The Staff Leave Program is available to all employees, including both professional staff (exempt) and support staff (non-exempt). It would somewhat parallel the College’s sabbatical leave program for faculty, and would be offered with the same logic: to address the interests of Manchester College through opportunities for renewal or improvement offered to its individual employees who operate the institution. Such revitalization results from time free from the routine, from new experiences, and from the acquisition of new skills and approaches. Important contributions come from the experience itself, planning for it, and consolidating its gains after it takes place. We also hope that this new program for staff renewal makes a clear, strong statement about our institutional values and our respect for all of our employees.

The leave program for employees is a “benefit” in the opportunity that it offers. Like our sabbatical program for faculty, it is not entitlement or guarantee. It is not a “reward” for service. The leave requires careful thought, a specific proposal, an acceptable plan for work coverage and demonstrable, reported benefits for the College and the employee. The work requirements of the employee’s department, the employee’s job performance, and the number of employees applying for leave, may affect the decision for approval.

An employee will receive full salary and benefits during the leave. It will not affect the number of his or her vacation days or sick days. Except in extraordinary conditions, and with approval of the President upon recommendation by the appropriate Vice-President and the Director of Human Resources, staff leaves cannot be linked to vacation or other forms of leave. Also, this program does not preclude staff members from participating in annual professional meetings and other such “ordinary” development activities of two or three days.

The program will be open to all non-faculty employees of Manchester College after the completion of each consecutive six years of full-time service, e.g., starting in year seven of employment; then year 13, etc. Part-time employees who work an average of 20 hours per week (half-time) will be eligible after they accumulate the equivalent of six years of full-time service. For management reasons, employees will be expected to use their leave opportunities within three years of each eligibility.

Two options will be available, to include as many employees in the leave program as possible and to reflect the College commitment to service.

**Option A:** The employee may receive up to 15 work days of paid leave to undertake a specific PLAN of work-related, professional development, as approved by the College. It could involve participation in a formal program or in one of the employee’s own design that specifies its objectives clearly and how they will be met. Ideally, the program would extend for the full 15 days, although it can be divided into two to three experiences of not less than five days.

**Option B:** The employee may receive up to 15 work days of paid leave for voluntary service that can be taken all at once or spread over three years, again in up to three blocks of time of at least five days. The service can be connected to a formal program (e.g. Habitat for Humanity, disaster relief services, a
denomination’s or church’s mission program) or it can be self designed with clear goals that can be assessed. [Note: in the case of disaster relief, the employee should be “pre-qualified” for such a leave, with the understanding that service might be sudden and immediate.]

Combinations of the two options would be considered. In all options, we expect proposals that reflect a significant investment of thought and commitment by the employee and the College.

The employee is responsible for arranging the financial support needed for the activities of the leave. The College will do what it can to identify resources.

A staff member is expected to return to the College’s employ for one year following the leave. If he or she does not do so, he or she will be required to reimburse the College for the salary or wages received during the leave.

We believe that this program is meritorious for four reasons:

- In a time when the College can not provide the salaries to faculty and staff that it would like to offer, the opportunity for staff development and related opportunities are especially important. We understand that new skills and experiences are “portable,” and can apply to employment at Manchester and elsewhere. Staff development for career improvement is increasing our responsibility to all employees.

- A strong staff leave program, for the reason stated above, can be a distinctive benefit as part of larger opportunities for staff development when offering employment at the College. Evidence in the human resources literature suggest that job seekers today, especially younger ones, expect to develop their talents in a new position. Our proposed program is not a common one, and it will give us some advantage, both in its offer to prospective employees and in its reflection of Manchester College as a good employer.

- The benefits to the College are significant both in the new skills and experiences that are accumulated and in the employees who are renewed and invigorated through some time away from the “routine.”

- The program can be one that reflects Manchester College’s values well- focused on the importance of each individual; available to all full-time or half-time employees; and providing opportunities for significant service.

The down side to the proposal is the occasional absence of employees who are required to complete the work of the College, including some who uniquely perform specific job functions. We believe that the trade-offs here are appropriate. We shall develop a better trained and often invigorated work force. Overall, we shall need to manage our work force needs more carefully. We also recognize that we must place more emphasis on the cross-training of employees and other coverage of workloads, especially to manage the work of those who are alone in their assignments or in their specific knowledge of ”where things are.” There may be occasions, however when we shall need to reschedule a level, or even deny it, because work coverage cannot be arranged. Our goal is clearly otherwise and we shall do our best to make suitable arrangements.
Procedures

The staff member interested in either option for leave should confirm his or her eligibility with the Director of Human Resources. Eligibility occurs after six consecutive years of full-time service dated from the employee’s initial appointment at Manchester College. Staff members who have voluntarily resigned from a College appointed position in accordance with the resignation procedures and are re-employed within one year from the date of separation will have their prior length of service reinstated.

Before submission of a proposal, the employees should initiate conversation about the leave with the appropriate supervisor and Vice President. The staff member should have a clear, convincing idea of what he or she wants to do. Planning for the leave should begin with an appropriate idea, not just with the fact of eligibility. Leaves do not have to be taken, and leaves will not be approved unless they are convincing in their merit for the College and the individual. The possibility of 15 days of leave does not mean that all proposals would logically use that full time. Proposals under Option A must be work related. This discussion should begin at least four months before the leave.

A proposal will need to be prepared. It will state clearly the nature of the leave or service opportunity, and the benefits that will occur for the leave-taker and the College. Help with these proposals should come to be recognized as a responsibility of supervisors. The proposal should address key questions.

- What new skills will be acquired?
- How will they be used?
- How will renewal occur for the leave-taker?
- When is the best time for the employee’s work group for the leave to occur?
- How will work coverage occur?

With the supervisor’s help, the proposal will need to address how the employee’s responsibilities will be met during his or her absence from the College.

The proposal will need to receive the approval of the employee’s supervisor, the Vice President for the employee’s area, the Director of Human Resources, and the President. Exceptions to the policy can only be granted, upon recommendation, by the President.

Within a month after the completion of the leave, the employee will submit a report that summarizes its activities and reflects on its value to the College and employee. The report should be sent to the supervisor, the Vice President of the employee’s area, the Director of Human Resources, and the President. Employees should anticipate that their reports will be shared with others to help in the development of the others’ proposals.

This policy will be re-evaluated in April, 2007, after each employee who completes a minimum of six years of full-time service has had one opportunity for a leave.