

Leaves of Absence and Withdrawals from School

The College of Law understands some students may need to leave school for some period of time. The policies and procedures below describe the circumstances under which a student may leave and return to the College of Law.

A. Leaves of Absence

- 1. Eligibility and Procedure:** A student who has completed at least one semester of study at the College of Law may petition the Associate Dean for a leave of absence. The petition must be in writing, must be signed by the student, and must set forth the circumstances of the request and the length of the requested leave. Students are not eligible for a leave of absence during their first semester at the College of Law. Also, a student typically will not be eligible for a leave of absence if the student is being investigated for an honor code violation or if an honor court complaint has been filed against the student and has not yet been resolved. Unless a student is called to active military service, a request for a leave of absence typically will not be considered during the last week of classes or during the examination period.
- 2. Circumstances for Leave:** The petition for leave of absence may be granted, granted with conditions, or denied. Approval will be granted only in circumstances of extraordinary hardship, such as sustained illness of the student or a person in the student's immediate family and for whom the student will serve as caregiver, call to military service, or selection for extended jury duty.
- 3. Time of Leave:** To be eligible for a leave of absence, the student must intend to return to the College within the stated period, which typically should not exceed one calendar year. If the requested leave exceeds one year, the Associate Dean will forward the petition to the Academic Standards Committee. The Committee may approve a leave that does not exceed two calendar years. If the student does not return within this two-year period, he or she risks losing all credits already earned and having to reapply for admission as a new student. In addition, if a student has been granted one leave of absence, any subsequent leave must be approved by the Academic Standards Committee. Unless granted an exception by the Academic Standards Committee, a full-time or part-time student must complete all degree requirements within six calendar years, counting all periods of leave or withdrawal.
- 4. Approval:** If the petition is granted, the Associate Dean will respond in writing and will set forth the period of the approved leave and any conditions associated with the leave. In the Associate Dean's absence, the Dean or Chair of the Academic Standards Committee may grant the leave. A copy of this approval letter will be placed in the student's file in the Registrar's Office.
- 5. Matriculation at Another School:** If the petition is granted, the student may not enroll as a degree candidate at another institution. If a student enrolls as a degree candidate at another school, the leave of absence will be converted to a withdrawal. A student may enroll as a nondegree seeking student only with the permission of the Associate

Dean.

6. **Returning to School:** At least four weeks before the end of the granted leave, or when otherwise requested, the student must submit a letter to the Associate Dean indicating his or her intent to return to school. If the student fails to submit a letter or goes beyond the time of the granted leave, the student will not be able to return automatically. Instead, the student must petition the Academic Standards Committee and request to be readmitted. The Associate Dean or Academic Standards committee may require documents, such as a doctor's note, that reflect the student has met stated conditions of the leave and/or is ready and able to return to school.
7. **No Residency:** The period of the leave of absence may not be counted as part of the time needed for residency or for other degree requirements.
8. **Tuition and Financial Responsibility:** Normal rules regarding the refunding of tuition typically will apply if the student is granted a mid-semester leave of absence. In addition, students should understand that funds that might be returned to a lender are still due and owing to the College of Law. However, the College of Law will refund tuition for students called to active military service. In addition, the Associate Dean and Dean have the discretion, in cases involving a leave of absence for a medical condition, to apply some or all already-paid tuition from one semester to the first semester after an approved leave.
9. **Financial Aid:** A student who is on an approved leave of absence retains in-institution status for Title IV loan repayment purposes. However, if the student does not return from a leave of absence, the student's loan grace period starts at the date the leave began. Moreover, Title IV regulations limit leaves of absence to 180 calendar days for recipients of federal funding. If the student has not completed the course work from the semester in which the leave of absence was taken or is not re-enrolled at the end of 180 calendar days, the leave of absence is treated as a withdrawal for federal financial aid purposes.
10. **Transcript:** A student who is granted a leave of absence after the first day of class in a semester in which the student is enrolled will receive "W" grades on his or her transcript. The transcript also will contain the notation "Leave of Absence."

B. Withdrawals from School

1. **Definition:** Withdrawal, as used in this policy, is defined as dropping the entire academic program in a given term, and not a portion of the program. Withdrawal from a particular course is covered by the policy on enrollment, attendance, and withdrawal. A student who wishes to leave the College of Law but does not qualify for a leave of absence must withdraw. A student must be in good standing to withdraw; students who are not in good standing fall under the exclusion policy.
2. **Eligibility:** A student may withdraw from the College of Law at any time.

3. **Procedure:** To withdraw, the student should obtain and complete a Withdrawal form, which is available in the Registrar's Office and on the Registrar's Web page. The student must meet with and obtain the signatures of the Associate Dean, the Director of Accounting, and the Director of Financial Aid. These signatures are necessary to prove that the student has fulfilled all outstanding financial and other obligations. The student must then return the completed form to the Registrar's Office. A withdrawal is not effective until the completed form is returned to the Registrar's Office.
4. **Tuition and Financial Responsibility:** Students should consult the separate policy on tuition refunds. Calculations under that policy will be based on the date the completed withdrawal form is received in the Registrar's Office. In addition, students should understand that funds that might be returned to a lender are still due and owing to the College of Law.
5. **Financial Aid:** A withdrawal does not count as a leave of absence. If a student stops attending school without notifying the College, a federal statutory provision allows the College to use the midpoint of the payment period as the withdrawal date for calculating the Federal Return of Title IV calculation. Otherwise, the College may use the student's last day of academically related activity if it can document the student's attendance.
 - a. A withdrawal affects Federal Stafford loans as follows: Stetson must perform a Return of Title IV calculation that is actually a prorated amount of Federal Stafford loans. As a result of the calculation, we must return the school portion to the lender. We must report the withdrawal to the Department of Education and the lender six-month grace period begins as of the withdrawal date. Prior loans that are in deferment are returned to a grace or repayment status
 - b. A withdrawal affects private alternative loans as follows: Stetson must report the withdrawal to the lender. A nine-month grace period begins as of the withdrawal date with interest accruing.
6. **Honor Code:** If a student withdraws when an honor code investigation or proceeding is pending, the Honor Court Investigator may place a memo in the student's file in the Registrar's Office outlining the charges and the status of the proceedings. An Honor Court proceeding may continue even after a student withdraws.
7. **Transcript:** A student who withdraws after the first day of a semester in which the student is enrolled will receive "W" grades on his or her transcript. The transcript also will contain the notation "Withdrew." However, if the student withdraws after having taken one or more examination, the grades for the examination(s) will be posted on the student's transcript. Those grades may be converted to "W" only if a petition is submitted to and granted by the Academic Standards Committee.
8. **Returning to School:**
 - a. **Students who have completed at least one semester:** Students who

withdrew after having completed one full semester, including final examinations, may petition the Academic Standards Committee for readmission. At least four weeks before the student seeks to return, he or she should obtain a petition form from the Registrar. The completed form should be returned to the Registrar, who will present the petition at the Committee's next meeting. The Committee may grant, grant with conditions, or deny the petition. The Committee will use the standards outlined in the general readmissions policy. The Committee may require documents, such as a doctor's note, that reflect the student has met stated conditions of the leave and/or is ready and able to return to school. If the student does not return within a two-year period, he or she risks losing all credits already earned and having to reapply for admission as a new student. Unless granted an exception by the Academic Standards Committee, a full-time or part-time student must complete all degree requirements within six calendar years, counting all periods of leave or withdrawal.

- b. **Students who have not completed at least one semester:** Students who withdraw during their first semester must re-apply as a new student to the Office of Admissions. Regular deadlines for admission, and all other admissions policies will apply.

Note: Students should also review the "Financial Obligations" policy.

Enacted by the faculty on February 12, 2003.