

7 **Policy Recommendation**
8 **Amendment A to University Policy S15-3,**
9 **Leaves of Absence for Students**

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11 **Background and Rationale:**

12 Leaves of absence (LOA) for students have been granted for many years at SJSU.
13 Previous policies that governed Leaves of Absence include S88-1: Health Leave Policy and
14 S93-1: Planned Student Leave; Absence. This current policy outlines general provisions for
15 LOAs, categories of LOA-eligible students, expectations for LOA applications, exceptions to
16 eligibility, and other items. The policy is guided by certain principles:

- 17 • Students may encounter circumstances that affect their education goal.
- 18 • Students should be empowered to determine if those circumstances justify a
19 temporary interruption in their educational goals
- 20 • Limited term LOAs have minimal effects on other students or applicants for
21 admission.
- 22 • As long as the originally stated reason(s) remain in effect for the student,
23 leaves up to two years are permitted
- 24 • Retroactive leaves will be considered when appropriate.
25

26 **Leaves of Absence for Students**

27 **I. General Provisions**

28 Students who have attended at least one semester as matriculated students and who are
29 in good or probationary academic standing may choose to be voluntarily absent from the
30 university (“stop out” or not enroll) for one semester (Fall or Spring) without submission of
31 a leave-of-absence petition or any penalty. A student must return the semester following
32 a stop-out semester and continue his or her enrollment as a matriculated student unless
33 the stop-out semester is immediately followed by an approved leave of absence. If a
34 student does not return in the semester following the one semester stop-out, application
35 for re-admission for the next available admission term is required. If the student is in
36 disqualified status or was disenrolled the previous semester for nonpayment of fees, he
37 or she can neither apply for a leave of absence nor enroll after the initial absent semester
38 without application for re-admission.

39 **II. Categories of Leaves of Absence**

40 Documentation and a personal statement are always required (though see certain
41 limitations below). Supporting memos from faculty advisors or mentors may be included but
42 are optional, except in the case of educational leaves.

43 1. **Medical Leaves.** These leaves (including physical and mental health leaves) must
44 be supported by submission of the Treating Healthcare Professional's Verification of
45 Medical Condition Form. Details of the medical condition or the type of healthcare
46 professional consulted should not be included, only that there is a medical condition
47 that justifies the leave and is supported by a State-certified healthcare professional's
48 authorization with respect to both the severity of the medical condition and the period
49 of need for a leave, as given by means of the Treating Healthcare Professional's
50 Verification of Medical Condition Form. A semester of pregnancy, maternity, or
51 paternity leave (beyond the first stop-out semester) is acceptable.

52 2. **Primary Caregiver Leaves.** In most cases, a healthcare professional's certification
53 of need for the care must be included by submission of the Treating Healthcare
54 Professional's Verification of Medical Condition Form, as indicated above.

55 3. **U.S. Military Deployment Leaves.** For students called to U.S. active duty, leave
56 requests must be supported by a copy of the U.S. military orders. Such leaves may
57 be for as long as five years. They may occur during the first semester of
58 matriculation.

59 4. **Educational Leaves.** These are leaves in which the student gains some value to his
60 or her educational program by being away from campus. The personal statement
61 must address the educational advantage to be gained, and there must be a clear
62 educational objective for award of the leave. At least one supporting letter from an
63 advisor, mentor, or chair from SJSU as well as the consent of the associate dean of
64 the college is also necessary.

65 5. **Personal Leaves.**

66 a. **Personal Hardship Leave.** This category encompasses a variety of social or
67 financial insecurities, including, but not limited to, financial hardship,
68 temporary job relocation, increased work hours in order to maintain
69 employment, or housing insecurity. A personal statement of understanding is
70 required and must include objectives to resolve the personal insecurity to be
71 able to return successfully to one's studies.

72 b. **International Military Service.** For international students called to active
73 military duty, leave requests must be supported by a copy of the military
74 orders. Such leaves may not exceed four consecutive semesters.

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76 **III. Process**

77 To request a leave of absence, undergraduate and graduate students shall submit a petition
78 to the Registrar's Office after obtaining the necessary signatures on the petition. A decision
79 shall be made within 30 days, and the student shall be informed, along with reasons in the
80 case of a denial, via email. Other than for a first-semester leave, leaves shall not be granted

81 for a current semester. Approval by the Registrar or designee for leaves other than first-
82 semester, retroactive, and educational leaves shall be awarded when the reason for the
83 leave is clearly within the parameters of these guidelines and documentation is provided to
84 substantiate the reason.

85 For first-semester, retroactive, and educational leaves or in cases in which the Registrar
86 determines that a university review is needed, the petition shall be forwarded for ultimate
87 decision to a Leave of Absence Committee consisting of the Vice President of Student
88 Affairs (or designee), the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and the Associate
89 Dean of Graduate Studies, with a majority vote required for approval. Students awarded a
90 leave of absence may return to active enrollment the semester following the leave without
91 application for re-admission. These students are guaranteed the right to return to their
92 department and degree program even if that program has restricted access during the time
93 of the approved leave, such as by admission caps. The Registrar shall inform the
94 departments/schools of the award, denial, extension, and duration of leaves within a timely
95 period.
96

97 **IV. Leave Durations and Extensions**

98 Fully approved petitions for leaves must be submitted prior to the first semester of the
99 period requested. Leaves, other than for U.S. military duty, may be requested for a
100 maximum of four Fall and Spring semesters, typically two semesters at a time, including an
101 initial stop-out semester. In other words, the initial stop-out semester shall be considered
102 part of the maximum of four consecutive semesters. Petition submission would then be
103 required before the start of the semester following the stop-out semester.

104 Extensions can be requested prior to the first day of classes following the approved leave
105 by submission of a new leave-of-absence petition. If the request is for a different reason
106 than the original leave, an explanation and documentation for that reason must be
107 provided. Exceptions to the maximum of four consecutive semesters shall be rare.

108 At the end of the leave period, failure to enroll in classes shall result in disenrollment from
109 the university. Application for re-admission would then become necessary for a return to
110 matriculated status at the university. An early return from leave must be accompanied by
111 written notice to the Registrar's Office in order to activate the student's enrollment once
112 again. For students in academic cohorts, restrictions may apply for early returns; see
113 "Exceptions" below. Students cannot graduate during a leave of absence, so they must
114 enroll in classes the semester following a leave to complete their programs during those
115 semesters.

116 **V. Retroactive Leaves of Absence**

117 Retroactive leaves may be granted for up to two semesters after the semester of the
118 student's last enrollment, excluding summer and winter sessions. These leaves shall
119 modify the enrollment status retroactively. After two semesters, the student will be
120 required to reapply and be subject to current application deadlines.

121 **VI. First-Semester Leaves of Absence**

122 These leaves, which are to be awarded sparingly, are for matriculated students exclusively.
123 Therefore, the student must have been admitted into the university rather than merely
124 applying for admission. Any conditions or provisions imposed on admission status that are
125 still in effect shall carry over to the semester of re-enrollment following the leave.

126 VII. Course Expiration

127 Course expiration, as per long-standing SJSU practice, (10 years on undergraduate
128 courses and 7 years on graduate courses) shall remain in effect even for students who have
129 taken leaves of absence. Upon a student's return, the student's catalog rights shall pertain
130 to his or her most recent admission date.
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132 VIII. Exceptions

133 1. **Graduate Students in RP Status.** Per University Policy S17-5, graduate students
134 who have completed all degree requirements except their thesis, project,
135 comprehensive examination, or other culminating experience must maintain
136 continuous enrollment every Fall and Spring semester until the culminating
137 experience has been completed and approved. During this stage of a graduate
138 student's career, leaves of absence for any reason beyond medical or U.S. military
139 duty shall be precluded except under rare circumstances, as evaluated and
140 approved by the College of Graduate Studies .

141 2. **International Students.** International students are eligible for leaves of absence
142 when authorized by International Student and Scholar Services. Lack of enrollment
143 for any reason other than prevention of the ability to pursue one's studies by severe
144 medical circumstances shall result in the student having to leave the United States. If
145 the student is able to return from abroad at the expiration of the leave period, he or
146 she shall derive the benefits of having had the formal leave, such as avoiding the
147 readmission process. However, other restrictions, such as in the ability to work within
148 the United States, may be imposed by federal immigration regulations.

149 3. **Cohort Programs.** Students who are members of an academic cohort may be
150 restricted by their respective departments or schools in the duration of their leaves.
151 Thus one-semester leaves may not be possible if it is necessary for course
152 enrollment to join a future cohort, which usually would start after one academic year.
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158 Approved: February 18, 2019
159 Vote: 14-0-0
160 Present: Bullen, Gill, Grindstaff, Hill, Khan, Kim, Kinney, Manzo, Nash, Ng, Pang,
161 Sen, Simpson, Sullivan-Green, Walters, Wilson
162 Financial impact: None
163 Workload impact: None