

Educational Leave

I. Purpose

It is the policy of Dyersburg State Community College (DSCC) to provide time off to regular employees, to continue their education and/or participate in research, grants, or fellowships on a full-time basis. Requests for educational leave for regular employees must be approved in advance by the president. Such approval must specify the length of the leave which normally should not exceed twelve (12) months. Each request for leave will be evaluated on its own merits and approval will depend upon the evidence provided as to the enhancement of the employee's value to the college resulting from the leave. Leave of absence for periods exceeding one (1) year may be granted upon recommendation of the president and approved by the Chancellor as stated in the Leave of Absence Policy.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all regularly employed (non-temporary) DSCC employees. It does not apply to student workers, adjunct faculty, and temporary workers.

III. Policy

Educational Leave of Absence with Pay

- A. Employees on educational leave of absence and receiving compensation through the payroll system of the college, regardless of the original source of the funds, are eligible for the following benefits:
 1. Retirement: (Refer to page 3 of this policy, Retirement Credit, for procedures to request retirement credit.) Regular full-time employees who have received final approval from the college and the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) for the period of the leave will continue to accrue creditable service and/or to have employer contributions paid on their behalf. Individuals who receive TCRS approval and who continue in the retirement program should not participate simultaneously in any other retirement system. Employees whose request for retirement credit is denied by TCRS will be removed from participation in the retirement program for the duration of the leave.
 2. Basic Group Insurance: Employees on approved educational leave who receive compensation from the college may continue their participation in the basic group insurance program. The employee's portion of the premium will be withheld by payroll deduction and the college will pay the employer's portion. The amount of the deduction and scheduled life insurance coverage will be the deduction and life schedule in effect immediately prior to the beginning of the leave.

3. Other Group Insurance: Employees on approved leave with pay may, at their option, continue membership in other group insurance plans available to active employees. In all such plans except the group medical/life insurance plan noted above, the full cost of the plan is born by the employee. These premiums will be withheld by payroll deduction in accordance with established procedures.
 4. Unemployment Compensation Benefits: The College will provide unemployment benefits based on the provisions of State and Federal unemployment compensation acts.
 5. Social Security: Employees will continue participation in Social Security with coverage and applicable taxes based on the compensation paid during the leave.
 6. Federal Withholding Tax: Federal withholding taxes will be based on compensation paid to the employee during the leave and upon the applicable withholding tables.
 7. Longevity Pay: Employees on approved educational leave with pay are considered to be eligible for longevity pay, and payments will be made on the regular schedule.
 8. Educational Assistance: Refer to the eligibility requirements contained in the various programs of Guideline P-130.
- B. Employees on educational leave are not eligible to accrue or use annual, sick or other leave benefits during the period not worked.

Educational Leave of Absence Without Pay

- A. Employees on an approved educational leave of absence and receiving no compensation from the college are eligible for the following benefits:
1. Retirement: (Refer to page 3 of this policy, Retirement Credit, for procedures to request retirement credit.) Employees who have received approval from the college and TCRS will receive retirement credit for the period of the leave.
 2. Basic Group Insurance: Employees on approved educational leave without pay are eligible to continue their participation in the group medical/life insurance program. If they elect continuation of coverage, employees must pay both the employee and employer share of the premium. The Tennessee Insurance System (Edison) will bill the employee for the full premium, in advance, on a monthly basis. The rate of contribution and the life insurance coverage will be the rate and life schedule in effect immediately prior to the beginning of the leave.
 3. Other Group Insurance: Employees on approved leave without pay may, at their option, continue membership in other group insurance plans available to eligible employees. In all such plans, the full cost of the plan is born by the employee.
 4. Educational Assistance: Refer to the eligibility requirements contained in the various programs of Guideline P-130.

- B. Employees on an approved educational leave of absence and receiving no compensation from the college are not eligible for the following benefits:
1. Unemployment Compensation Benefits: Unemployment benefits will not be provided for employees who do not receive compensation from the college while on leave.
 2. Social Security: The College will not make any contributions during a leave without pay.
 3. Longevity Pay: Longevity is not payable during a leave of absence without pay, nor is the period considered as eligible service.
 4. Leave Benefits: Employees on educational leave are not eligible to accrue or use annual, sick or other leave benefits during the period not worked.
 5. Educational Assistance: Refer to the eligibility requirements contained in the various programs of Guideline P-130.

Retirement Credit

An Application for Retirement Credit for Educational Leave of Absence form should be submitted along with a written request for a leave of absence to the president. If the leave request is approved, the application for retirement credit should then be forwarded to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System. The TCRS Board of Trustees is responsible for granting final approval for retirement credit.

To be considered for retirement credit, the leave must be for the purpose of attending school or engaging in academic research related to employment, and must be intended to increase the employee's usefulness to the college. Approval by TCRS is granted conditionally upon the employee's immediate return to employment after the leave for a period of at least one year of service. An individual may not receive retirement credit for educational leave in excess of two years during the individual's lifetime.

Examples of the types of leave which will be considered for retirement credit are as follows:

- A. The leave is for formal study at an institution of higher education leading to an advanced degree in a field relevant to the faculty/staff member's area of professional responsibility.
- B. The leave is for a formal period of research or post- doctoral study in a field related to the faculty/staff member's area of professional responsibility. Such leaves will include, but not be limited to, periods of study supported by grants, such as the Guggenheim, Fulbright-Hays, Rockefellers Foundation, or Ford Foundation fellowship.
- C. In rare cases, retirement credit will be allowed for an approved educational leave for formal study leading to an undergraduate degree or professional certification directly related to enhancing an employee's ability to perform his/her job. A written statement justifying the leave must be provided and approved by the president.

When retirement credit is approved for a leave of absence which occurs after 1981, creditable service and/or contributions during the leave will be handled in the following manner:

- A. Employees Receiving Compensation: TCRS Member Creditable service in TCRS will be granted for the period of the leave and the employer contribution will be made based on the rate in effect during the period of the leave and the annualized salary in effect immediately prior to the educational leave; however, employer provided employee contributions will not be credited to the employee's account.

ORP Member Employer contributions equal to 10% (11% of salary above the Social Security wage base) of the annualized salary in effect immediately prior to the educational leave will be made.

- B. Employees Receiving No Compensation: TCRS Member Creditable service will be granted but no employer contributions will be made during the leave period.

ORP Member Employer contributions equal to 10% (11% of salary above the social security wage base) of the annualized salary in effect immediately prior to the educational leave will be forwarded to the ORP. If the employee is an ORP member and does not return to service following the educational leave of absence, the college should request a refund from the ORP vendor(s) of the employer contributions which were made during the leave period.

If retirement credit is approved for a leave of absence which occurred prior to July 1981, the TCRS member must pay employee contributions plus interest based on the salary earned in the year immediately prior to the commencement of the leave; the ORP member must contact the TCRS Prior Service Section directly to initiate an individual calculation.

IV. Compliance

All DSCC employees are expected to adhere to this policy.

V. Definitions

TCRS Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System
ORP Optional Retirement System

VI. Revision History

Policy created November 2004. Policy updated July 2012; approved by Administrative Council on July 27, 2012. Reviewed and approved with no changes by Administrative Council on April 27, 2023. Reviewed and approved with no changes by Administrative Council on April 24, 2025.