Policy Title: Medical Student Leave, Withdrawal and Readmission Policy

Policy Number: EC.10.01.170912

Applies to: This policy applies to WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine Medical Students

Date: 03/28/2022

1.0 Policy Statement:
It is the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine policy to define and process various student leaves of absence, withdrawal, and readmission requests.

2.0 Definitions:
Required leave of absence: The College of Medicine’s removal of a student from any or all academic and clinical activities for a period of time.
Dean for Student Affairs: The College of Medicine’s dean responsible for leading the Office of Student Affairs or equivalent.
SEPAC: The College of Medicine Student Evaluation, Promotion and Awards Committee.
Medical student: A student in the MD program of the College of Medicine. An accepted applicant becomes a medical student upon matriculation on the first day of class in the first year.
Voluntary leaves of absence: A leave of absence initiated voluntarily by student. Voluntary leaves of absence are limited to the following:
- Financial leave of absence: Allows a student time to resolve financial issues.
- Medical leave of absence: Allows a student time to address personal health needs including mental or physical illness, injury, or disability.
- Pursuit of academic and scholarly interest: Allows a student the opportunity to complete another degree or pursue a scholarly interest.
- Personal: Allows a student time to address significant personal circumstances.
- Career reconsideration: Allows a student time to consider a career outside of being a physician.

3.0 Responsibility:
Office of Admissions and Student Affairs

4.0 Procedures:
Voluntary Leave of Absence
To obtain a voluntary leave of absence, students must initiate a request with the College of Medicine’s Dean of Student Affairs in writing or in person. The request should clearly state the basis of the leave, specify beginning and end dates, and include contact
information while on leave. Students will work with the Office of Student Affairs to coordinate with other college and campus offices including financial aid, registrar, and other entities to provide a profile of potential outcomes and to understand the ramifications of the leave of absence. The Office Student Affairs works with students to identify additional supporting documentation for the leave to be included with the request, when applicable. For example, a student who requests a medical leave of absence may be required to provide appropriate, confidential evidence of the health issue.

The Dean for Student Affairs forwards the of leave of absence request to the SEPAC, which may grant a voluntary leave of absence for up to 1 year.

The SEPAC reviews all requests for a leave of absence from the program, as well as requests to return from leave, to ensure that the request meets the definition of one of the types of voluntary leaves of absence, is for one year or less, and that the plan for leave and return takes into account factors that might affect a student’s success in completing the MD program. The College of Medicine, through the SEPAC, will strive to ensure that students will have the best chance of meeting graduation requirements; therefore, the SEPAC may adjust the proposed timing of leave and return from leave in order to accommodate factors including, but not limited to, course timelines, clinical training capacity, financial aid, WSU course requirements, etc. The SEPAC will specify requirements for returning to the program, such as: a need for a re-entry orientation, skills assessment, specific deliverables, or a statement of “fitness to practice” from a specific class of licensed practitioner or from the Washington Physicians Health Program. In all considerations, the SEPAC will strive to ensure that students are treated equitably and consistent with the policies and procedures of the College of Medicine and university, and that efforts are made to support student success as appropriate and feasible.

If the College of Medicine receives a notice of withdrawal from a student while charges, investigations, or other evaluations are active, the College of Medicine reserves the right to delay a decision on recording the withdrawal until final determination has been made. Following the stated policies, the College of Medicine also reserves the right to dismiss a student found to have violated academic or professionalism policies even if the student submitted a notice of withdrawal prior to its final determination.

When a voluntary leave of absence is approved by the SEPAC, the Office of Student Affairs will work with the student to ensure appropriate university withdrawal forms or other needed documents are completed. The Office of Student Affairs will notify appropriate campus and college offices when a leave of absence has started. The campus registrar will notify appropriate university offices of the withdrawal and student’s academic status, as appropriate.

**Required Leave of Absence**

Every medical student enrolled in the College of Medicine is expected to participate and perform in an appropriate and safe manner, consistent with the academic standards, including professional standards, of the program. The College of Medicine reserves the right to remove a medical student from any and all academic and clinical activities if a
student’s behavior fails to meet those standards or that behavior raises significant concern about the safety of the student or others (e.g., patients, other students, faculty, and staff). Required leave of absences are decided by the SEPAC consistent with the Medical Student Promotion, Dismissal, and Graduation Policy.

The College of Medicine expects that all faculty, staff, and students report behavior that threatens the student’s own safety or the safety of others or raises concern about impairment or an inability to function in educational or clinical settings (e.g., drug or alcohol use and/or erratic behavior). If a student poses an immediate threat to self or others, call 911. Otherwise, all other concern notifications or reports can be made by:

1. Submission of an online College of Medicine Incident Card.
2. Personal notification to College of Medicine personnel such as an Associate Dean for Clinical Education, the Dean for Student Affairs, or the Associate Dean for Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation.
3. Leave, Withdrawal and Readmission | Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine | Washington State University (wsu.edu)

All reports to College of Medicine systems or personnel will be submitted to the SEPAC for immediate review and recommendation. Recommendations may include a leave of absence, fitness for participation evaluation, or dismissal. The College of Medicine Dean for Student Affairs will coordinate with the student affairs leadership at each campus for any campus-based safety network and represent the College of Medicine in appropriate campus actions, which if appropriate, may include notification to campus security.

Fitness for Participation
If a student is subject to a required leave of absence based on a finding of threat to self or others that is determined to be significant, the SEPAC may require a Fitness for Participation evaluation before the student may resume classes or clinical rotations. The SEPAC notifies the student in writing that the required leave of absence remains in effect until such time as a student is returned to the program following a Fitness for Participation evaluation. Students should be aware that removal from the MD program may result in a delay in the student’s progress toward graduation.

Fitness for Participation evaluations must be carried out by fully WA state licensed healthcare providers whose qualification(s) must be agreed upon by the SEPAC and the Dean for Student Affairs in consultation with the student. The student is responsible for any costs associated with the evaluation and any costs associated with required follow-up evaluations or treatment. A Fitness for Participation evaluation must be submitted to the Office of Student Affairs that forwards the results to the SEPAC as appropriate.

Students who decline to secure a required Fitness for Participation evaluation by a fully WA state licensed healthcare provider are subject to dismissal from the College of Medicine.
The SEPAC is responsible for determining whether what, if any, additional conditions the student must meet to return to the MD program (e.g., remediation).

**Credit for Term**

If students are partially through a term when they take a voluntary leave of absence or are placed on a required leave of absence, they are required to repeat that term unless an appeal to the SEPAC is granted. Students wishing to appeal to the SEPAC may do so by meeting with the Dean for Student Affairs to prepare an appeal. The SEPAC evaluates the appeal to determine if credit can be given for that term or if other arrangements to complete that term can be arranged within university and consistent with University or College of Medicine policies.

If a third-year or fourth-year medical student takes a voluntary leave of absence or is placed on a required leave of absence during a clinical rotation, the Course Director or Clerkship Curriculum Director will determine the number of weeks of instructional credit applied. A student who has successfully completed the requirements for a term, including in the fifth-year option, need not repeat that term.

**Fifth Year Option**

The College of Medicine provides a fifth-year tuition plan for students who are required to take a fifth year of medical school. Eligible students pay a tuition cost that is 10 percent of full tuition, plus full mandatory fees. Prorated amounts are calculated based on the number of terms that a student is taking within the fifth year (e.g., prorated 10 percent tuition cost of 1 term).

**Return to the College of Medicine**

All students on leave must submit a letter of intent to return, specifying the effective date of return, to the Office of Student Affairs at least one month (30 calendar days) in advance of the return date to the pre-clerkship curriculum and at least two months (60 calendar days) in advance of the return date to the clerkship curriculum. If the SEPAC includes additional requirements for returning to the MD program, the letter must also indicate how the student has met these requirements and include appropriate supporting documentation as required (e.g., physical/mental assessment (fitness to “practice”) by a fully WA state healthcare provider). In collaboration with the Office of Student Affairs, students must consult with the registrar, financial aid office, and other relevant offices to project a date of return on the Spokane Health Sciences campus and be aware of the potential ramifications. Documentation must accompany the request, if required.

Students who have a temporary leave of absence may have their status converted to enrolled student when appropriate documentation is received and approved by the SEPAC that the student is ready to return. Students returning from leave will have an academic records review, which will determine their education plan including determining their status: 1) promotion to the next year; 2) eligibility to retake examination(s); 3) what courses they must (re)take; and/or 4) dismissal for failure to progress. Any curricular changes in course content or assessment methodology that occurred while the student was on leave may necessitate modifications in the student’s
educational plan. Based on this review, a student’s anticipated graduation date may be modified.

Students who do not return to the College of Medicine at the conclusion of the approved/required leave of absence or do not submit the required documentation by the stated deadlines will be withdrawn administratively. The action is reported to the SEPAC for review. Students who have been withdrawn administratively following a voluntary leave of absence from the College of Medicine and wish to be readmitted should refer to the Readmission from Voluntary Withdrawal section.

**Voluntary Withdrawal**
A student in good standing may choose to voluntarily withdraw from the College of Medicine with the intent not to return as an enrolled student.

To voluntary withdraw, students must initiate a request with the Dean for Student Affairs in writing or in person. Students work with the College of Medicine Office of Student Affairs to coordinate with other offices including financial aid, registrar, and other entities to fully understand the ramifications of the withdrawal. Students will be referred to the College of Medicine Tuition Refund Policy during this process.

**Readmission from Voluntary Withdrawal**
Former students who withdrew or were administratively withdrawn following a voluntary leave of absence in good academic standing from the College of Medicine may petition for readmission within 12 months from the effective date of the withdrawal (e.g., student decides medical school is not their career path and withdraws, but within a year believes they are ready to pursue medicine). All petitions for readmission must be in writing with all correspondence directed to the SEPAC through the Office of Student Affairs. The petitioner may ask to appear in person before the SEPAC. All written materials are distributed to the SEPAC membership prior to the meeting at which the petition is reviewed. The SEPAC decides to readmit or not based on the merits of the student's rationale for readmission and the student's likelihood of success. If the SEPAC rejects the petition, further petitions from the former student will not be accepted.

If the SEPAC readmits the student, it refers the readmitted student to the appropriate College of Medicine committees and offices for the development and implementation of an appropriate curriculum plan, including the point of re-entry into the MD program. Any plan generated by College of Medicine committees or offices is subject to approval by the SEPAC. Students who withdraw in good academic standing to pursue another advanced degree may petition for an extension beyond the one-year deadline for readmission.

Former students who do not petition for readmission within 12 months following withdrawal must re-apply to the first-year class through the admissions process and meet all requirements for that enrollment year.
5.0 Related Policies
Tuition Refund Policy EC.12.01.170425
Technical Standards Policy AD.10.02.170508
Medical Student Promotion, Dismissal, and Graduation SE.09.02.170808

6.0 Key Search Words
Leave of absence, voluntary leave, failure to return

7.0 Revision History

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Responsible Office: Office of Student Affairs

Policy Contact: Dean for Student Affairs

Supersedes: EC.10.01.170912 approved 11/09/2020