

### 1500.3 Liberal Leave Policy

**Purpose** To establish the process to implement “liberal leave” during inclement weather or emergency situations.

**Policy** As residential university, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute requires campus services to be available at all times. To provide these services, Rensselaer will make every effort to remain open at all scheduled times. However, during inclement weather or emergency situations, it may be deemed necessary to allow “liberal leave” for non-essential staff.

This Liberal Leave policy provides all staff the option of utilizing Paid Time Off (PTO) or leave without pay, without the leave being previously scheduled and approved in advance by their immediate supervisor. Also, this policy provides staff with a grace period to arrive two-hours later than the normal start of their shift or a grace period to leave two-hours earlier than the normal end time of their shift without being charged PTO leave when Liberal Leave is in effect.

Staff requesting Liberal Leave must follow departmental procedures to request a late arrival, an early departure or an absence. Any absence or departure beyond the two-hour grace period will require staff to use their accrued Paid Time-Off (PTO). The use of PTO leave and/or an unpaid leave of absence applies to both exempt and non-exempt employees. If PTO leave is not available, staff will not be paid for the time away from work in accordance with the PTO Program Policy guidelines. (See Human Resources Policy # 1300.1, *Paid Time Off Program*.)

When the Liberal Leave Policy is invoked, staff who have been designated as “Essential Staff” by their Vice President or Academic Dean must report to and/or remain at work. All other *non-essential staff* are permitted to use the two-hour grace period. Non-essential staff, who do not report to work when Liberal Leave is invoked AND who have previously scheduled PTO or bereavement leave, are not eligible to use the two-hour grace period.

When the Liberal Leave Policy is invoked, the Vice President for Student Life will ensure student services are available for residential and off-campus students on the Troy campus.

**Procedure** From time-to-time, it may be deemed necessary to modify the operating schedule. Altered schedules have resulted from events such as weather emergencies, interruption of utilities and local conditions, or other emergencies. Altered schedules may, therefore, pertain to the Institute, a campus, a school or a department.

When conditions warrant, the President, in consultation with the Provost, Vice President for Administration and the Vice President for Human Resources, will decide whether and when to alter/curtail operations. It is recognized, however, that conditions may be local.

### **Announcement**

When there is an alteration or curtailment of Rensselaer's operating schedule, an official announcement approved by the President or designee, will be made on the Public Safety Closing/Delay Information Line, through designated radio stations, through RenServ communication announcements, RPI Alert, or by the designated Vice President/portfolio owner. Since conditions may vary in the geographic areas where Rensselaer has campuses, there may be times when Liberal Leave Policy is invoked for some locations and not others. In addition, conditions may be different on campus than they are in the area where an employee lives. Although every effort will be made to ensure consistency across media, the official operating schedule will be the one reported on the Public Safety system.

### **Essential Staff**

When the Liberal Leave Policy is invoked, all "Essential Staff" must report to work and/or remain at work.

Essential Staff is defined as an employee who has been designated by the Vice President or portfolio owner as vital to the operation of a work group, whose presence is required regardless of the existence of an emergency condition or Institute closing, and whose presence allows the continuation of critical services, protects the safety and well being of the university population and/or physical plant and supports necessary timely work. Designated Essential Staff must remain at work or report to work. Employees who fail to remain at or report to work may be considered on an Unauthorized Absence Without Approval pending discussion with their supervisor.

Annually, or on a rotating schedule, certain employees will be designated by their supervisors as Essential Staff. This designation should be put in writing indicating that these employees provide critical services and are required to report to work or remain at work. The Division of Human Resources can provide guidance on making the determination.

Essential Staff may also be designated by the Vice President or portfolio owner based on the business needs of the department at the time of the emergency condition or Institute closing. Each unit/department will define its own staffing requirements in times of an emergency or Institute closing. Essential Staff in this category will be advised at the time of the liberal leave announcement.

### **Compensation**

When Rensselaer at Troy or Hartford, or a department of either (including offices in New York City, Washington D.C or other locations) invokes Liberal Leave due to inclement weather or an emergency, non-exempt, Essential Staff will be paid time and a half for all hours worked and will receive equal time off for time worked from the time their Liberal Leave is invoked on campus or at their work location to the end of their normally scheduled work shift. Such time off must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor and must be taken within a reasonable period of time.

All staff not designated as "Essential Staff" arriving to work within a two hour period of time from the start of their shift or who leave work within two hours of the normal end time of their shift will be paid other paid time "OTH" for time taken within that two hour period of time. Staff electing not to report to work for the entire duration of their shift will utilize PTO leave or leave without pay for the entire shift.

Temporary and Fixed-term employees who are not eligible for PTO leave are paid for time worked only.