



MEMORANDUM

TO: University Council

FROM: Lori Erickson, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources; Jeff Blanton, Assistant Vice President of Administration; Mason Bowen, Director of Operations of Emergency Preparedness; Kay Lennon McGrew, Esq., Associate University Counsel

DATE: October 3, 2023

RE: Policies for October 9, 2023 UC Meeting

I. Parental Leave Policy.

A. Policy Purpose.

On August 1, 2023 in response to changes in Tennessee Law (TCA 4-21-208), ETSU enacted an emergency policy on Parental Leave. Pursuant to the Policy on Policies, the content of the emergency policy is now moving through the formal policy process. No substantive change to the content in the emergency policy were made in the proposed permanent policy. This policy specifies the parameters for parental leave.

B. Public Comment Period.

This policy was posted for public comment from September 9, 2023 through September 20, 2023. No substantive comments requesting revision of the policy were received. However, Rachel Waldon and Sharon McGee both applauded ETSU's efforts to adopt this policy.

C. Legal Review.

The Office of University Counsel completed its review of this policy on August 7, 2023 and found no legal issues.

D. Recommendation.

IN CONSIDERATION of all of the above, the Office of University Counsel confirms the requirements under the Policy and Development and Administrative Rulemaking Policy have been met and the Office of Human Resources recommends **APPROVAL** of the Parental Leave

Policy.

II. Campus Closure Policy.

A. Policy Purpose.

This policy specifies the institutional response plan to local and regional inclement weather conditions. It replaces the TBR policy which the institution is currently following.

B. Public Comment Period.

This policy was posted for public comment from September 9, 2023 through September 20, 2023. The following substantive comments were received:

Comment from Janna Scarborough: *“Hello - I believe cancelling synchronous classes for weather does make sense given that the exact time of the course is a consideration (different from asynchronous). There could be access issues due to power but also due to the need to be in a location, in front of a computer/phone with connection, at a specific time - and this could also be impacted by the weather-related issue.”*

Sponsor’s Response: Thank you for your comment. We agree.

Comment from Cheri Clavier: *“I agree with Dr. Pittarese's comment. For reference, the following are ETSU's off-campus instructional sites per the SACSCOC definition:*

- *ETSU at Kingsport Allandale, located at 1501 University Boulevard, Kingsport, TN 37660*
- *Nave Center, located at 1000 Jason Witten Way, Elizabethton, TN 37643*
- *Pellissippi State Community College, located at 10915 Hardin Valley Road, Knoxville, TN 37932*
- *ETSU at Sevier County, located at 2025 Red Bank Road, Sevierville, TN 37876*
- *BlueSky Chattanooga Center, located at 1 Cameron Circle, Chattanooga, TN 37402*

Note that SACSCOC considers a location an off-campus site when 25% or more of the credits towards a degree or certificate can be obtained there. However, ETSU offers instruction (below the 25% threshold) at additional locations not included in the list above, including at some local high schools via dual enrollment. Guidance for ETSU students, faculty, and staff at these locations would strengthen this policy.”

Sponsor’s Comment: Thank you for your comment. Please see the previous response. The policy has been updated.

Comment from Rachel Walden: *“I would appreciate having a responsibility spelled out in this policy regarding communication of expectations from leadership during weather hazards that occur during nights and weekends. For example, the Medical Library may be*

staffed until midnight on weekdays and open on weekends - when snow or other inclement weather occurs during these times, there is uncertainty about whether the institution will issue any specific closure or delay directive. We also have a student area that is open 24/7 by cardswipe; it would be helpful to know if emergency alerts for tornadoes or other hazards would go out in the middle of the night when students may be using campus buildings. Other campus units who may be affected on nights and weekends could include the Sherrod Library, the CPA, the Martin Center, other arts performance spaces, etc.”

Sponsor’s Response: While we cannot predict all emergency weather events in advance of the emergency, for example tornadoes, the communication is same regardless off the time of day. Our system currently does send out notices 24 hours a day. However, the nature of an emergency is often unforeseeable. It also depends on the time of emergency; for example, if a tornado were to strike, the 24/7 student area that you mentioned should stay open if students are in it, so that the students may shelter in place.

Comment from Sharon McGee: *“I agree with Dr. Pittarese's comment about off-site locations and the need for clarity in this policy regarding the impact of closures on off-campus sites.*

I agree with Dr. Epps and am confused as to why synchronous online classes would be canceled. It is possible in inclement weather that internet or electric services could be out, but couldn't the policy allow flexibility for that?

Many institutions are moving to online instruction in the event of forecasted inclement weather so that instructional time is not lost.

Sponsor’s Response: Thank you for your response. Please see previous comments.

Comment from Susan Epps: *“Are all synchronous courses connected to an on-ground course? If so, the policy that they would be canceled makes sense, but if they aren't connected to an on-ground course, why would a synchronous course need to be canceled for inclement weather if everyone is on Zoom?”*

Sponsor’s Response: Inclement weather may affect the faculty or student’s ability to access internet. In addition, we would neither require faculty to travel to campus to teach an online course nor do we require faculty to have internet in their homes to teach from home.

Comment from Tony Pittarese: *“Should there be a statement in this policy regarding off campus instructional locations? When closure announcements are made for the main campus, clarity is needed regarding how this affects Off-Campus Sites. As an example, the BlueSky Chattanooga Center must, of necessity, follow the closure policies of BlueCross BlueShield of TN. If they close their facility due to inclement weather, the instructional site would be required to close. Similarly, that Center may operate at times when the main campus*

is closed if the inclement weather is local in its effect. (Off-Campus Sites are listed in the defined terms, but I don't see Off-Campus Sites addressed in the policy.)”

Sponsor’s Response: Thank you for your comment. The policy has been updated to reflect your suggestion.

C. Legal Review.

The Office of University Counsel completed its review of this policy on October 2, 2023 and found no legal issues.

D. Recommendation.

IN CONSIDERATION of all of the above, the Office of University Counsel confirms the requirements under the Policy and Development and Administrative Rulemaking Policy have been met and the Office of Administration recommends **APPROVAL** of the Campus Closure Policy.