



INSTITUTIONAL POLICY: E-26

Category:	Education
Subject:	Leave of Absence
Effective Date:	June 9, 2020
Updated:	N/A
Applicability:	Students

E 26-1. Authority

W. Va. Code § 18B-1-6

E 26-2. Purpose

The purpose of a leave of absence from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (“WVSOM”) is to allow for a temporary interruption of a student’s academic progress due to significant reasons that are out of the student’s control.

E 26-3. Definition

“Dean” means the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine.

E 26-4. General Provisions

- 4.1 A leave of absence may only be granted for significant reasons, including but not limited to medical problems and/or family crisis. The stress involved in the pursuit of a degree in Osteopathic Medicine is not an adequate reason for being granted a leave of absence.
- 4.2 A student who applies for a voluntary leave of absence from WVSOM is responsible for all academic work scheduled up to the official date of the voluntary leave of absence determined by the Dean. In extraordinary circumstances, the Dean, may, in his or her discretion, excuse the student from academic responsibilities prior to the official date of the voluntary leave of absence.
- 4.3 A student who is granted a voluntary leave of absence or is placed on administrative medical leave will be withdrawn from all courses. The Registrar will indicate on the student’s official permanent academic record the student’s academic standing in the courses in progress as of the official date of the voluntary leave of absence (withdrawal ["W"], withdrawal passing ["WP"], or withdrawal failing ["WF"]), as appropriate.
- 4.4 A student who requests a voluntary leave of absence or is placed on administrative medical leave must meet with the Director of Financial Aid to ascertain the effects of the leave or failure to return from the leave on the student’s financial aid. For financial aid purposes only, any

leave of absence in excess of 180 days in any 12-month period will be considered as a withdrawal beginning with the official date of the leave of absence in accordance with Higher Education Amendments enacted in October 1998. The use of the term “withdrawal” in this Section 4.4 does not constitute a withdrawal from WVSOM under WVSOM’s policy on withdrawal unless the leave of absence falls under Section 4.7.

- 4.5 For leaves of absence involving student mental health, WVSOM’s policy on student mental health must also be followed.
- 4.6 Any disciplinary proceeding(s) pending against a student at the time the student’s leave of absence is approved will continue as soon as the approved leave of absence ends.
- 4.7 Any student whose leave(s) of absence, for any reason, cumulatively exceeds 12 months shall be administratively withdrawn from WVSOM and must apply for readmission through the normal admission process pursuant to WVSOM’s policy on withdrawal. In extraordinary circumstances, and at the sole discretion of the Dean, this limit may be extended beyond 12 months.

E 26-5. Voluntary Leave Requests

- 5.1 A student desiring a voluntary leave of absence must provide a written, signed, and dated request to the Dean that includes the reason(s), in sufficient detail, for the requested leave of absence. The student must submit the request in advance, unless extraordinary circumstances prevent the student from doing so.
 - 5.1.1 For a voluntary medical leave of absence, the request must also be accompanied by a letter from a physician or treating mental health provider, if applicable, describing the nature of the illness for which the leave is requested and the estimated length of time needed for recovery.
 - 5.1.2 Voluntary medical leaves of absence for mental health reasons shall be consistent with WVSOM’s policy on student mental health.
- 5.2 The Dean shall decide, in his or her discretion and based upon satisfactory proof, whether to approve a voluntary leave of absence request.
- 5.3 The Dean shall notify the student in writing of the final decision, including starting and ending dates for the leave, which shall be sent by certified mail to the student’s mailing address on file with the Registrar and to the student’s WVSOM-issued email address. The Dean will also notify the Registrar, the Office of Student Affairs, the Financial Aid Office, the Office of Business Affairs and the appropriate associate dean of the decision.

E 26-6. Administrative Medical Leave

- 6.1 Any student whose excused absences demonstrate a pattern which interferes with the student’s ability to meet WVSOM’s Health and Technical Standards may be placed on an administrative medical leave of absence.
- 6.2 Administrative medical leaves of absence for mental health reasons shall be consistent with WVSOM’s policy on student mental health.

- 6.3 The Dean shall notify the student in writing that the student has been placed on an administrative medical leave of absence, including starting and ending dates for the leave, which shall be sent by certified mail to the student's mailing address on file with the Registrar and to the student's WVSOM-issued email address. The Dean will also notify the Registrar, the Office of Student Affairs, the Financial Aid Office, the Office of Business Affairs, and the appropriate associate dean of the decision.

E 26-7. Return From Leave of Absence

- 7.1 Before a student may return to educational activities following any leave of absence, the student shall submit a written request to the Dean prior to the ending date of the applicable leave of absence.
- 7.1.1 For students requesting to return from a leave of absence for medical reasons, a letter from a physician or treating mental health provider, if applicable, stating that the student has recovered from the illness leading to the leave of absence and now meets WVSOM's Health and Technical Standards must accompany the written request.
- 7.1.2 For students requesting to return from a leave of absence involving mental health, WVSOM's policy on student mental health must also be followed.
- 7.2 Upon receipt of a written request to return from a leave of absence, the Dean shall, in his or her discretion, determine whether the request and supporting documentation are satisfactory and whether to approve the request.
- 7.3 If the Dean approves the request, he or she shall determine the student's placement within the curriculum.
- 7.3.1 A leave of absence during Year 1 or Year 2 generally requires that the student repeat the academic year in which he or she was enrolled at the time of the leave.
- 7.3.2 A leave of absence during Year 3 or Year 4 generally requires that the student repeat the rotation he or she was participating in at the time of the leave. An extended leave of absence during Year 3 or Year 4 may require the student to complete additional preparation before the student is permitted to return to rotations and/or repeat the academic year in which he or she was enrolled at the time of the leave.

E 26-8. Requests for Additional Leave

Subject to Section 4.7, if a student is unable to return to educational activities by the ending date of an approved voluntary leave of absence or an administrative medical leave of absence, the student must submit a new written request to the Dean for the additional leave of absence prior to the ending date of the applicable leave of absence. The request must follow each of the requirements applicable to leave requests set forth in this policy, including the submission of a new letter from a physician or treating mental health provider, if applicable, as the request for an additional leave is considered a new leave of absence request.

E 26-9. Failure to Contact the Office of the Dean

Any student who fails to contact the Office of the Dean prior to the ending date of the applicable leave of absence and/or as requested by the Office of the Dean may be subject to disciplinary action, including administrative withdrawal under WVSOM's policy on withdrawal.

E 26-10. Implementation of Policy

This policy will be implemented using applicable WVSOM policies and/or procedures.