| Policy: **Voluntary and Involuntary Medical Withdrawal** | |
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| Issuing Department**:** **Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs** | |
| Date last revised: **October 2013** | |

## POLICY STATEMENT

Western Oregon University is strongly committed to supporting students in achieving success in their intellectual and extracurricular endeavors. When significant illness or injury intrudes upon a student's ability to successfully meet the requirements of the course of study or engage in general University life, it is the University's policy to assist the student in withdrawing from the University for the purpose of focusing on those matters requiring attention. Prior to re-matriculation, it is the University's intent to provide students with information about resources that may be of use as they resume studies and to provide support where possible in order to optimize the likelihood of a successful return to University life.

It is the University's goal that all students are able to participate fully in the academic community. In unusual circumstances, however, when a student's illness or injury causes the student to pose a threat of harm to self or others, the student may be required to withdraw from the University.

## REASON FOR THE POLICY

It is the goal of the University to foster an environment in which students are able to fully pursue academic goals. When significant illness or injury prevents a student from achieving these goals, it is the intent of the University to provide a mechanism whereby the student may withdraw from courses for the respective term. In unusual circumstances, illness or injury may cause a student to pose a threat of harm to self or others. In such circumstances, the University may find it necessary to involuntarily withdraw a student from the University.

## APPLICABILITY OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students at the Western Oregon University and is in force for the entirety of each academic term, including summer term.

## PROCEDURES

### Voluntary Medical Withdrawal

1. Students who seek a Medical Withdrawal from the University because of significant illness or injury must complete a Medical Withdrawal form and provide supporting documentation from a medical or mental health provider. A student will next take the form and supporting documentation to the Dean of Students who, as necessary, will confer with appropriate campus medical or mental health professionals in order to make a determination regarding the student's request. In unusual or complex situations, the Dean of Students may convene a committee composed of representatives from the Student Health and Counseling Center and may include designees from the University CARE Team and other offices as appropriate. A student may appeal the decision on such a request by following the appeal process outlined below.

2. Students who are granted a medical withdrawal will not show any record of attendance for that respective term. Any adjustment to the student's tuition will be made in accordance with standing University policy.

3. Students granted a medical withdrawal will have a hold placed upon their registration by the Dean of Students office pending successful petition for re-enrollment to the University.

4. Students granted a medical withdrawal will be given a copy of this policy, and as possible, asked to sign an acknowledgement of receipt.

5. Students granted a medical withdrawal will be sent a letter outlining expectations to be met in order for the student to successfully return to Western Oregon University. Such expectations may include providing appropriate medical documentation as described below.

**Return Process**

It is the University's intention to support students in a successful return to the University community when significant illness or injury has necessitated withdrawal. To this end:

1. A student will be informed in writing by the Dean of Students office that the University expects the leave to be of sufficient duration to allow the student to address the issues involved in necessitating a medical leave. It is common for a student who takes a medical withdrawal because of serious illness or injury to take a minimum of one full term away from the University in order to enhance the likelihood of success upon return.

2. A student wishing to return to the Western Oregon University following a medical withdrawal must complete the following steps:

a. Notify the Dean of Students office in writing of the desire to return to the University.

b. If required by the Dean of Students, submit documentation from the treating clinician to the Dean of Students attesting to the student's ability to resume studies with a reasonable likelihood of success. This information must be specific in its description of the student's illness or injury and the treatment rendered. It must outline, as appropriate, a plan of treatment to be followed upon return as necessary. All documentation will be held in strict confidence by the University; it will be maintained in the student's medical or mental health treatment record and will not become part of the student's academic record. Upon request, the student will authorize the Dean of Students to secure any additional information necessary to assess the student's readiness for readmission.

c. Submit documentation by the following dates: August 1 for the fall term, November 1 for the winter term, February 1 for the spring term, and May 1 for the summer term.

3. The Dean of Students may consult with the Director of the Student Health and Counseling Center and/or other appropriate resources in considering the student's request.

4. When the Dean of Students has concerns about the likelihood of the student's success, the Dean of Students will communicate this to the student and, with the student's permission, to the treating clinician(s).

5. The Dean of Students may decide to approve the re-enrollment request, deny the re-enrollment request for the current term, or allow conditional re-enrollment. If conditions are imposed, the student will be provided a written outline of all applicable conditions and expectations. The student may appeal the decision by following the appeal process outlined below.

**Involuntary Medical Withdrawal**

1. When a student's behavior presents a direct threat to the health or safety of the student or others WOU may involuntary withdraw a student.

2. In evaluating whether an involuntary withdrawal is recommended pursuant to the process below, WOU will make an individualized and objective assessment of the student's ability to safely participate in WOU's programs, based on reasonable medical judgment or the best available objective evidence. The assessment will determine the nature, duration and severity of the risk, the probability that the potentially threatening injury will actually occur and if a qualifying disability exists, whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures will sufficiently mitigate the risk. Involuntary withdrawal is warranted if it is determined a student poses a direct threat, which means a significant risk or high probability of substantial harm to the health or safety of the student or others.

3. If a student is involuntarily withdrawn from the university as a part of this policy, every effort will be made to refer the student to available resources outside the university to assist the return process, and to facilitate financial and academic matters, on a case-by-case basis, involving departure from the university.

4. The involuntary withdrawal process is not a substitute for disciplinary action when there is a violation of the Code of Student Responsibility, and the disciplinary process is separate from that outlined here. Unless they are sanctioned separately through the disciplinary process, students who are involuntarily withdrawn will not be considered as having a student conduct record nor will they considered to be in violation of WOU policy for the circumstances or behaviors which led to the involuntary withdraw.

**Process**

1. The CARE Team is a campus resource established to receive, collect, consider, and when it deems appropriate, act upon information on behavior of concern exhibited by a student or group of students. The CARE Team is comprised of representatives from Campus Public Safety, Student Health and Counseling, Disability Services, University Housing, Registrar's Office, Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs. The Dean of Students serves as the chair of the CARE Team.

2. If the CARE Team believes that any student may pose a direct threat, the Dean of Students will notify the student of the need to evaluate whether the student should be involuntarily withdrawn pursuant to this policy. The notification will also advise the student of this policy.

3. The CARE Team may require a student to have a medical and/or mental health assessment completed depending on the nature of the direct threat. The student can choose to have the assessment completed through WOU's Student Health and Counseling Center, by an independent licensed physician, or by a licensed mental health professional or psychiatrist. Any person who provides such an assessment must be approved by the University and be unrelated to the student and must have a specialty and credentials appropriate to be able to address the condition or concern. If the assessment is completed by an independent provider chosen by the student, the student will be responsible for the costs associated with the assessment. The student must also sign a release of information form with the provider completing the assessment and WOU in order that information can be shared with members of the CARE Team and the Vice President for Student Affairs regarding the assessment, and WOU can share appropriate background information with the provider.

4. Upon completion of the assessment, the treating professional will complete and submit to the CARE Team a written medical and/or mental health evaluation (as appropriate). If the CARE Team believes, based upon the evaluation and any other information before it, the student poses a direct threat, a formal meeting with the student and a subset of the CARE Team will be scheduled. (Generally the subset of the CARE Team will be the Dean of Students, Director of the Student Health and Counseling Center, Director of Campus Public Safety, or each person's designee.) If the CARE Team believes the student does not pose a direct threat at this current time, the CARE Team may continue to review the status of the student in future meetings.

**Formal Meeting**
1. If a student is believed to pose a direct threat, the Dean of Students or his/her designee will provide written notification to the student with the time and place for a formal meeting before the subset of the CARE Team. The period of time between the formal meeting date and the student's notice must be at least 72 hours.

2. All formal meetings pursuant to this policy are closed and information and documents presented will be made available only to the Dean of Students or designee, the subset of the CARE Team, and other WOU employees on a need-to-know basis. If the student has been properly notified and fails to complete an assessment or chooses not to appear, the formal meeting may proceed.

3. During the formal meeting, the student may be accompanied by another person, but the other person will not represent the student or speak on the student's behalf. The student has the opportunity during the formal meeting to offer information and has the opportunity to review and respond to all information presented. The Dean of Students or designee will decide and address any questions or concerns about procedures that are raised during the formal meeting.

4. At the conclusion of the formal meeting, the subset of the CARE Team will go into executive session with the Dean of Students or designee, who will determine whether involuntary withdrawal is warranted pursuant to the standards outlined above. The student will be notified in writing by the Dean of Students or designee of the CARE Team's decision within two business days of the formal meeting. The student may appeal the decision by following the appeal process outlined below.

**Interim / Emergency Withdrawal**
1. The Dean of Students or designee may take emergency action to place a student on involuntary withdrawal without a formal meeting when necessary to secure the health or safety of the student or others.

2. At the time that the emergency action takes place, the Dean of Students or designee shall (1) inform the student of the reason for the emergency action, (2) give the student the opportunity to explain why emergency action need not be taken, and (3) inform the student that a formal meeting will take place within five (5) business days of the Emergency Action if the student is available, or if the student is unavailable for medical reasons, within five (5) business days after the student becomes available.

**Appeal Process**
1. Appeals of the decision of the Dean of Students shall be made to the Vice President for Student Affairs, whose decision is final.

2. Appeals must be in writing and filed with the Vice President for Student Affairs within fifteen days following the date the action is taken. The request for an appeal must include specific justification, including errors, failure to consider all of the information presented, or any other action, including any new information not known at the time of the formal meeting, which denied the student a fair process. The decision made by the CARE Team will remain in place during the appeals process.

**Concerns Regarding Discrimination**
Any student who believes he/she has been discriminated against under this policy because of his/her medical condition should discuss his/her concerns with staff in the Office of Human Resources and may file a complaint with that office.

Complaints alleging discrimination in the delivery of programs, services and facilities to persons with disabilities should be brought to the attention of the Director of the Office of Disability Services who is available to assist in resolving a request or complaint.

**AUTHORITY**

Vice President for Student Affairs

**RESPONSIBIITY**

Vice President for Student Affairs

Date of next review: **May 2017**

Alternate formats of this policy are available from the Office of Human Resources