPOSE:

To outline procedures relating to Professional Development Leave of Absence provided by the University.

AUTHORITY:

West Virginia Board of Trustees Series 35; West Virginia Board of Trustees Classified Employee Handbook, Section 7.5; WV Code 21-5D-9

ELIGIBILITY:

Full time regular employees who have completed at least four years of continuous full-time employment at West Virginia University are eligible to participate in one of two professional development programs available. Two separate but similar professional development programs exist. One program covers faculty, FE/AP, and non-classified employees, while another program exists for classified employees.

MAXIMUM LENGTH OF LEAVES OF ABSENCE:

An employee's maximum charge against available leave balances, in addition to any approved leave of absences, will be 260 working days (1 year) per occurrence/incidence. If an employee is absent from work in excess of one year, termination from the University may occur.

Professional Development Leave of Absence

The maximum length of a professional development activity/program and the amount of compensation provided, if any, will be dependant upon an employee's length of service. Employees must have a minimum of four (4) years of continuous full-time service before becoming eligible for participation in the program(s).

GRANTING OF UNPAID LEAVES OF ABSENCE:

Unpaid leaves of absence will not be granted automatically. An unpaid leave of absence will/will not be granted after an assessment of the merit of the request, the needs of the unit and the University and other relevant factors by the administrator(s) responsible for granting the requested leave.

A copy of the approval for the unpaid leave of absence should be forwarded to the Division of Human Resources Benefits Office for the coordination/continuation of benefits as appropriate.

Professional Development Leave:

The Vice President/Provost cognizant to an employee's unit has the authority to grant/deny a professional development leave request following a review of the immediate supervisor and the Dean/Directors recommendation.

EMPLOYEE REQUIREMENTS:

General:

Failure to submit timely and/or satisfactory documentation may be cause for denial of the requested leave.

Professional Development:

Employees seeking a leave of absence to participate in the professional development program must submit a written statement, to their immediate supervisor, outlining the plan/activity the employee proposes to follow and sign a statement indicating he/she is aware of and agrees to the conditions of participation in the program (cross reference Professional Development policy).

Upon completion of the professional development program the employee must submit a written report of his/her development activities to the immediate supervisor, the dean/director, and the appropriate vice president.

The employee is obligated to return to the University for a period at least twice that of the length of the professional development leave if the rate of pay was at full salary and at least equal to the period of leave if the rate of pay was at half salary. Failure to return for the required length of time will obligate the employee to reimburse the University for the salary received during participation in the professional development program.

Return to Work:

Employees are required to report to work and fulfill positional requirements at the expiration of an unpaid leave of absence.

Employees unable to report to work at the expiration of the approved leave of absence must contact their immediate supervisor and submit justification for not returning, prior to the expected date of return. It is the responsibility of the employee to obtain and provide in a timely manner, updated medical information to alter or extend a medical or Family Medical/Parental leave of absence.

An employee who fails to notify his/her immediate supervisor of their inability to return to work as scheduled will be on unauthorized absence and subject to disciplinary action (cross reference Unauthorized Absence policy).

Employees returning from an approved unpaid leave of absence will be reinstated to the position they held before their leave of absence unless the position has been eliminated due to a loss of funding or a reduced workload.

DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS:

Deans/Directors approving an employees request for an unpaid leave of absence must also complete and process a Personnel Action Form, indicating the dates the employee will be removed from and returned to the payroll.

The employing department of an individual that has been approved for an unpaid of absence is responsible for notifying the Benefits Unit in the Division of Human Resources, in writing, if an employees returns to work prior to the originally approved restart date or is granted an extension of their unpaid leave of absence, in order to assure proper continuation of an employees benefit coverage. The employing department must also generate a new Personnel Action Form indicating the individuals employment status and expected/actual date of return to active payroll.

BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION OF UNPAID LEAVES OF ABSENCE

For all unpaid leaves of absence, the administration of the University's benefit package will be coordinated through the Benefits Office in the Division of Human Resources.

Benefit Continuation for Employees on an Approved Unpaid Leave of Absence:

The Director of Human Resources/designee will issue a memorandum notifying the employee of the approval/denial of the requested medical, personal, parental and family leave of absence and the effective dates of the leave. A billing statement informing the employee of the required payment needed, if any, in order to continue medical benefit coverage(s) will also be included in the notification letter.

Employees on an unpaid leave of absence in excess of one (1) month will receive a billing statement each month thereafter from the Benefits Office, in the Division of Human Resources.

Employees on an approved unpaid leave of absence must contact the Benefits Office to arrange for the payment of benefit plans during their leave. Employees should initiate contact following their receipt of a billing statement from the Benefits Unit, in the Division of Human Resources, for the required payment. An employee's failure to make the required payment will result in the termination of the plans coverage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Additional information or questions regarding continuation of benefits, processing and/or payments during an approved unpaid leave of absence should be directed to the Benefits Unit in the Division of Human Resources at 293-5700x4. Additional information or questions regarding the application of this policy should be directed to the Employee Relations Unit in the Division of Human Resources at 293-5700x5.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 1999