

## **Berkeley College Voluntary Medical or Unforeseen Circumstance Withdrawal Policy and Procedures**

### **Purpose**

Berkeley College is committed to supporting the health, safety, and welfare of our students, and preserving the integrity of the learning environment. The purpose of a Voluntary Medical or Unforeseen Circumstance Withdrawal (MUCW) is to provide students time away from campus and their studies until they are able to function successfully and safely as a member of the Berkeley College Community.

### **Scope**

This Policy applies to all current Berkeley College students. This policy does not pertain to students who are experiencing pregnancy and/or related conditions. Students should refer to the [Rights of Pregnant and Parenting Students](#) policy for guidance. In addition, pre-existing conditions that have not worsened during the semester will not be considered.

### **Policy**

The Voluntary Medical or Unforeseen Circumstance Withdrawal (MUCW) may be requested in extraordinary cases in which serious illness or injury (“medical”), or another significant personal situation (“unforeseen circumstance”), prevents a student from continuing his or her classes, and Incompletes or other arrangements with instructors are not possible.

MUCWs are intended for extraordinary circumstances and, with rare exceptions, to be approved only once during a student’s academic career. A complete withdrawal from all classes is usually required. Students who can complete work in some but not all their classes are not typically granted a MUCW. All applications for withdrawal require thorough documentation. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis, and students who wish to pursue an exception may complete the MUCW application.

When seeking to enroll in a new semester of courses following a MUCW, students must apply to return and may be asked to follow a re-entry plan created by the academic advisor, personal counselor, and related support staff members. A student may take up to three semesters off before returning. If they are unable to return within these three semesters, students should contact Academic Advisement and submit proper documentation to be considered for additional time.

### **I. Medical Withdrawal**

A student may request and be considered for a medical withdrawal when a serious illness or injury occurs that prevents a student from continuing classes. The MUCW policy covers both physical health and mental health difficulties. Examples include but

are not limited to: illness that leads a student to be absent for more than three weeks of a 15-week course, or 1.5 weeks of a 7-week course; sudden medical or psychological emergencies; or a sudden, unexpected worsening of known chronic health conditions. Medical withdrawals are not typically approved for chronic health conditions or other health conditions known to the student before the term starts.

## **II. Unforeseen Circumstance Withdrawal**

A student may request and be considered for a withdrawal due to unforeseen circumstances when extraordinary circumstances, not related to the student's personal physical or mental health, prevent the student from continuing in classes or completing coursework. Examples of requests that may be granted for unforeseen circumstances include, but are not limited to: students who need to provide care to an immediate family member (spouse, child, mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent) who is experiencing a serious or unexpected physical or behavioral health condition; or students who have experienced the death of an immediate family member (spouse, child, mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent) that impacts the student's ability to return.

### **Procedures**

Requests for a MUCW must be submitted during the term the request is being made. Requests made after the end of the term may be considered for extreme circumstances only. Students have one week from when the request is made to submit the application and supporting documentation. There is no extension beyond this week.

Students who are considering a MUCW should begin the process by speaking with their Academic Advisor to ensure that all other academic options prior to applying for a MUCW have been explored.

### **I. For Medical Withdrawals**

The Academic Advisor will direct the student to submit a MUCW application along with thorough supporting documentation that is completed by a licensed health care provider who is knowledgeable about the student's medical condition. Information shall include the date of onset of issue, the dates the student was under professional care, the general nature of the medical condition and why/how it prevented the student from completing their course work, and the anticipated date that the student can return to school. The student must also provide the last date they were able to attend class.

Medical withdrawals are not typically approved for health conditions known to the student at the start of the term. Students that require accommodation based on a known chronic health condition should register with the Office of Accessibility Services before the start of the term. A medical withdrawal may be approved as an accommodation for a disability in situations such as the worsening of the health condition for which the student receives accommodation. If a student wishes to apply for a medical withdrawal

for pre-existing, recurring, or chronic health conditions, documentation from the treatment provider must support that the recurrence or worsening of the condition(s) began *after* initiation of the term for which the withdrawal is requested.

## **II. For Unforeseen Circumstance Withdrawals**

The Academic Advisor will direct the student to submit the MUCW application and supporting documentation. Appropriate documentation for an unforeseen circumstance withdrawal will vary according to the nature of the situation and must pertain to these circumstances. For example, documentation for a car accident that does not lead to disability but prevents the student from attending class could include a police report on the accident. Documentation supporting care of an immediate family member could include proof of family member's address or a letter from the family member's treatment provider indicating the need for support. Documentation for students who have experienced the death of an immediate family member could include an obituary along with proof of the relationship between student and family member. Students must also provide the last date they were able to attend class.

## **III. Processing MUCW Applications – MUCW Committee**

A MUCW Committee, led by an academic dean or department chair, and including at least one faculty member, one Student Accounts Staff Member, and one additional student service staff member (from Advisement, Counseling, or Accessibility Services) will convene to approve or deny MUCW requests. Students can appeal denied requests by submitting a written appeal with appropriate supporting documentation, within seven days of the date of the denial, to the Provost. The decision by the Provost shall be final.

## **IV. Return from MUCW Leave – Re-Entry Plan**

When a student is ready to return to Berkeley College, they shall first contact Academic Advisement. Students then complete a Return from Leave form and submit their request along with documentation at least two weeks before the next semester starts. If students had left due to medical reasons, they shall submit documentation from a qualified health care provider supporting that they are able to successfully resume their studies. If students had left due to unforeseen circumstances, they shall explain how they are currently managing the situation that caused them to withdraw. Students shall include proof of how their difficult circumstances have been mitigated.

Upon receipt of the Return from Leave form, Academic Advisement will collaborate with Personal Counseling, Accessibility Services, and/or other relevant student support services on creating a re-entry plan. The re-entry plan may include elements such as regular appointments with Personal Counseling, tutoring with the Center of Academic Success, and/or academic coaching through Accessibility Services. Members of the MUCW Committee may be consulted to collaborate with Advisement on determining aspects of the student's return.

## V. Financial Aid

Students who complete and sign the MUCW application authorize Berkeley College to return all of their financial aid for the semester for which the leave is applied. Likewise, the College will remove all related charges for that semester, which will generally leave the student with a zero balance for that semester. However, prior balances and bad debt will not be waived. Further, in addition to reducing student debt, by returning all other federal, state, and institutional aid, it ensures that the student does not lose future eligibility as a result of the leave. The exception to the zero-balance referenced above is if a student received a financial aid refund. Under those circumstances, the student will be responsible for repaying this refund to the College. Students who receive financial assistance are strongly encouraged to consult with a Financial Aid advisor to identify and understand the financial implications of taking a MUCW.

### Session I Completers

Students who complete Session I, and are *not registered* for any additional courses for that semester (15 weeks and/or Session II) when Session I is completed, would not be required to apply for a MUCW leave, should they encounter a MUCW type event. They are considered to have completed the semester and they can choose to return or not return for more semesters. Therefore, this Policy does not apply to them.

Students who complete Session I, and *are registered* for additional courses for that semester (15 weeks and/or Session II) when Session I is completed, can apply for a MUCW leave for the current semester. If approved, the college will return all Financial Aid for that semester. Although the student will still incur full charges for the current semester, the College will cover all these costs.

### Loan Repayment

A student who is approved for a MUCW leave will be reported “out of school” to the Department of Education. If that student has college loans, the loans will go into repayment six months after the student’s last day of attendance. This six-month period is considered a “grace period.” If the student returns to school *within* six months, loan repayment will be deferred while the student remains in school, and the six-month grace period will not have been used. If, however, the student returns *after* six months, repayment will again be deferred while the student remains in school, but the six-month grace period will have been used, resulting in immediate repayment at the student’s next separation from the College.

### Enforcement

This Policy shall be enforced by Academic Advisement and Accessibility Services. The Policy shall be reviewed annually by these two Departments.