

Staff Senate Recommendation to the VP of Administration & Finance

Originating Body:	SU Staff Senate	Originator:	Joe Benyish, 2 nd Chair
Date Submitted:	1/18/2022	Requested Effective Date:	March 24, 2022 & March 25, 2022

Background: As we look to spring break 2022, the Staff Senate acknowledges that the constituents that they represent are the one group of the University Community that will most likely be working during that week. The Staff Senate is also aware of:

- **The importance of Mental Health** – Based on the emails received from Human Resources throughout the fall semester, we know this is not only a major priority for administration, but also for the Staff Senate. We wholeheartedly believe that for staff to be able to advocate for the mental health of our students (the main purpose we exist at the University) we must first make sure our staff members are taking care of their own mental health in the middle of an ongoing pandemic. The spring semester is very long without any true break for the staff (MLK Jr. Day until Memorial Day with no breaks).
- **Staffing shortages & growing expectations** – Many staff are working extremely hard, and some are even doing the jobs of multiple positions. We are in a time of great resignations across the field and run the risk of our staff members leaving as they take their own mental health seriously and find other opportunities, only to cause a bigger burden on our current staff members. This is a perfect storm that does not allow our staff members to take the time off that they have earned. It also creates expectations that our staff members are working, even on their days off (which we recognize is not ideal). *Because of these staffing shortages, it makes it difficult for staff to take their earned time, thus making their balances higher than usual.*
- **Staff Morale** – Because of the two first points, we find ourselves in a place where staff morale is low. We live in a world of uncertainty with an impending new president, and it makes a lot of people uneasy. Due to the staffing shortages and the growing expectations, many are burnt out and are really feeling it as it relates to their own mental health, even after just having had their time off for the holidays.
- **Consistency among USM Institutions** – Anecdotally, we recognize that other institutions have different holiday schedules, but we have witnessed other institutions reward their staff with additional days around holidays and during spring breaks over the years. Two examples of the institutions granting additional days at the discretion of the University President include:
 - UMBC who does not typically get the day before Thanksgiving was given that day as administrative leave because of “burn out.”
 - The University of Maryland College Park does not typically get the day before Thanksgiving unless “the president closes the institution.”
 - Bowie was given a Wellness Week that included additional administrative leave

- **Ongoing Pandemic** – The ever changing and ongoing pandemic has resulted in staff having to think more creatively than ever before, but also working harder and being ready for anything and everything all at the same time. Staff have faced numerous challenges this year including taking on new tasks, learning new ways to complete tasks, all while managing ever-increasing workloads due to unfilled vacant positions. Morale among staff is down. Staff are feeling overworked and overlooked.

For these reasons and more, we make the following recommendation on behalf of the Salisbury University Staff.

Recommendation: Grant **Administrative Leave** to Full Time PIN and Contingent II staff for Thursday, March 24, 2022, and Friday, March 25, 2022, to allow staff mental health break during spring break 2022. If there are certain groups that would be disadvantaged by this recommendation the Staff Senate is open to offering those critical employees days that could be used at a different time.

Additional Considerations: The Staff Senate recognizes that there is a group of contractual employees that could potentially lose pay from this recommendation. We would encourage Human Resources to talk with supervisors who have these types of staff members to provide some guidance on how to handle this situation. Ultimately, the Staff Senate still feels that the impact on mental health, staff morale, burnout issues, etc. far outweigh the negatives that could be perceived from this recommendation.

We know that in 2020 staff were given a holiday in March for the 2019 Christmas Eve holiday provided by Governor Hogan. The March holiday was very popular with staff.

It is also worth noting that the most popular (and would be helpful for staff morale) is having a time when all staff are off. We want to emphasize this because when staff use their earned time and the university is not closed, they return to many emails, or they feel obligated to respond to email on their days off. When the university is closed, there are many fewer internal email messages, making it easier for staff to take an actual mental break.

Attached: NA

Date Approved by the Staff Senate:

Vanessa Collins

1/18/2022

Chair, Staff Senate

Date

Joe Barysh

1/18/2022

2nd Chair, Staff Senate

Date

Action Taken by VP of Administration & Finance

_____ Recommendation Accepted _____ Recommendation Not Accepted

_____ Recommendation returned to the Originating Body for further review (see attached)

Disposition for Approved Recommendation

_____ President	_____ VP Student Affairs
_____ Staff Senate Chair	_____ VP Admin & Finance
_____ Consortium Chair	_____ School Deans
_____ Webmaster	_____ AVP Institutional Equity