

Rice University Policy No. 405

BENEFIT TIME

Applies to: Staff Who Are Eligible for Benefits

Rice University grants staff members an amount of paid benefit time during which an employee may be absent for any reason, including vacation, personal business, illness, or religious holidays. Benefit time must be scheduled in advance with supervisors, who approve requests according to departmental workload and staffing levels. In the event of sudden illness or emergency when there is no opportunity for advance scheduling, the employee's supervisor should be notified as soon as possible and preferably before the normal time that the employee would begin work.

Basis of Benefit Time Accumulation

The rate at which an employee accumulates benefit time depends on whether the employee's position is classified by the Fair Labor Standards Act overtime provisions as exempt "professional, executive, or administrative staff", non-exempt "technical or support staff", or classified by Rice University as "a postdoctoral research associate." The rate of accumulation also depends on the seniority date, which takes into account all full years of any prior benefits-eligible service at Rice University in a benefits-eligible job.

On a professional, executive, administrative, technical or support staff member's anniversary of employment, he or she may carry forward a maximum of one year's accumulated benefit time. He or she then begins accumulating additional days or hours of benefit time.

Postdoctoral research associates (postdocs) regardless of their length of service, accumulate benefit time at the same rate as exempt staff members with less than 10 years of service. The postdoc must exhaust all benefit time prior to the end date of the appointment specified in the current appointment letter. If a postdoctoral research associate's current appointment letter specifies a term beyond one year, the postdoc may carry forward a maximum of one year's accumulated benefit time, with the understanding that all benefit time must be used by the end date of his or her current appointment; any extensions, renewals, or subsequent appointments reset the amount of accrued benefit time to zero.

Time is accumulated according to the following schedules:

Full-Time, Non-Exempt Technical and Support Staff

Length of Continuous Benefits-Eligible Service	Number Days per Employment Year	Monthly Accumulation in Hours
0 - 5 Anniversary	16	10.67
5 - 10 Anniversary	21	14.00
10+ years	26	17.33

Technical and support staff may take benefit time in half-hour increments.

Full-Time, Exempt Professional, Executive, and Administrative Staff

Length of Continuous Benefits-Eligible Service	Accumulated Days per Year	Accumulated Days Benefits per Month
0 - 10 Anniversary	21	1.75
10+ years	26	2.17

Professional, executive, and administrative staff should generally take time in full-day increments and may be required to do so.

Part-time employees accumulate benefit time according to the percentage of a full year they regularly work. For example, a person who works 20 hours a week all year (50 percent of full time) in a non-exempt technical or support position would accumulate eight days or 64 hours a year if he or she had worked less than five years.

In order to accumulate benefit time for any month, the employee must work or be on paid time off (other than short term disability leave) in that month for a minimum of twelve working days or the equivalent.

New employees have no entitlement to their accumulated benefit time until they have completed 6 months of continuous benefits eligible employment. New employees may, with the supervisor's permission, use benefit time in the first six months of employment. However, if an employee leaves the University before completing six months, accumulated days are not owned by (and not paid to) the employee and any benefit time taken will be deducted from the final paycheck.

Coordination with Short-Term Disability Program

In the case of major illness or injury (not work related), the first five days of leave are covered with available benefit time. If the individual does not have any benefit time available, these first five days will be unpaid. Thereafter, short-term disability coverage, if available, may be used according to the provisions of that program. Unpaid leave in excess of accrued benefit time may also be available for a serious health condition under the Family and Medical Leave Act (see Policy No. 417).

Payout of benefit time at termination

Effective July 1, 2012, the payout of unused benefit time to a staff member with at least six months of continuous benefits-eligible service who terminates from Rice for any reason will be no more than one year's accrual based on FTE and years of service. For example, a maximum of 26 days, or 207.96, hours for a full-time staff member with fifteen years of service. **(Implementation Note:** Staff members who had 20 or more years of service on January 1, 1993, [or were in the 20th year of Rice employment on that date] are entitled to an accumulation rate of 31 benefit time days each year; upon termination of employment, these staff members may receive a maximum payout of 31 days of unused benefit time.)

/s/ David W. Leebron
David W. Leebron, President

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Supersedes: Prior versions of Policy No. 405

See also: Benefits Eligibility Policy
Short-Term Disability Policy
Holiday Policy
Research Positions