

# MEMO

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Kalyani Ankem, Vice President

DATE: February 8, 2021

RE: January 25, 2021 Election Meeting

A Report on the 2021-22 Election Meeting

**2021-22 Members present:** David Agard (for Lisa Holden), Kalyani Ankem, Janel Bloch, Michael Carrell, Susannah Coaston, Christine Curran, Charlisa Daniels, John Farrar, Richard Fox, Kathleen Fuegen, Amy Gillingham-Culligan, Christopher Lawrence, Caroline Macke, Phil McCartney, Chari Ramkumar, Dana Ripley, Denice Robertson, Robert Salyer, Andrea Lambert South, Brittany Sorrell, Lynn Warner, Darrin Wilson, Justin Yates

**2021-22 Members absent:** Jason Applegate, Rachel Banks, Tracey Bonner, Robert Brice, David Childs, Ronnie Chamberlain, Rhonda Davis, Jacqueline Emerine, Irene Encarnacion, Kebede Gemene, Rich Gilson, Stephen Johnson, Ken Katkin, JC Kim, Jennifer Kinsley, Kajsa Larson, Jitana Benton-Lee, Sara Runge, Lynn Smith, Laura Sullivan, Jose Saavedra Torres, Andrea Watkins, Zach Wells, Kim Yates

**Guests:** Michael Baranowski (Faculty Regent), Kimberly Weir (General Education Chair), Brian Hackett (Graduate Council), Grace Hiles (Elections Assistant)

The special elections meeting was called to order by Senate President John Farrar at 2:52 pm with a quorum present.

The slate of nominees prior to the meeting were the current officers:

President: John Farrar

Vice President: Kalyani Ankem

Secretary: Laura Sullivan

Benefits Committee Chair: Charlisa Daniels

Budget Committee Chair: Janel Bloch

University Curriculum Committee Chair: Richard Fox

Professional Concerns Committee Chair: Kathleen Fuegen

TEEC Chair: Christopher Lawrence

General Education Committee Chair: Kimberly Weir

Senate President John Farrar clarified that the Faculty Advocate, per the Constitution, is elected before the last meeting of the spring semester. The Parliamentarian is appointed by the President of the Faculty Senate.

Senate President John Farrar called for nominations from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor.

Those nominated prior to the meeting were elected by acclamation. The following are the Senate officers who were elected for the 2021-22 term:

President: John Farrar  
Vice President: Kalyani Ankem  
Secretary: Laura Sullivan  
Benefits Committee Chair: Charlisa Daniels  
Budget Committee Chair: Janel Bloch  
University Curriculum Committee Chair: Richard Fox  
Professional Concerns Committee Chair: Kathleen Fuegen  
TEEC Chair: Christopher Lawrence  
General Education Committee Chair: Kimberly Weir

The special elections meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

Copied from the Faculty Handbook, page 75-76

## 12.6. PAID LEAVE FOR ILLNESS, TEMPORARY DISABILITY, OR MATERNITY LEAVE

Continuing faculty earn and accumulate sick leave with pay on the basis of one day per month credited on the first day of the contract year (twelve (12) days per contract-calendar year). An unlimited number of sick-leave days may be accrued. Records regarding faculty sick-leave accumulation are maintained in the office of Human Resources.

New faculty having no accrued sick leave will have one-half the yearly total credited to them at the beginning of their annual appointment; the remaining six (6) days will be credited as they accumulate monthly for the remaining half of the contract year.

Faculty who suffer temporary illness or disability, thus making them unable to perform assigned duties, will be granted paid leave for the necessary period, not to extend beyond the period that can be covered by accumulated sick leave days or ninety (90) calendar days, whichever is greater. A physician's written statement may be required by the faculty member's department/school and/or the Office of the Provost at any time during a temporary disability leave.

Faculty on paid leave will receive their regular compensation during the period of leave, as well as any salary increases, promotion, award of tenure, or any other rights that they would have received individually or as a member of the faculty had they not been on such leave.

On the first day of the month following the completion of six (6) months of continuous total disability, the faculty member is eligible for benefits under the University's group total disability insurance plan.

A maximum of five (5) accumulated sick days per contract-calendar year may be used for absences necessitated by emergency or serious illness of an immediate member of family (parents, brother, sister, spouse, child, or other persons for whom the faculty member is responsible). Faculty may use accrued sick leave for childbirth, adoption, or attending childbirth in the immediate family.

If a faculty member is ill, he/she is required to call the department chair's/school director's office as early as possible to report the absence and to make provisions to have his/her classes notified. If a faculty member anticipates an illness in excess of three (3) consecutive teaching days, the department chair/school director must be notified so that provisions can be made for covering the classes.

Unused faculty sick-leave allowance will not be paid upon termination or resignation.

## **POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT**

**NUMBER:**

**DIVISION:**

**TITLE: Paid Parental Leave**

**DATE:**

**POLICY FOR: All Faculty and Staff Positions**

**AUTHORIZED BY:**

### **Purpose and Scope**

This policy is established and constructed to demonstrate NKU's commitment to a workplace culture that supports faculty and staff in balancing the challenging responsibilities of work life and family life. Specifically, this policy sets forth benefits and provisions that support the family unit associated with the birth or adoption of a child. By design, this policy illustrates strongly held institutional values by providing parents significant time and flexibility to bond with a new child, to adjust to a modified family status and balance professional obligations. These tenets are consistent with NKU's strategy for recruiting and retaining an inclusive, diverse and exceptionally qualified workforce.

### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Eligible employee: a faculty or staff member who meets FMLA or other eligibility criteria as stated within this policy.

Parent: a faculty or staff member who is a legal parent of a newborn or newly adopted child. A legal parent is one whose name appears on the respective child's birth certificate, or legal document establishing paternity or a legal document establishing adoption.

Spouse or Other Qualified Dependent/Partner: a husband or wife, as recognized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Kentucky or Other Qualified Dependent (OQD)/Partner who is financially interdependent and sharing a primary residence with the employee. The spouse or other qualified dependent (OQD)/partner, must meet FMLA and any other applicable eligibility criteria for any paid parental leave provisions under this policy.

Semester Weeks: weeks that occur during the fall and spring semesters in which faculty are teaching. Summer and winter breaks are not considered semester weeks. For staff, this consists of all weeks within an academic year, other than holiday breaks that last five (5) or more days.

Parental Leave: a period of time away from job responsibilities that may include paid and unpaid

time as specified in this policy. The purpose is for the recovery from birth of a child and/or to bond with a newborn or a newly adopted child who is under the age of 18. Parental Leave must be taken within a 12-month period from the time of the event. Parental Leave may be taken in advance of the event when deemed necessary or when required to fulfill the requirements for an adoption. Utilization is limited to once during a rolling 12 month-period based on the date of the birth or executed adoption agreement. Parental Leave is intended to run concurrently with an eligible employee's qualified FMLA leave.

**Paid Parental Leave:** paid leave that is awarded separate from any eligible employee's balance of accrued sick or vacation leave. Paid Parental Leave is intended to run concurrently with an eligible employee's qualified FMLA leave. Pay for the paid leave period is established based on the employee's regular base salary or base hourly rate.

### **Explanation of Benefit**

All requests for Parental Leave as described under this policy should be made as far in advance as possible, but not less than thirty (30) calendar days before the leave is to commence. Requests for leave should be presented in writing to the applicable department/unit head and dean. Employees may use the Paid Parental Leave benefit within 12 months from the birth/adoption date. (Use FMLA forms on HR webpage)

### **Faculty Employees**

Upon request and following the provisions of policy, faculty, including those with administrative responsibilities, will be granted Paid Parental Leave following the birth or adoption of a child. Duration of the Paid Parental Leave is for up to one academic semester or 16 semester weeks. If the birth/adoption occurs mid-semester or late-semester, a faculty member may choose to take paid leave during the semester in which the event occurs or the following semester.

Prior to the start of or at the expiration of a Paid Parental Leave period, it may not be feasible for a faculty member to return to customary classroom/instructional duties. Because of this, a workload modification plan must be developed that provides guidance for the faculty member's work until the next semester begins. The proposed workload modification plan will generally involve a reassignment of the faculty member to research, service or administrative duties (i.e., teaching during the bi-term, service role to the department or departmental administrative functions). Faculty are exempt from one semester's worth of teaching and service; therefore any modified teaching arrangements made during partial semesters (before and/or after paid parental leave time) shall not equal more than one semester's worth of effort in total. The applicable college dean will authorize and approve the plan in compliance with academic policies.

Summer and winter breaks are not counted against the semester or 16 week total, respectively. Faculty will not be required or expected to attend pre-semester meetings in the semester they are taking leave. However, any holiday or closure period of less than five (5) business days is counted toward the limit.

### **Staff Employees**

Upon request and following the provisions of policy, including those with administrative responsibilities, staff will be granted Paid Parental Leave following the birth or adoption of a

child. Duration of the Paid Parental Leave is for up to 16 weeks. The applicable college dean or department director will authorize and approve the plan in compliance with university policies. Any holiday or closure period of less than five (5) business days is counted toward the limit.

### **Compensation for Attending Employee**

The Dean or Department Chair will assign stipends to faculty and staff who are assuming the courses and responsibilities of the employee on leave. This paperwork should be completed no later than thirty (30) days before the beginning of the leave. The stipend should be an amount determined by the appropriate Human Resources representative, and should cover the time from the beginning of the leave until the end of the leave.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

There is no waiting period for full-time employees prior to being eligible for Paid Parental Leave. Part-time employees must have been employed for one (1) full semester (Fall or Spring) in order to be eligible for benefits under this policy. Part-time faculty are eligible for pay equivalent to the modal (most common) number of classes they taught in the past two academic years. Part-time staff are eligible to pay equivalent to their normal weekly rate.

**In cases where both parents are NKU employees, they may choose to take paid parental leave independent of each other.**

### **Option to Extend the Tenure Probationary Period**

A tenure track, non-tenured faculty employee may request an extension of the tenure probationary period in conjunction with an approval Parental Leave as provided for in Academic Affairs Policy #####.

### **Considerations for Promotion**

Time taken under this policy is still considered time toward promotion. In other words, if an employee member us required to complete five years of work at NKU until they are eligible for promotion and they take one semester of leave during those five years, they are still eligible for promotion at the end of five years. The employee should note their use of the paid parental leave policy in their application for promotion and that time should not count against them.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

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### **Protections for Faculty Employees**

No employee shall be discriminated against or otherwise experience reprisals in any appointment, evaluation, promotion, tenure award or other employment-related process as a result of utilizing Parental Leave and other provisions specified within this policy and as articulated in the University's non-discrimination policy.

### **Mid-/Late-term Miscarriages, Stillbirths, and Infant Mortality**

In cases of loss of pregnancy, a stillbirth, or infant death, Policy 4.6302: FMLA (Expanded Sick Leave/FMLA) would apply.

### **Support for Pregnancy, Childbirth, Related Medical Conditions and Nursing Mothers**

In compliance with federal and state law, employees are provided protections against employment discrimination related to pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions. On request and following proscribed procedures, NKU will make reasonable accommodations to employees who are limited due to pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, except where an undue hardship would be imposed on the institution.

Nursing mothers shall be provided reasonable paid break time for purposes of expressing breast milk for a nursing child up to one (1) year after the child's birth date. Additionally, appropriate space/facilities for purposes of expressing breast milk shall be provided as follows:

- The area must be shielded from view and free of intrusion from others.

- A bathroom or restroom is inappropriate and shall not be designated as an area for expressing breast milk.
- The space may be a private area contained within a larger room or a private room that is reliably made available to nursing mothers whenever needed, but may otherwise be used for different purposes.
- The area shall be equipped with seating, a table or other flat surface, an electrical outlet and nearby access to water/sink.

Related Policies

Policy 1.1240

Policy 1.2092

Policy 4.6302

DRAFT for Discussion Purposes



Retention and hiring of high quality faculty and staff can have significant impact on the recruitment and retention of students to a university (ref). Considering the objectives of the Success by Design Framework are focused on recruitment and retention in part, the University should reconsider some of the policies that concern present and future workforce.

In order to remain competitive in recruiting outstanding, talented, and diverse staff and faculty to NKU, it is within our best interest to adopt a separate paid parental leave policy that would supplement the current policy. The more diverse, high-caliber, student-focused critical thinkers we hire, the more we'll be recognized as a first choice for students. In order to achieve that status, we need creative ways to recruit the greatest talents to our team. One policy that should be scrutinized is the parental leave policy. Having a paid family leave policy has the potential to draw more talent to our team. According to the *National Partnership for Women & Families*, paid leave "...improves worker retention, which saves employers money through reduced turnover costs; increases worker productivity; improves employee loyalty and morale; allows smaller businesses to compete better with larger businesses; and heightens American businesses' competitiveness in the global economy."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, The United States Congress Joint Economic Committee studied paid family leave in states such as California. Their research led to a fact sheet titled, *The Economic Benefits of Paid Leave: Fact Sheet*. They found the following:

- "Businesses gain from retaining workers with firm-specific knowledge and skills, and from not having to bear the sizable costs of finding and training new employees. They benefit from increased productivity and higher levels of employee satisfaction.
- The median cost to employers of having to replace an employee is estimated to be about 21 percent of that employee's annual salary.
- A survey of employers affected by California's paid family leave initiative found that only a small portion (fewer than 10 percent) reported adverse effects on profitability, turnover and morale."<sup>2</sup>

While this study does focus on businesses, it stands to reason that the benefits lend themselves to other arenas including higher education.

An additional benefit to paid leave is the ability to provide in-house professional development and non-salaried stipends for other staff and faculty. According to Ty Kisel in his article titled, *Parental Leave in Small Businesses*, he states that, "If you have an entry-level employee who is ready for the next step, this can be the perfect time to give them more responsibility and expand their skill set. It also sets you up to have employees who have a deeper understanding of your business and can fill in beyond parental leave, such as if someone else is sick, on vacation, or called into jury duty."<sup>3</sup>

Upon adopting such a policy, it is evident that NKU will emerge among its comparable institutions, especially in Kentucky and the Cincinnati metropolitan area, that affords its employees paid parental leave. There are several local models that could be combined to produce a new parental leave policy for NKU.

For example, Xavier (private) and Murray State University (public) have been researched. While Murray State University offers their employees 26 work weeks (6 months) of FMLA, it is unpaid.<sup>4</sup> Xavier, on the other hand, does offer a paid leave at full salary. Xavier's policy offers 8 weeks paid leave of the 12 work week federal FMLA policy.<sup>5</sup> In recent weeks, news has emerged that Western Kentucky University is close to adopting a paid parental leave policy<sup>6</sup>. The potential WKU leave states that, "The paid leave is

awarded separately from any accrued sick or vacation leave balance, and it's intended to run concurrently with an eligible employee's leave under the federal Family Medical Leave Act."<sup>6</sup> However, this leave policy only covers the leave of faculty, excluding staff. The proposed NKU parental leave policy would afford all NKU employees access to 16 weeks of paid family leave, with an opportunity for an addition 10 weeks to either take unpaid or to use accrued sick and vacation time. The employees would have to meet the same standards that they need to meet to access our current FMLA leave. Updating this policy has the opportunity to be immensely beneficial to new parents on campus. This is a population that is small, but the benefits of extending the policy could have great effect in the recruitment and retention of quality talent at NKU. Data from Human Resources (table 1) shows that less than 30 employees reported use of the parental leave benefit in the last 2 years. It is notable that the use of parental leave is equal between mothers and fathers. It should also be of interest that reported use is higher among staff than faculty, though reporting may not be thorough for reasons discussed later in this document.

	2018	2019
Parental Leave	27	29
Maternity	14	13
Paternity	12	16
Faculty		6
Staff		23

Table 1: Breakdown of parental leave reported to Human Resources office at NKU

Since the parental leave at NKU is unpaid, there have been innovative measures taken to try to help assuage the financial gap. One of those measures is headed by the NKU Benevolent Association. This group hosts biannual events that accepts donations in monetary or sick/vacation leave form. Table 2 is the breakdown from Human Resources that outlines the donations from 2011-2018 (in reverse chronological order). These donated benefits are available to anyone taking FMLA leave, so it is not ydirect indicator of the use of parental leave. However, it does illustrate how fractional and wildly varied the donations are in supporting employees during unpaid leave.

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
# of requests awarded	17	23	28	11	17	23	15	12
Hours awarded (per person, if equally distributed)	2130 (125.3)	3133 (136.2)	3934 (140.5)	1785 (162.3)	1884 (110.8)	2870.25 (124.8)	2587.50 (172.5)	1889 (157.4)
Dollars awarded	\$2,452.66	\$3,600	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$1,852	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$2,000

Table 2: Breakdown of Benevolent Association's donations of sick/vacation time and money for eligible employees.

Another point of inconsistency is the way in which parental leave is instituted throughout the university. While certain supervisors agree to some form of paid leave, an employee may find themselves working in an environment that is less accomadating.

- In 2016, a woman on parental leave was not given paid time off. She had to use all of her sick and vacation time, plus work out an arrangement with her supervisor to be able to have a paycheck throughout her leave. However, when she returned, she was forced to remain hopeful that her or her children would not get sick until she accrued enough time again to cover it.
- In 2012, a faculty member took parental leave for the first 8 weeks of the semester. She used her accrued sick leave to support her leave. Her students, teaching evaluations, and teaching style were impacted by the mid-semester change. In addition, she was not excused from administrative duties and was working remotely with regards to her service duties.
- In 2018, a new faculty member, with no accrued sick leave, took 6 weeks of parental leave. The department chair orchestrated a myriad of service and off-campus teaching duties for her to achieve in order to satisfy conditions to remain salaried.
- A faculty member who has taken 2 parental leaves (2012 and 2017). She taught her courseload in 7-week sessions in her third trimester to keep her teaching load intact, which would keep her salaried. She worked with the dean to have her research and other duties make up for the non-teaching credits. She came back after (a little less) than 3 months out on leave. She was exhausted and a less than effective teacher.

Lastly, an unexpected benefit to the university comes from employees who are able to acquire new skills and offer higher contributions to the university. While their workloads are altered, most were able to achieve compensation. It would be prudent for adequate compensation to be available for all employees who are increasing their workload temporarily. Below are some examples that illustrate the benefit according to an on campus supervisor.

- In 2012, a woman staff member went on parental leave. In order to cover her duties, several staff members were recruited to learn her job responsibilities. These staff members were also paid a stipend. Two of the three recruited were outside of her department; therefore, they were learning completely new skills. One of these staff members' job titles was Counselor at the time. This staff member is now an Associate Director. Another of the staff members' job titles at the time was Director. That staff member is now an Assistant Vice President.
- In 2016, a woman staff member went on parental leave. Again, staff members were recruited to take over her duties. One of these staff members – who was part-time – was able to increase her hours during this time period. The other one was given a stipend. The staff member whose hours were increased had the job title of Specialist at the time. She is now an Assistant to the Vice Provost. The other staff member who received a stipend during this time had the job title of Coordinator. She is now an Assistant Director.
- In 2019, a faculty member took parental leave for the last 6 weeks of a semester. A colleague took over her 2 courses without compensation.

It is important to note that this policy wouldn't just affect faculty and staff – students are also invested in seeing to it that their faculty and staff are getting paid parental leave. The student newspaper, The Northerner, used their last issue in the 2018-19 academic year to bring light to the lack of paid leave at NKU.<sup>8</sup> These students took this issue up on their own accord and investigated, interviewed, and wrote several pieces to bring awareness to the lack of paid leave at NKU.

As we can see from NKU's own examples, adopting this policy increases the likelihood for employees to gain skills that will aid them in being promoted throughout the university. It would also give mothers

and fathers more of an incentive to return to work after their leave. They would feel valued by their employer – and, even indebted. And, most importantly, this would promote a family-first climate across the university. We all want our NKU mothers and fathers to bond with their children – to raise them with empathy, critical thinking skills, and to be productive and responsible citizens. In closing, it's important to touch on the areas in which adopting paid parental leave would speak to NKU's *Success by Design*. One of the Completion Objectives is to enhance the culture of service-orientation. This is best accomplished with long-serving staff and faculty in crucial roles. Because NKU stands to reduce turnover by enacting this policy, our students have a better chance at completion since key personnel would still be up-to-date on student plans and processes. If the coordinated care piece is to work, it would mean cross-training personnel and being proactive about the chance of one of them being on leave. Therefore, they could have a succession plan in place. And, instead of employees looking for other jobs during their leave, they would be preparing to arrive back to a workplace that values them. So, they'd be able to pick up right where they left off. *Success by Design* only works if there are highly diverse, motivated, confident, and valued employees behind the initiatives. With a paid parental leave policy in place, *Success by Design* has a better chance of succeeding.

#### Works Cited

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<b>Year</b>	<b>2015</b>		<b>2016</b>		<b>2017</b>	
<b>Number of Employees</b>	48		52		52	
<b>All Staff</b>	\$ 1,346,686.67	\$ 1,458,910.56	\$ 1,458,910.56	\$ 1,458,910.56	\$ 1,458,910.56	\$ 1,458,910.56
<b>All Faculty</b>	\$ 1,500,306.31	\$ 1,625,331.84	\$ 1,625,331.84	\$ 2,113,548.16	\$ 2,113,548.16	\$ 2,113,548.16
<b>50/50</b>	\$ 1,423,496.49	\$ 1,542,121.20	\$ 1,542,121.20	\$ 1,786,229.36	\$ 1,786,229.36	\$ 1,786,229.36
<b>Stipend for covering as</b>	\$ 142,349.65	\$ 154,212.12	\$ 154,212.12	\$ 154,212.12	\$ 154,212.12	\$ 154,212.12

	Salary+Benefit Annual	Salary+Benefit/Week	Salary+Benefit/16 Weeks	Stipend for covering
Staff	\$ 91,181.91	\$ 1,753.50	\$ 28,055.97	\$ 2,805.60
Faculty	\$ 101,583.24	\$ 1,953.52	\$ 31,256.38	\$ 3,125.64

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
	27	25
\$	757,511.25	\$ 701,399.31
\$	843,922.30	\$ 781,409.54
\$	800,716.78	\$ 741,404.42
\$	80,071.68	\$ 74,140.44



## **Revised Grading Scale Recommendation November, 2020**

Student retention is a critical issue within higher education (Burke, 2019), the low graduation rates within American higher education being described as “a human and financial tragedy” (Strikwerda, 2019). Given the considerable financial implications associated with student retention, it comes as no surprise that universities incorporate the topic into their strategic plans. At NKU, the Success by Design (SBD) framework specifically references the university’s intent to “significantly improve retention” and reduce time-to-degree.

Whereas faculty are “often the most direct way to help at-risk students” (Strikwerda, 2019), one strategy for improving retention – monitoring drop/fail/withdrawal (DFW) rates (University of Iowa, n.d./2020) – may, depending on the method of enactment, prove detrimental to instructors. Leet (2015) observed heightened attention to DFW rates has negatively impacted faculty evaluation processes, and Bloemer, Day, and Swan (2017) found institutions may respond to DFW rates by changing staffing in high-DFW courses. Bloemer et al. (2017) stated the latter measures “may overlook some problem cases, or, worse yet, identify problems where none exist, causing misplaced or even damaging ‘fixes’” (p. 6).

Given the clustering of higher DFW rates in quantitative disciplines, the absence of universally applicable standards for DFW rates (Bloemer et al., 2017), and instructors’ lack control over whether students permitted into a course have the necessary preparation for said course (Leet, 2015), some institutions have taken steps to balance the critical importance of retention efforts with the need to fairly assess and evaluate faculty performance. For instance, the Academic Chairs’ Council at Northern Arizona University (NAU, 2012) suggested directing academic units to “include measures that focus on the effectiveness of faculty efforts to facilitate student learning and success, rather than focusing on measures like DFW rates that are influenced by other factors beyond the control of the faculty member” (p. 7).

TEEC supports the idea of expanding evaluation processes to ensure a more holistic and realistic assessment of faculty performance. In conjunction with such aims, the committee recommends the university recognize the myriad of issues that may contribute to DFW rates and consider modifying its grading scale to more clearly delineate a distinction between “failing to perform at a level required of a course” (i.e., earning low/failing grades) and “nonperformance in a course” (i.e., ceasing to submit assignments, attend classes, etc.). This would involve the creation of a VF (vanished/failing) grade to denote a student’s consistent failure to attend class and/or submit required assignments.

Among Kentucky state schools, such nonperformance grades are common, appearing on the grading scales at the University of Louisville, Morehead State University, Eastern Kentucky University, and Western Kentucky University. Likewise, in the greater Cincinnati metropolitan area, both Xavier University and the University of Cincinnati already draw such distinctions, as evidenced by the following:

Xavier University		
Grade (Undergraduate)	Description	Quality Points
VF	Failure to officially withdraw	0.00
W	Official withdraw	N/A
I	Incomplete	0.00
AU	Audit, no credit, no effect on GPA	N/A
S	Satisfactory, credit earned, no effect on GPA	N/A
U	Unsatisfactory, no credit earned, GPA is effected	0.00
NC	No credit earned, non-graded	N/A
NR	Not reported	N/A

Xavier University		
Grade (Graduate)	Description	Quality Points
VF	Failure to officially withdraw	0.00
W	Official withdraw	N/A
M	Incomplete, changed when grade is assigned.	0.00
AU	Audit, no credit or grade earned, no effect on GPA	N/A
S	Satisfactory, credit earned, no effect on GPA	N/A
U	Not passing/Unsatisfactory, no credit earned, GPA is effected	0.00
NC	No credit earned, non-graded	N/A
NR	Not reported	N/A

University of Cincinnati		
Grade	Description	Quality Points
I/F	Failure	0.0000
W	Withdrawal (Official—With Academic Attendance)	N/A
WX	Withdrawal (Official—No Academic Attendance)	N/A
UW	Unofficial Withdrawal (With Academic Attendance)	0.0000
X	Unofficial Withdrawal (No Academic Attendance)	0.0000
NG	No Grade Reported (See Instructor)	N/A

*A UW grade is given to students who did not officially complete the withdrawal process. Their lack of academic attendance is the basis for a failing grade. The “UW” carries zero (0.00) quality points. It is calculated into the GPA like the “F” grade. Students who cease academically attending at some point in the course or who never academically attend the course are considered to be “unofficially withdrawn students.”*

#### Points to consider:

- NKU’s VF grade would be optional/used at faculty’s discretion. Instructors who wish to simply assign an F for sustained student nonperformance may do so.
- The VF would carry zero quality points.
- Assigning a VF grade will require records of student attendance. This could be via a formal measure of attendance (e.g., taking roll), by documenting the final submission by a student, etc. A date of last attendance will prove necessary when entering the grade.
- A VF grade would be eligible for a grade change, should circumstances dictate.

**Potential benefits:**

- The VF grade could prove useful for student appeal purposes.
- The VF grade could provide data for retroactive withdrawal applications (since the VF would include a final date of participation).
- Distinguishing between a student's cessation of participation in course activities and their apparent inability to successfully complete the requirements of a course may inform the university's response to the student in question.
- Distinguishing between a cessation of participation and an apparent inability to successfully satisfy course requirements may reduce the potential impact on faculty should their course have an elevated DFW rate.
- The inclusion of VF in the grading scale would acknowledge students may drop or withdraw from a course for any number of reasons not within a faculty member's control, including but not limited to:
  - Alterations in student's work schedule
  - Changes in student's financial situation
  - The time/day(s) a course is offered
  - Family needs
  - Course modality (i.e., online, F2F, hybrid)
  - Health issues
  - Pace/length of a course (e.g., seven/eight weeks)
  - Level of student preparedness for course content
- The VF could nuance grades, enabling faculty to better assess their courses. For example, if an instructor assigns 20 Fs in a class, and 10 of those are FVs, the faculty member can examine the final participation dates for the students. Should those dates cluster around a certain point in the semester, the faculty can explore the course materials to examine what may have contributed to the subsequent nonparticipation.

**Potential drawbacks:**

- Introducing the VF grade would require the Registrar's Office alter the university's grade-reporting system.
- Pending approval, changes would need to be made to the catalog, faculty syllabi, etc.
- Relatively few VF grades may be given every year – UC reported 900 VFs out of an estimated 200,000 entered grades last semester.
- For faculty who may consider the VF grading option, taking attendance would become essential, as – for financial aid purposes – a final date of participation would be a necessary accompaniment to a VF grade.

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