Involuntary Leave of Absence

Brown University provides a wide range of services to support the educational and social needs of students, including health care treatment, assessment and referral through the university’s Health Services and Psychological Services departments. Although these services are offered, the university recognizes that it is sometimes desirable or necessary for a student to take a voluntary leave from enrollment for a period of time. There are also times when a student’s behavior may raise concerns about the student posing a threat to him/herself and/or to others, or significantly disrupting the educational and other activities of the University community. In such situations, and when a student is not willing or able to take a voluntary leave of absence, the university may make an assessment of the situation and place the student on an involuntary leave of absence. The following policy establishes the protocol under which an involuntary leave of absence may occur and the process for return from leave.

The University may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence when the student exhibits behavior resulting from a psychological, psychiatric, or other medical condition that:

- harms or threatens to harm the health or safety of the student;
- harms or threatens to harm the health of safety of others; or
- significantly disrupts the educational and other activities of the University community.

When an undergraduate or graduate student exhibits behavior that causes concern about student’s threat to the community and/or him/herself as described above, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Office of Student Life. (Depending of the circumstances that are present, students may be offered the opportunity to voluntarily take a leave from the university). The Senior Associate Dean for Student Life or the Associate Dean for Student Support Services may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence or impose conditions upon a student’s continued attendance. In making an informed decision on whether to place a student on involuntary leave the Senior Associate Dean or Associate Dean will consider all germane information that is available to the Dean, including information provided by the student in a timely manner, and make an individualized assessment as to whether the student should be required to take an
involuntary leave or whether any conditions are to be placed on the student’s continued enrollment.

The student will be notified that the Dean is seeking to determine whether he/she should be required to take a leave of absence and when reasonably possible the student will be given the opportunity to provide information and/or confer with the Dean. However, when in the judgment of the Dean a student’s continued presence on campus represents a imminent and substantial risk to the health and safety of the student or others the Dean may take emergency action to require an interim leave pending a final determination.

In determining whether to impose an involuntary leave of absence (or whether there is a need to impose conditions in the event an involuntary leave is not warranted), the Dean shall make an individualized and objective assessment of the student’s ability to safely be a student at Brown taking into account the following factors:

- whether there is a significant risk of harm to self or the community;
- the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; and
- the probability that the potentially threatening harm will actually occur, and whether the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable and realistic accommodations and/or on-campus supports.

The Dean will conclude the review of available information with a decision that may include the following:

- that the student remain enrolled with no conditions;
- that the student remain enrolled subject to conditions (including a description of those conditions); or
- that the student be placed on an involuntary leave of absence.

If the Dean’s decision is to require an involuntary leave of absence, when feasible the student shall be informed in writing by the Dean of the leave decision, including the minimum length of the leave, the effective date of the leave, and conditions (if any) for return from leave. If a student is permitted to remain enrolled subject to conditions, the student shall be informed in writing of the conditions, the effective date of the conditions, and the duration of the modified attendance. The appropriate university offices, administrators, faculty advisors, and instructors will be notified of the leave. The university reserves the right to notify a parent or guardian if deemed appropriate under the circumstances, including making arrangements for the guardian or family member to pick up the student from the university’s premises.

A student placed on an involuntary leave of absence may request, within seven (7) days of the date of the decision, a review of the decision by the Vice President for Campus Life & Student Services. The student must submit the request for a review of the decision and any supporting materials in writing. The Vice President will review the matter and render a final decision as soon as practicable. The decision shall be
communicated in writing to the student. The leave of absence shall remain in effect during the period of the Vice President’s review.

A student seeking a return from leave must petition the Medical Leave Readmission Committee. The Committee shall conduct an assessment and determine whether the student should be allowed to return from leave, taking into account whether the student has met conditions established (if any) for reenrollment, whether the student no longer poses a significant threat to disrupting the functioning of the university, and/or whether the student no longer poses a significant risk to the health and safety of the student or others.

This involuntary leave of absence process is independent of and does not preclude use of the non-academic disciplinary system to address behaviors that may violate Brown University’s Standards of Student Conduct.