

Leave of Absence Procedure User's Guide: How to Implement the Procedure

The purpose of the new SMU procedure for Leave of Absence (LOA) and the accompanying Leave of Absence Form (LOAF) is to provide a formal process to monitor those students who "Stop Out" of SMU either for voluntary or involuntary reasons. Typically, a leave of absence is generally for a temporary departure from the institution. However, with this new policy, intended permanent withdrawals from SMU will also be processed using the LOAF. The completion of this process will assist all respective offices at SMU monitor and have a formal centralized record of the status for all of these students. Presently, SMU students may stop out from the university for two consecutive full semesters and are not required to notify anyone of their plans or intentions to exercise this choice. Similarly, there are administrative gaps in the current *process* governing a student's return to SMU after their time away.

Following is a step-by-step guide for each office to follow in the administration of this policy. In short, no SMU student should leave SMU without having a formal conversation with key offices on campus.

The possible exception to this policy will be for those students who are processed for a medical withdrawal or other involuntary withdrawal from SMU.

Procedures/Process:

I. Academic Advising:

The first formal and initial step is for the student to meet with his/her adviser to discuss their intentions. Students who intend to leave the university on a temporary or permanent basis must complete the Leave of Absence Form (LOAF) which will be available through the advising offices, the registrar and the dean of students. A simple course withdrawal is to be treated differently than a separation from SMU. Routine course withdrawals will continue to be processed per current policy using the *Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation* form.

Academic Advisers should determine if their advisee is intending to leave SMU on a temporary basis (withdraw from the term) or withdraw from a course or courses for the term. If it is the former, then the student should begin the process of completing the LOAF with you, their adviser. Once the adviser has signed and dated the LOAF, the student should then be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

II. International Center:

A SMU student on an international student visa has to adhere to specific enrollment guidelines and regulations of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency, (ICE). The foreign student adviser must clearly advise the student of the implications of a LOA on his/her student visa status. Once the foreign student adviser has signed and dated the LOAF, the

student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

III. Retention and Strategic Planning:

The Director of Retention and Strategic Planning will meet with students to conduct an exit interview with them. The director will also record any additional information the student shares about their decision to leave SMU. Once the Director of Retention has signed the LOAF, the student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence policy.

IV. Dean of Students:

The student will meet with the Dean of Student Life to discuss available options and or resources of support the student may consider while on a LOA. Once Dean of Student Life has signed and dated the LOAF, the student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

V. Financial Aid:

Due to the complexities associated with financial aid, any student who is a recipient of grants, scholarships, or loans should meet with a financial aid adviser to discuss their intentions to leave SMU. The financial aid adviser will discuss available options with the student if reasons for leaving are associated with financial concerns. The financial aid adviser will also discuss the implications their LOA will have on the status of their financial aid. Lastly, the financial aid adviser should inform the student of important filing dates for consideration to receive financial aid upon their return. Once financial aid has signed and dated the LOAF, the student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

VI. Residence Life and Student Housing:

SMU students who reside in campus housing will be processed per RLSH policies to check out of their assigned room. Students should be directed to go to the Residence Life and Student Housing Office in Boaz Hall. The RLSH staff member should inform the student of important deadlines regarding consideration for consideration of future campus housing. Once RLSH has signed and dated the LOAF, the student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

VII. Park 'N Pony:

The student processing a LOA needs to cancel their meal plan at the Park 'N Pony Office and determine if there are any outstanding charges owed to SMU by the student. Once Park and Pony has processed the student's accounts and signed and dated the LOAF, the student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

VIII. Student Financial Services (Student Accounts):

Before leaving SMU, the student should be aware of any outstanding charges owed to SMU. These include tuition and fees, housing (if applicable), meal plan, health insurance and any other miscellaneous charges, i.e., Park "N Pony, library fines, etc. Once payment arrangements have been made, student financial services should sign and date the LOAF and the student should be directed to meet with the remaining offices to complete the leave of absence process.

IX. Registrars:

The Registrar is the final office that the student must visit. The Registrar will collect the LOAF from the student and review it for accuracy. The LOAF information will be entered into the database, courses will be cancelled and the student will officially be on a leave of absence. Follow-up correspondence will be generated to inform the student that their LOA has been processed.