



Ratified at January 21, 2026 meeting

Board of Trustees Meeting

December 10, 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Westchester Community College held on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at 3 PM in the Student Center Event Room.

Trustees Present:

Dr. LeRoy Mitchell, Chairperson, Dr. Norman Jacknis, Vice-Chairperson, Deborah Raizes, Vice Chairperson, Robin Bikkal, Esq., Anabella Delduco, Susan Gerry, Esq., Hon. John Nonna, Dr. Gregory Robeson Smith, (via videoconference), Sergio Serratto, Hon. Lyndon Williams, Yolanda Howell, Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Trustees Excused:

None

Cabinet Members Present:

Dr. Belinda S. Miles, President, Dr. Vanessa Morest, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs, Dawn Gillins, Acting Vice President and Dean of Administrative Services, Dolores Swirin-Yao, Vice President and Dean, External Affairs, Executive Director, WCC Foundation, Tere Wisell, Vice President and Dean, Community Education and Workforce Development, Garrett McAlister, Vice President, Information Technology, Dr. Rinardo Reddick, Acting Vice President of Student Access, Involvement & Success, (via videoconference) Ben Naylor, Chief of Staff & Vice President of Strategic Affairs.

Call to Order

Chairperson LeRoy Mitchell called the meeting to order.

Ratification of Minutes

Trustee Nonna made a motion seconded by Trustee Jacknis to ratify the minutes of the November 19, 2025, Board meeting. The motion passed.

INFORMATION AND DECISION

A. President's Report

Dr. Belinda S. Miles reported:

This meeting will mark the final meeting of the calendar year. The fall semester was productive, with several new initiatives underway, including SUNY Reconnect. To date, 477 students have been verified, awarded, and registered for Fall 2025 through Reconnect. The top enrolled majors under Reconnect are:

- Health Studies (193)
- Cybersecurity (66)
- Health Information Technology (40)

SUNY System Administration's Office of Institutional Research & Data Analytics reported that SUNY Westchester Community College ranked third systemwide in Fall 2025 Reconnect enrollment. As of November 2025, total systemwide Reconnect enrollment stood at 5,608 students.

Under the leadership of Provost Morest, the College is participating in SUNY's Academic Momentum Campaign, a systemwide, multi-year initiative focused on improving student retention and completion. Seven faculty and administrators attended the regional Planning Summit at SUNY Purchase last week.

Government Relations

Vice President Ben Naylor represented the College at SUNY Advocacy Days in Washington, DC earlier this month. Meetings were held with Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, as well as Representatives Hakeem Jeffries and George Latimer, to discuss institutional priorities and advocacy issues.

Community Relations

The Lower Hudson Valley My Brother's Keeper Alliance held its 2025 Youth Leadership Symposium on campus. The theme, "*Legacy in Action – Empowering Youth, Building Futures,*" included panel discussions, a showcase of the College's Black & Hispanic Male Initiative, and remarks from Deputy County Attorney Richard Wishnie, Westchester County Youth Bureau Executive Director Ernest McFadden, and New York State Education Department Chancellor Dr. Lester Young, Jr.

Dr. Harold Coles, District Superintendent of Southern Westchester BOCES, invited members of the College's Opportunity Programs to attend the Westchester BOCES Region Chief School Administrator meeting to discuss student opportunities and services

with leaders from approximately 34 regional school districts. Next steps include engagement with school counselors and outreach to high school seniors.

The College acknowledged the outreach efforts of:

- Dr. Leidy Pichardo, Assistant Vice President of Student Success
- Prof. Donnie Simmons, Sr., Director, Black & Hispanic Male Initiative
- Dr. Gwen Roundtree Evans, Director, Educational Opportunity Program
- Prof. Leonore Rodrigues, Director, Viking Roads
- Paola Liriano, Director, TRIO
- Prof. Shaunyce Jones, Admissions

Enrollment Management

Institutional Research reported the following:

- **Winter 2026 Enrollment:** Enrollment is ongoing, with 669 students registered, representing an 8.5% decrease compared to Winter 2025.
- **Spring 2026 Enrollment:** Enrollment is trending upward, with 7,753 students registered, an 8.3% increase compared to Spring 2025 at the same point in time.

The College finalized two IPEDS reports—12-Month Enrollment and Completions:

- The 2024–2025 Annual Unduplicated Credit Headcount was 16,898, an 8.4% increase over 2023–2024.
- A total of 1,313 degrees and certificates were awarded in the 2024–2025 academic year, a 2.2% increase from the prior year.

Completion Ceremony

The Completion Ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, December 18, from 4:00–6:00 p.m. in the Physical Education Building. The College will recognize August and December 2025 completers. Currently, 170 students have registered to participate.

B. Chair’s Report

Trustee Mitchell reported:

National and Federal Updates

NYCCT announced that *“Are You Ready to Shape the Nation’s Future?”* will take place on December 16. The event is hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Critical Materials Collaborative and will convene a national dialogue focused on workforce and career development to ensure the United States has a trained critical minerals and materials workforce to support a secure domestic supply chain.

At the federal level, the U.S. House and Senate have proposed differing education appropriations. Additionally, five new accreditors have been appointed to six-year terms on the National Advisory Committee for Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI).

ACCT Updates

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), in partnership with the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, released a report indicating that community college trustees have become increasingly reflective of the diverse student populations they have served over the past three decades.

ACCT also released a new resource on ACCT Connect focused on data-driven decision-making. This resource serves as the first module in a five-part trustee education series and provides guidance on implementing data-informed governance practices. ACCT continues to emphasize the growing role of artificial intelligence in higher education. An upcoming session titled *“The Future Is Now: Guiding Qualities for AI Transformation”* will be presented at the 2025 ACCT Congress by Dr. Claire Grady, President of Glass Half Full Consulting, addressing key questions about the role of AI in higher education.

Student Financial Aid and FAFSA Updates

According to the National College Attainment Network’s FAFSA Tracker, more than 27% of high school seniors have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), representing a 6% increase compared to the Class of 2023. This increase is attributed to the earlier release of the FAFSA form and a shorter completion time of approximately 15 minutes.

The U.S. Department of Education has enhanced FAFSA transparency by adding earnings disclosure information to the post-submission screen. Students can now view an earnings measure comparing the inflation-adjusted earnings of college graduates (as reported in the College Scorecard) to those of high school graduates ages 25–34. This change is intended to help students better assess the potential economic value of their postsecondary choices.

Regulatory and Policy Developments

The U.S. Department of Education released proposed regulatory text, along with the agenda and list of negotiators, for this week’s negotiated rulemaking session focused on higher education accountability and access through demand-driven Workforce Pell.

Higher Education Outlook

Fitch Ratings joined Moody’s in issuing a negative outlook for the higher education sector, citing declining student enrollment, uncertainty in state and federal support, rising expenses, and shifting economic conditions. Fitch projects a deteriorating outlook for higher education in 2026.

The report also highlights a decline in international student enrollment, approximately 17%, as well as demographic shifts indicating that the number of high school graduates has peaked. Additional challenges include reduced federal research funding and caps on student loan limits.

Discussion also noted federal distinctions regarding professions eligible for certain advanced-study funding. Occupations such as teachers, nurses, and educators are classified as not requiring education beyond a bachelor's degree for entry, while other fields are categorized differently. It was noted that this distinction is based on educational requirements rather than the professional status of these occupations.

C. Committees

Governance Committee

Trustee Gerry reported:

The Governance Committee had discussion on the following:

- BOT Bylaws Review
- Strategic Plan Review
- Presidential Evaluation

The Committee conducted a preliminary review of the bylaws and identified limited areas for potential updates, including provisions related to remote participation and quorum requirements. Further review will continue, with possible revisions to be presented at a future meeting.

The Committee reviewed an overview of the draft 2025–2030 Strategic Plan and discussed the importance of timelines and progress tracking. The soon to be hired Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment will support ongoing implementation and assessment.

The Committee also discussed updating the Presidential evaluation process, which has not been revised in several years. We would like to look more towards the community for perception of the college itself as well as how we evaluate the President in the normal course of her role. We will continue this work in the coming year.

Program Committee

Trustee Jacknis reported:

The Program Committee had discussion on the following:

- Future AI Presentation – February 18, 2026
- Academic Momentum

The committee continued its discussion on artificial intelligence and its implications for the College, focusing on the content to be presented to the full Board at the February meeting. The presentation will include representatives from across the College and will address institutional impacts, including potential policy and budget considerations for the Board.

Dr. Morest then presented on SUNY's Academic Momentum initiative, which seeks to improve graduation rates by supporting sustained student progress. While Westchester Community College has made significant gains over the past decade, SUNY has established additional expectations and targets. The committee discussed factors influencing student success, institutional responsibilities, and strategies that can be implemented within existing budget constraints. A more detailed presentation is planned for the February Program Committee meeting.

We also began brief discussion on workforce development. Recent federal legislation has expanded Pell Grant eligibility to include shorter-term programs and micro-credentials, with an emphasis on workforce training. This initiative, led at the state level by the Governor's Office and workforce development boards, presents opportunities for expanded student access and better alignment between workforce and degree programs. Workforce development will be the primary focus of the January Program Committee meeting.

Student Trustee Report

Trustee Delduco reported:

I wanted to start with a quick update on the discrimination survey. It's been sent out, and the responses we've received so far look positive, but we've only had about 50 students respond, so there's still room for more participation.

I also wanted to talk a bit about food insecurity, which is something I'm seeing firsthand as a student. Working with Second Chance Foods and Student Support Services to bring in frozen meals has been really encouraging, but events like the Unhunger Games made it clear just how immediate the need is. Students were asking for food before we even finished unpacking donations, and the pantry was empty again within a few weeks.

Right now, there's one full-time and one part-time staff member trying to support hundreds of students who are just trying to meet basic needs. I want to be clear that this isn't a request on behalf of SGA. It's about making sure we have the support systems in place so students can stay in school. Hunger pulls students away from their classes and their goals, and it's hard to see, especially when it's preventable.

As enrollment continues to grow, I think it's important that we also think about how students can afford to stay once they're here. From what I've seen, expanding Student Support Services could make a real difference.

I just want to thank the Board for continuing to keep students at the center of these conversations.

Finance/Facilities

Trustee Williams reported:

The Finance committee had discussion on the following topics.

- Operating Forecast
- Capital Projects Update

Trustee Williams asked Acting Vice President Dawn Gillins to go over the forecast for the month ending November 30, 2025.

Resolution

Trustee Gerry presented the following resolution to the Board.

RESOLUTION: APPROVAL TO ADOPT THE INVOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR STUDENTS POLICY

WHEREAS, SUNY Westchester Community College is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students, including those experiencing medical, emotional, or mental health concerns; and

WHEREAS, the College recognizes the importance of clear, consistent, and comprehensive procedures to determine when a student's continued presence on campus may present a significant risk to the health or safety of the student or others, or when behavior severely disrupts the College environment; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Involuntary Leave of Absence for Students Policy establishes an individualized assessment approach, emphasizes the requirement to

consider reasonable accommodations prior to separation, defines due process protections, outlines conditions for return, and specifies appeal procedures; and

WHEREAS, the Involuntary Leave of Absence for Students Policy further affirms the College's responsibility to comply with federal and state disability law and prohibits decisions based on stereotypes, generalizations, or unfounded assumptions; and

WHEREAS, upon adoption, the Involuntary Leave of Absence for Students Policy shall replace and supersede the College's current Involuntary Withdrawal policy in its entirety; and

WHEREAS, the Vice President of Student Affairs is designated under the Policy as the official authorized to impose an involuntary leave only when objective evidence demonstrates that no reasonable accommodation can adequately reduce the identified risk or disruption; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the SUNY WCC Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Involuntary Leave of Absence for Students Policy, as attached hereto, effective immediately.

****Motion: Gerry/Raizes – all in favor**

Public Comment

Trustee Mitchell invited members of the community for public comment.

No public comment.

The Chairperson convened an Executive Session under provisions of Section 105 of Article 7 of the Public Officers Law to discuss personnel matters.

Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues.

****Motion: Williams/Nonna – all in favor**

Motion out of Executive Session

****Motion: Raizes/Jacknis – all in favor**

Adjournment

****Motion: Gerry/Williams – all in favor**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for January 21, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Yolanda Howell

Yolanda Howell

Secretary, Board of Trustees



Involuntary Leave of Absence For Students Policy
Last Updated: October 2025 (DRAFT)

POLICY

Westchester Community College (the College) prohibits discrimination in educational programs and activities based on disability or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. The College provides a range of resources, support services, and accommodations for otherwise-qualified students experiencing medical, emotional, or mental health concerns with the goal of promoting their safe participation in the College's educational program. The College will provide reasonable accommodations when properly requested and with appropriate documentation if the accommodations do not require a fundamental alteration of the living or learning environment.

However, there may be situations that require a level of care that exceeds what would be considered a reasonable accommodation or support for the College to provide. The College will utilize an individualized, objective assessment to determine the need for an Involuntary Leave of Absence. Requiring a student to take a leave of absence is rare and only happens when current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence (not speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations) indicates that there is a significant risk to the student's health or safety, or the health or safety of others at the College, or the student's behavior severely disrupts the College environment, and no reasonable accommodations can adequately reduce that risk or disruption. The Vice President of Student Affairs has the authority to place a student on an Involuntary Leave of Absence, after appropriate due process has occurred per this policy.

Before placing any student on an Involuntary Leave of Absence, the College will conduct an individualized assessment, consulting with Office of Accessibility Services to determine if there are reasonable accommodations that would permit the student to continue to participate in the College environment without taking a leave of absence.

The Vice President of Student Affairs may be notified about a student who may meet the criteria for an Involuntary Leave of Absence from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, the student, the Community Assessment & Risk Evaluation (CARE) Team, the student's academic advisor, or an academic department. If the Vice President of Student Affairs deems it appropriate, the procedures under this policy can be initiated.

This policy is not used in lieu of disciplinary actions to address violations of College policies. A student may be subject to the College's disciplinary process while simultaneously being assessed for an Involuntary Leave of Absence. A student who has engaged in behavior that violates policies of the College may be subject to the procedures identified in the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Students who are placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence and have been found

to have violated the [Student Code of Conduct](#) may be subject to sanctions imposed by the College.

DEFINITIONS

- A. **Advisor**: an individual of the Student's choice who can accompany the Student at any meeting with the College pursuant to this Policy for the limited purpose of providing support, advisement, and guidance. A Support Person or Advisor may not directly advocate on behalf of the Student to College officials or otherwise actively participate in the process, but may speak privately with the Student.
- B. **Campus or College Property**: all land, buildings, facilities, and other property in the possession of or owned, used, or controlled by the College, either solely or in conjunction with another entity.
- C. **Community Assessment and Risk Evaluation (CARE) Team**: a cross-functional committee of faculty, staff, and administrators, which identifies, assesses, and monitors students exhibiting concerning behavior or thoughts.
- D. **Involuntary Leave of Absence**: a specified period of time when a student is not permitted to (a) register for and/or attend classes; (b) participate in any College activities; and (c) be present on College Property. Specific conditions or requirements may be imposed and must be satisfied in order for the student to be eligible to return. A student who is on leave is still considered to be enrolled and is subject to pertinent College policies and procedures.
- E. **Interim Administrative Actions**: temporary measures that may be taken against a student pending resolution of the procedures described in this document, up to and including the conclusion of the appeals process.
- F. **Student**: any person registered for courses, either full-time or part-time, pursuing undergraduate studies as well as non-degree seeking students; individuals who are term active but are between academic terms or not enrolled at the College; individuals taking online classes; individuals auditing classes; and individuals that were enrolled at the College on the date of an incident that gave rise to the Involuntary Leave of Absence.
- G. **Written Notification**: written documentation transmitted to the Student using at least one of the following methods: (i) hand-delivery to the Student by a College employee, (ii) electronic message to the Student's assigned College e-mail account, and/or (iii) delivery by the U.S. Post Office to the Student's last-known off- Campus address that is on-file with the College. Students shall be held responsible for the contents of any written documentation for which they have refused receipt.
- H. **Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs or VPAA**: The College's Chief Academic Officer or their designee.
- I. **Vice President of Student Affairs or VPSA**: The College's Chief Student Affairs Officer or their designee.

IMPLICATIONS OF AN INVOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A Student who is placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence shall:

- i. Be unable to: register for and attend classes;
 - ii. ii. participate in any College activities; iii. be present on College Property;
- B. Receive a grade of “W” for courses in which they are enrolled. A “W” does not affect a student’s GPA.
 - C. Have a hold placed on their account preventing any registration or enrollment activity until the Involuntary Leave of Absence is completed, the conditions for return are satisfied, and the student has received Written Notification that they are approved to return to the College. (NOTE: this does not prevent a student from requesting and accessing their official College transcript.)
 - D. Be eligible to appeal to receive refunds of portions of their tuition. See the [SUNY WCC Tuition Refund Policy](#).
 - E. Based on the College’s enrollment policies, may be disenrolled after a period of inactivity.

PROCEDURES

Throughout the process, the Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) may confer, as feasible and when appropriate depending upon the matter, with individuals regarding the need for an Involuntary Leave of Absence. Each case may vary, but conferring individuals may include the following:

- Members of the Community Assessment & Risk Evaluation (CARE) Team;
- Representatives from the Health Services Office (with appropriate authorization for any providers who have provided services to the Student);
- Representatives from the Department of Mental Health & Counseling Services (with appropriate authorization for any providers who have provided services to the Student);
- The student’s treatment providers or other health care professionals (with appropriate authorization for any providers who have provided services to the student);
- Faculty members;
- Academic advisors; and
- Other individuals who may be appropriate in an individual matter.

The following steps may be taken when evaluating the need for an Involuntary Leave of Absence:

1. EMERGENCY REMOVAL

- a. In emergency situations involving an imminent threat of harm to the Student or any other member of the College community, the VPSA, in the exercise of their reasonable judgment, may require a Student to be immediately prohibited from entering College Property while such individualized assessment and review under this policy is taking place.
- b. Such Students shall receive Written Notification to this effect as quickly as possible and/or practicable.
- c. While the individualized assessment and review is being conducted, every effort shall be made by the VPSA to reach a decision within seven (7) calendar days, provided that the Student responds in a timely manner to requests for information, and if appropriate, evaluation. If there are delays, the College shall document the reason for such delays in writing.

2. NOTIFICATION TO STUDENT

- a. A Student will receive Written Notification that an Involuntary Leave of Absence is under consideration. This Written Notification shall include: (a) the reason(s) why the Student is being considered for an Involuntary Leave of Absence; (b) the contact information for the Office of Accessibility Services, including information regarding the Student's right to request reasonable accommodations through that Office; (c) possible outcomes from the assessment, including the possibility of an Involuntary Leave of Absence; (d) information about the Student's right to have an Advisor accompany them to any meeting; and (e) a copy of this policy.

3. STUDENT PROVIDED INFORMATION

- a. The College will encourage the Student to provide additional information that the Student believes is relevant to the determination. The College may ask the Student to execute an Exchange of Confidential Information Consent Form providing certain College personnel with temporary authority to obtain information from the Student's health care provider(s) regarding issues relevant and appropriate to the consideration of an Involuntary Leave of Absence. The College will respect the Student's privacy, and only expects the Student to provide a release for access to the Student's medical and mental health records as reasonably necessary to complete this individualized assessment. If a Student refuses to execute such a release or to respond within a reasonable timeframe set by the College, the VPSA may proceed with the individualized assessment based on the information in their possession.

Any direct communication with a Student's medical provider shall be done through the appropriate College office, which will relay that information to the VPSA who is responsible for assessing all information regarding a potential Involuntary Leave of Absence.

4. **MANDATED PSYCHOLOGICAL, THREAT, AND/OR VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENTS**

- a. In certain circumstances, the VPSA may mandate a psychological, threat, and/or violence risk assessment conducted by a trained professional designated by the College, if the VPSA believes it will facilitate a more informed decision.

i. Self-Harm

In cases where the Student is unable or unwilling to carry out substantial self-care obligations (e.g. necessary steps recommended by their mental or medical health care provider to address known concern, not willing to utilize accommodations offered by the college to mitigate a known concern, etc.) and/or appears to pose a significant risk to their own safety, a licensed mental health professional (licensed psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, licensed professional counselor, licensed clinical social worker, etc.) or another professional trained in conducting risk assessments will conduct an assessment.

This assessment will be used to make a determination that relies on objective evidence, and not speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations, about whether the Student poses a legitimate safety risk to themselves based on the severity and likelihood of the potential harm.

ii. Harm to Others

In cases where the Student appears to pose a substantial potential threat to the College community, an employee of the College or an affiliate organization who is trained in conducting risk assessments will conduct an objective violence risk assessment (using tools like the Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment - SIVRA). This assessment will be used to help determine the risk and protective factors related to a Student's likelihood of engaging in violence and whether a direct threat of harm to others exists.

- b. The College will provide an assessor to conduct the required assessment; however, the College may allow the Student to choose an alternative assessor who meets the criteria established in the Written Notification sent to a student.
- c. Students will be notified in writing regarding the requirements for the mandated assessment. This Written Notification will include the: (1) required credentials for the assessor; (2) the required type of assessment; (3) the expected documents to be submitted as a result of the assessment; and (4) the timeline for completing the assessment. All steps in the process must be completed per the direction of the referral letter including meeting the deadlines set forth and submitting the appropriate paperwork, unless the Vice President of Student Affairs grants an exception.
- d. Additionally, as part of the assessment, the Student may be asked to sign a mutual release of information allowing the exchange of information between the College and the assessor. This release will allow the College to share pertinent information from the Student's education record that would enhance the assessor's ability to conduct a thorough assessment (incident reports, behavioral intervention team referrals and notes, etc.). The release will also allow the assessor to provide the results of the

assessment to the College.

- e. A student will be referred for disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct if they fail to complete a mandated assessment(s) in accordance with standards, procedures and reasonable timelines set by the College.

5. **DETERMINING THE NEED FOR AN INVOLUNTARY LEAVE**

- a. When evaluating whether an Involuntary Leave of Absence is appropriate, the VPSA will consider specific criteria, such as:
 - i. Whether current knowledge about the Student's medical condition and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that a student poses a significant risk to the health or safety of a member of the College community;
 - ii. Whether a Student is unable or unwilling to carry out carry out substantial self-care obligations (e.g. follow steps recommended by their mental or medical health care provider to address

known concern, not willing to utilize accommodations offered by the college to mitigate a known concern, etc.) and/or appears to pose a significant risk to their own safety, not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations; and/or

- iii. Whether a Student's behavior severely disrupts the College environment.
- b. The individualized assessment for each factor, based on reasonable judgment that relies on current medical knowledge to the extent that information is available, or the best available objective evidence, should capture:
 - i. the nature, duration, and severity of the risk or disruption;
 - ii. the probability that the risk or disruption will actually occur; and
 - iii. whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will appropriately mitigate risk or disruption, thereby eliminating the need for an involuntary leave of absence. Reasonable modifications do not include changes that would fundamentally alter the academic program or unduly burden College resources or staffing capabilities, or that would exceed the standard of care or monitoring that a College can be expected to provide.

The VPSA will give significant weight to the opinion of the Student's treatment provider(s) identified by the Student (with appropriate authorization) regarding the Student's ability to function academically and safely at the College with or without reasonable accommodations. If the VPSA determines that the information provided by the treatment provider(s) is incomplete, requires further explanation or clarification, or is inconsistent with the other information in the Student's record, the VPSA (with appropriate authorization) may contact the treatment provider(s) to obtain additional information.

6. OUTCOME

- a. Following the VPSA's consultations and review of the relevant documentation and information available, the VPSA shall make a decision regarding whether the Student should be placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence. The VPSA shall determine that either:
 - i. Reasonable accommodations can adequately reduce the risk, as applicable: (A) to the Student's health or safety; (B) to the health or safety of others in the College community; and/or (C) that the Student's behavior would severely disrupt the College environment. The VPSA may, in consultation with the Office of Accessibility Services, determine conditions and/or requirements under which the Student is allowed to remain at the College using the least restrictive appropriate means possible. A student shall be referred for disciplinary action under the [Student Code of Conduct](#) if they fail to comply with the applicable conditions and/or requirements after they are imposed by the VPSA.
 - ii. Reasonable accommodations cannot adequately reduce the significant risk, as applicable: (A) to the Student's health or safety; (B) to the health or safety of others in the College community; and/or (C) that the Student's behavior would severely disrupt the College environment. The VPSA may impose an Involuntary Leave of Absence. The VPSA will consult with the Office of Accessibility Services prior to making a decision to impose an involuntary leave of absence.
- b. This VPSA's decision shall be sent in writing to the Student. This Written Notification of the decision shall include: (1) the rationale for the decision; (2) the required length of the leave, which will be determined on an individualized basis (if applicable); (3) any conditions and/or requirements that the Student must satisfy to be eligible for return (if applicable); (4) information about the Student's right to appeal the decision; and (5) information about reasonable accommodations available during the appeal process. The Student shall be sent Written Notification of the outcome in a reasonable and timely manner.

7. APPEAL

- a. Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the written notice of the decision, the Student may submit an appeal of the decision in writing by using the [Involuntary Leave of Absence Appeal Form](#).
- b. The written request for appeal must specify the particular substantive and/or procedural basis for the appeal and must be made on grounds other than general dissatisfaction with the decision.
- c. The appeal will be reviewed by the Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA). The original decision will remain in place during the pendency of the appeal.

- d. The criteria for appeal will be limited to the following:
 - i. **Disproportionate Findings or New Information**: if there is any information not previously considered that would allow the Student to remain with or without a reasonable accommodation, or if there is any new information not previously available to the Student or the VPSA that may change the outcome of the decision-making process;
 - ii. **Procedural Irregularities**: if there were any procedural irregularities or errors that materially affected the outcome of the matter to the detriment of the student who appealed the decision.
- e. After reviewing the matter fully, the VPAA shall issue a written decision affirming, modifying, or reversing the decision to place the Student on an Involuntary Leave of Absence. Written Notification of the appeal decision will be sent within ten (10) calendar days of the Student's appeal. The decision of the VPAA shall be final; no other internal appeals or grievance procedures at the College are available.

PROCEDURES FOR RETURNING TO THE COLLEGE

1. A Student must make a written request to the VPSA to return to the College following an Involuntary Leave of Absence. A Student shall not be allowed to return until the leave period in the Involuntary Leave of Absence decision has elapsed, and all conditions and/or requirements have been met. Students requesting to return from an Involuntary Leave of Absence must submit a [Request to Return from a Involuntary Leave of Absence Form](#) found on the SUNY WCC website.
2. In addition to any conditions for return from an involuntary leave of absence imposed, Students seeking to return from an Involuntary Leave of Absence may be required to submit additional documentation as part of an individualized assessment. The Student may be required to provide evidence that the Student, with or without reasonable accommodations, has sufficiently addressed the issues that previously established the criteria for imposing an Involuntary Leave of Absence. The VPSA may also ask, confer with, or seek information from others to assist in making this determination. The information sought may include:
 - a. At the Student's discretion, documentation of efforts by the Student to address the issues that led to the leave;
 - b. Release of academic records to inform treating clinicians (with appropriate authorization);
 - c. Release of treatment information to the extent necessary to determine if the Student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the leave (with appropriate authorization);
 - d. Completion of a violence risk assessment or self-harm assessment conducted by an employee of the College or an affiliate organization who is trained in conducting the respective assessments;

- e. Consultation with the Health Services Office and/or Department of Mental Health & Counseling Services to the extent necessary to determine if the student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the leave (with appropriate authorization);
 - f. Consultation with member(s) of the Community Assessment & Risk Evaluation (CARE) Team; and/or
 - g. Consultation with the Office of Accessibility Services to review any requests, eligibility and/or need for reasonable accommodations to support the Student's return.
3. If a return to the College is denied by the VPSA, Written Notification of the decision will be transmitted to the Student and will include the rationale for the decision, a date when the student is eligible to re-apply for return, and any additional conditions or requirements, in addition to those already established in the original decision, for the Student's return. Written notification will be sent within a reasonable time after the student has submitted a request for return and required documentation per this policy.
- a. A Student not permitted to return may appeal the decision under this policy, following the procedures for appeal established in Procedure Section 7 (Appeal) of this Policy.
4. If the VPSA determines that the Student is ready to return to the College, Written Notification of the decision will be transmitted to the Student and shall include the rationale for the decision, the date when the Student is eligible to return, and any additional conditions or requirements that will be imposed upon the Student's return. Written Notification will be sent within a reasonable time after the student has submitted a request for return and any required documentation per this policy.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COLLEGE POLICIES

A leave of absence is an administrative process; it is not a disciplinary process. This policy is not intended to be punitive and does not take the place of disciplinary actions that are in response to violations of the [Student Code of Conduct](#), or other policies and directives, nor does it preclude the removal or dismissal of students from the College or College- related programs as a result of violations of other College policies.

This policy does not limit the College's ability to place enrollment holds on students for reasons beyond the scope of this policy.

This policy does not relieve a Student of any financial obligations to the College that were incurred prior to the time the Involuntary Leave of Absence was imposed.

Nothing in this policy limits the power of the College to take administrative action to ensure the safety of the College community in accordance with all appropriate laws and policies.

Nothing in this policy prevents the College from engaging in a temporary suspension under its policies if necessary, under the circumstances. Any such cases shall be appropriately reviewed per College policy.

REQUESTS FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities may seek reasonable accommodations during, and/or for, any stage of the process. Any Student requesting accommodations will be referred to the Office of Accessibility Services to request and obtain an accommodation letter. The Student must then submit the accommodation letter and their written accommodation request to the VPSA.