

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Policy:	Student Involuntary Leave Policy University Policy – Student Handbook
Effective Date:	August 2023
Revisions:	
Next Review Date:	September 2024
Review Officer(s):	Vice President for Student Success, Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Status:	Pending Approval of the LU Board of Trustees

I. POLICY STATEMENT

Lincoln University is committed to the safety, health, and well-being of all students and members of the University community. The University recognizes that students may experience situations that significantly inhibit their ability to function successfully or safely in their role as students. When such circumstances arise, the University encourages students to voluntarily withdraw for a period of time so that they may address any outstanding issues. When a student chooses not to do so and the best available objective evidence indicates that they pose a serious risk to themselves or the health and safety of the University community, or where the student's behavior severely disrupts the University environment or its customary functions, the University may require the student to take an involuntary leave of absence.

II. REASON FOR THIS POLICY

In the uncommon circumstance that a student cannot safely remain at the University or meet academic standards even with accommodations and other supports, the University may require the student to take a leave of absence.

DEFINITIONS

Process Facilitator: A University official separate from the decision-making process but with the knowledge necessary to serve as a neutral resource available to help guide, counsel, and support a student involved in the involuntary leave process from initial referral through the student's potential return to the University.

Student: For purposes of this policy, any person who is enrolled, who has been promoted or accepted for enrollment, or who intends to enroll at or be promoted to the University within the next twelve calendar months.

POLICY

Section I. – Involuntary Leave of Absence

A. General

1. The Vice President for Student Success may place a student on an Involuntary Leave of Absence for reasons of personal or community safety. The Vice President may confer with the Associate Vice President of Health and Wellness, Dean of Students, Class Dean Health Services Director and the Director of Counseling Services when making the decision of involuntary leave. Involuntary leave may be imposed

for safety reasons if it finds, after an individualized assessment, that there is a significant risk that the student will harm him/herself or another, and that the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through accommodations.

In making his/her decision, the Vice President will: consider whether there are accommodations that would allow the student to meet academic standards and remain safely in school, and if safety is an issue, consider the nature and severity of the risk, the probability that injury will actually occur, and whether accommodations can sufficiently mitigate the risk.

The Vice President may inquire into a student's current condition, including requesting recent mental health information and records, but must confine his/her inquiry to information and records necessary to make a determination. The Vice President may not insist on unlimited access to confidential information or records.

This process will be commenced only in extraordinary circumstances when there is compelling evidence to suggest that the student is engaging in or is at heightened risk of engaging in behavior that could lead to a serious risk to the physical safety of the student or any other person or property or is a risk as a result of physical or a medical or mental health emergency; the student has engaged, or threatened to engage, in conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, serious disruption to the University environment or its customary functions, including by impeding the rightful activities of others; or the student is unable to function as a student; and no reasonable accommodations can adequately reduce the risks, threats, or disruption.

The process of Involuntary leave may be initiated when an individualized assessment determines that there is a substantial risk that there exists a significant danger of self-harm by the student, and the risk cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level through reasonable and feasible accommodations and/or on-campus support.

2. An involuntary leave of absence is not a disciplinary sanction and may not be intended or interpreted as punitive in nature. Lincoln University will make no distinction on a student's transcript between a voluntary and an involuntary leave of absence. An involuntary leave of absence is intended to permit a student to take a break from their studies to address the issues that led to the need for the leave of absence, so that they may later return to the University with an enhanced opportunity to achieve their educational goals. At any time prior to the decision to place a student on involuntary leave, the student may choose to voluntarily withdraw from the University for a period of time.

3. Faculty and staff, academic leaders, advisors, residence hall staff, coaches, administrators, or any other person should transmit information regarding a student who may meet the criteria for involuntary leave to the Vice President for Student Success. The Vice President will assess and make a determination as to whether the Student should be recommended for involuntary leave. The three possible outcomes of this process are the student may remain at the University without conditions; ii) may remain at the University with conditions to be described in writing, which if violated would cause a re-evaluation of the student's status; or iii) should be placed on involuntary leave if the student does not elect to take voluntary leave.

4. The Vice President for Student Success will inform a student under consideration for involuntary leave in writing of the student's option to consult with, and the contact information for, the University's involuntary leave Process Facilitator, who will support the Student by serving as a neutral resource available to answer the Student's questions regarding the process from referral through return to the

University. The Process Facilitator will be a member of counseling services and appointed by the Director of Counseling Services.

5. Unless otherwise authorized in writing by the Vice President for Student Success, a student placed on involuntary leave must promptly vacate University housing and leave University property within the allotted time, may not continue to participate in-person in Student activities or use University facilities, and may not re-enroll or return to University property or participate in University activities until authorized in writing to do so. Students must also present all required documentation given to student or requested by the Vice President for Student Success in order to return to the campus community.

B. Coursework While on Leave

The University may allow online course credit or academic transfer credit from a qualifying institution for equivalent coursework completed by Students while on involuntary leave in a manner consistent with its established requirements. Students must consult with their particular Class Dean should they have questions in this regard or wish to develop an academic plan for continuing their studies while on involuntary leave.

D. Notification

At any time during the involuntary leave process, the Vice President for Student Success may notify a Student's parent, guardian, emergency contact, or other individual, in a manner consistent with applicable law and policy, when the Vice President of Student Success determines that such notification is appropriate.

E. Refunds

Students who qualify for involuntary leave and elect to take voluntary leave and Students who are placed on involuntary leave will be entitled to refunds of tuition, fees, and room and board charges as appropriate given the timing of the required leave. Generally, when the University mandates a leave of absence, for determining the Student's financial obligations to the University, such leave will be retroactive to the beginning of the semester or term, as determined by the Vice President for Student Success.

Section II. – Rejoining the University Community

A. Involuntary Leave Effective Dates

An involuntary leave of absence will remain in effect until the Vice President for Student Success determines, following an individualized assessment conducted by the Vice President for Student Success based on the best available objective evidence, that the Student is i) able to return in person to the University with or without reasonable accommodations; ii) has complied with any University requirements applicable to all Students returning from time away from the University; and iii) has complied with any special conditions or limitations mandated by the Vice President for Student Success in writing.

B. Requesting Permission to Return

1. A student who desires to return to school after taking a leave of absence for mental health reasons will not be subject to more rigorous standards or procedures than a student who desires to return to school after taking a leave for physical health reasons.
2. A Student placed on involuntary leave must submit a written request to the Vice President for Student Success to return in person to the University. Generally, a Student will not be allowed to return until at least one full semester (or other term as may be appropriate) has elapsed. A Student's involuntary leave notification will specify any minimum term of the leave that is mandated and any conditions or requirements that must be satisfied by the Student before the Student's return in person to the University.
2. When a Student requests permission to return from involuntary leave, the Vice President for Student Success will conduct an individualized assessment, provide his/her recommendation and make a determination of whether Student can return to campus. The Vice President may confer with the Associate Vice President of Health and Wellness, Dean of Students, Health Services Director and the Director of Counseling Services when conducting this assessment. Students seeking to return from involuntary leave must submit required documentation related to the factors that led to the involuntary leave decision as part of the assessment. Accessibility Services and Counseling will work with the Student to provide reasonable accommodations as part of the return process as necessary or appropriate.
3. The Vice President for Student Success may require the Student to provide evidence from a specialized medical doctor or personnel, such as psychiatrist that the Student, with or without reasonable accommodations, has sufficiently addressed the issues that previously established the criteria for imposing an involuntary leave of absence as set forth in Section I(A)(1) above. The Vice President may also ask, confer with, or seek information from others, such as the Associate Vice President of Health and Wellness, Dean of Students, Health Services Director and the Director of Counseling Services to assist in making its recommendation. This information may include, but is not limited, to the following:
 - a. At the Student's discretion, documentation within the last 30 or 60 days of the Student's effort to address the issues that led to the need for the involuntary leave of absence;
 - b. With appropriate authorization, release of treatment information to the extent necessary to determine if the Student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the need for the involuntary leave.
4. All Students returning from an involuntary leave of absence, or a voluntary leave of absence taken at the Student's option, must meet the essential eligibility requirements and any technical standards of the University and, if applicable, the relevant college, school, or department, with or without reasonable accommodations. If the Vice President for Student Success is not satisfied that the Student is ready to return to the University or places conditions on the Student's return, the Vice President will notify the Student in writing of the reasons for the decision in a timely manner. After the Student has submitted a written request to return to the University and all required documentation.

Appeal Re-Enrollment Denial

A student may appeal a decision by the Vice President for Student Success, denying re-enrollment to the University President by submitting a written request for review of the decision. The President will review the student's appeal and all necessary additional information and will then render a decision. If the student is not satisfied with the President decision, the student may submit a written request to the Board of Trustees to review the decision. The Board of Trustees will review the student's appeal and all necessary

additional information and will then render a decision, which shall be final. All appeals to the Board of Trustees must be submitted at least 30 days before the next scheduled Board meeting in order for the Board to review the appeal. In exigent circumstances, the Board may call a special meeting at the discretion of the Chairman of the Board.

Confidentiality

Lincoln University will maintain the confidentiality of all information regarding Involuntary Leaves of Absence in accordance with federal, state and local law, and to the greatest extent consistent with the goal of processing such Leaves. All records concerning Involuntary Leaves are confidential. Counseling Services shall retain the official copy of such records, but the Office of the Registrar must be notified. Access to these records is limited by appropriate federal, state and local law.

Lincoln University reserves the right to notify a parent or emergency contact if deemed appropriate under the circumstances and as permitted by applicable federal, state, and local law.

Questions about this Policy should be addressed to:

***The Office of the General Counsel
1570 Baltimore Pike
International Cultural Center (ICC), Second Floor
Lincoln University, PA 19352
484-365-5247***

***The Office of Student Success
1570 Baltimore Pike
Wright Hall, 3rd Floor
Lincoln University, PA 19352
484-365-7222***