

**Response to Staff Senate Recommendation
to the VP of Administration & Finance**

Request: to Grant Administrative Leave for Full time Staff and Contingent II staff on March 24, 2022 and Friday, March 25, 2022

Staff Recommendation: Grant Administrative Leave to Full Time PIN and Contingent II staff for Thursday, March 24, 2022, and Friday, March 25, 2022, to allow staff mental health break during spring break 2022. If there are certain groups that would be disadvantaged by this recommendation the Staff Senate is open to offering those critical employee's days that could be used at a different time.

Additional Consideration: The Staff Senate recognizes that there is a group of contractual employees that could potentially lose pay from this recommendation. We would encourage Human Resources to talk with supervisors who have these types of staff members to provide some guidance on how to handle this situation. Ultimately, the Staff Senate still feels that the impact on mental health, staff morale, burnout issues, etc. far outweigh the negatives that could be perceived from this recommendation.

VP Consideration and Recommendation:

Thank you for bringing the concerns of staff forward and particularly the need to address the ongoing mental health and well-being of our campus. The University Holiday Calendar for 2022 provides for 16 paid Holidays. Because of the nature of the College work and our academic mission many of those Holidays are observed in conjunction with academic programming. The current 2022 Calendar established no observed leave days during the week of spring break.

After researching the current leave policy, observed holidays in 2022, all staff types and classifications, operational unit impact, and other USM institution leave plans for that same period, in lieu of additional Administrative leave on those dates, SU will implement Liberal Leave for employees currently scheduled to work during that week.

While the campus will remain open and operational, Liberal Leave will allow certain employees flexibility to use their available personal or annual leave for their needs with prior notification, but without required preapproval from their supervisor. Additionally, for those employees identified as critical and/or essential to certain operations, prior notification to and approval by the supervisor to use their available personal or annual leave will still need to be made, as soon as possible, to ensure campus needs are met. This will also prevent the potential loss of wages for those employees who do not accrue leave.

In looking at other USM schools' observed Holidays and Administrative Leave days I noted that many allot 12 Holidays and 4 Administrative Leave days. However, administrative leave days may differ at each school. Given the staff concerns raised I suggest SU review and consider modifications to the administrative leave days observed by SU.

I believe this action supports the Staff Senate's goal and at the same time fulfills the operational needs of the campus before the Holiday leave period begins. An announcement with this information will be distributed to the campus community shortly. Your support of this action is appreciated.

Staff Senate Response to the VP of Administration & Finance

We appreciate your response but find ourselves disappointed with the decision to allow staff to use earned leave. Morale is down among staff all over campus. We aren't advocating for a shift in how holidays are assigned. We are advocating for recognition that staff are over-stressed and burned out. We feel the importance of mental health is perceived differently for staff than it is for other campus constituencies. Time and time again, staff at SU work diligently to make sure the work we do has a positive impact on the campus. And time and time again, it is staff that is overlooked. Over the past two years, the entire campus community came together to ensure students were able to continue their education during unprecedented times. That could not have happened without a dedicated workforce. We do not teach the students but without staff, the students don't make it into the classroom (virtual or in-person) nor can they receive services outside of the classroom. Please understand, the pandemic has not only effected students and faculty. Staff have had to take on additional duties and work under a lot of stress. Having a day or two off when the university could decide to close for the mental health break that we need is what Staff Senate was advocating for. Smaller departments and departments that require coverage will still have to decide which staff can take off and which staff will have to work, which defeats the purpose of the original proposal.

Therefore, respectfully, we cannot support your decision to offer the use of Liberal Leave during the week of Spring Break. We don't need a Liberal Leave policy to use the annual leave we have earned and it will only cause additional tension for supervisors and their staff.