

Recommendations from the Select Committee to Review Family Medical Leave

Recommendation Outline

Santa Fe College's current policy regarding leave for medical and family-care purposes is to comply with what is required by the Department of Labor's Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. A review of policies maintained by Santa Fe's peer institutions, as well as our competing employers, has revealed that several organizations go beyond this, providing employees with a more robust offering of leave options in conjunction with FMLA. For an overview of relevant policies, please refer to Table 1, below. In addition, a survey of 482 faculty and staff, has highlighted the extent to which employees 1) feel that SF's current leave policy is inadequate and 2) avoid utilizing the benefits they are afforded, for fear of exhausting accrued leave that may be necessary for the coverage of a potential future event.

In light of these findings, this committee recommends that The College Senate's and Career Service Council's respective Salary and Benefits Committees consider the following additions and revisions to our existing leave policies:

Leave Policy Additions:

- Supplement the currently offered 12 weeks mandated by FMLA to allow up to a total of 6 months job-protected leave for the purposes of qualifying FMLA events.
- Allow for an optional transition period back to work with reduced schedule when coming back after job-protected leave, not to exceed one year in totality per qualifying event.
- 30 business days of employer-paid parental leave, to be used in conjunction with FMLA leave. We recommend this for both full-time and part-time employees who are eligible for FMLA.

Leave Policy/Procedure Revisions:

- Make job-protected leave without pay available to employees immediately upon hire.
- Allow spouses who have shared leave requirements under FMLA to take additional job-protected leave, up to 12 weeks for each individual.
- Remove the requirement to use all sick days while on FMLA, retaining up to 15 sick days at the discretion of the employee.
- Explore the use of the sick leave pool for any FMLA qualifying event.
- Remove the once-per-lifetime limitation from the Board Approved Leave of Absence.

Additional Recommendations:

- Develop an educational program to help chairs, directors, and other supervisors gain greater familiarity with SF's family and medical leave policies and procedures, including existing procedures for extending leave (Board Approved Leave of Absence, Reduced work contract).
- Update online information available about FMLA and the procedure to request leave.
- Increase education on FMLA eligibility and procedures for part-time employees.

Table 1: Family and Medical Leave Benefits available at Peer Institutions

In conjunction with 12 weeks of job-protected leave through FMLA, SF's competing employers offer:		
Florida State Colleges	Unpaid Leave*	Employer Paid Leave**
Eastern Florida State College	6 months	
Hillsborough Community College	12 months	
Lake Sumter State College		10 days parental leave for each employee
Miami Dade College	12 months	
Palm Beach State College	6 months	
Pensacola State College	1 academic year	
Polk State College	16 weeks	
Valencia College		30 days parental leave; 45 total for spouses
Other Competing Employers		
University of Florida	12 months	8 weeks parental leave per employee 8 weeks medical leave after 80 hours PTO
University of Central Florida	6 months	Collective Bargaining Agreement up to 1 semester (pending)
The State of Florida	6 months	

* Used concurrently with FMLA, extends leave to stated maximum

** Used concurrently with FMLA, policies relating to other leave balances differ by institution