

USAC PTO Proposal

I. **Overview of this proposal:**

This proposal seeks to address concerns by staff members surrounding Vanderbilt's holiday schedule and the flexPTO policy. After a review of Vanderbilt's current policies and an evaluation of our peer institutions, we will make a recommendation to the Vanderbilt Administration and Human Resources to better align Vanderbilt University with its peers.

II. **What?**

Vanderbilt currently recognizes seven (7) holidays in a calendar year; the fewest among our peer institutions. Furthermore, those holidays are accrued in the same manner as if they were simply additional PTO days and Vanderbilt is the only institution amongst its peers to accrue holidays this way. Finally, many employees still remember there being seven (7) more total days off available prior to the transition to a flexPTO policy.

III. **Impact?**

In July of 2014, all University Central eligible staff transitioned to a flexPTO program where vacation, sick, holiday, and personal time combined into one bank. Prior to this transition, the total number of vacation, sick, personal, and holiday days allotted to a brand new, non-exempt employee was 31. That number has since dropped to 24. For exempt employees, that same number dropped from 36 to 29 days.

IV. **Why are we addressing this issue?**

Ever since the new flexPTO policy was announced in 2013, it has been the subject of the most questions and concerns brought to the University Staff Advisory Council. While the Vanderbilt University staff understand the move to a flexPTO system, with the upcoming split from the Medical Center, it is the perfect time to revisit the current paid time off policies and how holidays are accumulated for the University employees when no longer tied to the same Human Resources department as a Medical Center with much different staffing requirements.

V. **Insufficiency/problems with current state?**

Upon a review of peer institutions, many of whom have recently been named to Forbes' list of the top universities to work for, we found Vanderbilt to be at the bottom of the list for both observed holidays and total days off for staff. Vanderbilt currently observes seven (7) holidays and the next closest peer

institutions, Stanford, Princeton, and Brown, all observe eleven (11). Please see Appendix A for details. Additionally, with holidays included, Vanderbilt staff currently receive between 24 and 34 total days off, depending on their years of service. The next closest peer institution, Georgetown, offers their staff between 29 and 39 total days with 13 of those days being holidays. Please see Appendix B for details. Finally, all of the peer institutions we researched separate their holidays out from other paid time off. Under Vanderbilt's current policies, staff need to use their accumulated flexPTO to take a holiday off. This presents an issue for newly hired employees who may not have accumulated enough time to take a holiday off without going into a negative balance; a disappointing experience for a new employee. Staff also have a negative connotation with being required to reserve their flexPTO to take University-designated days off.

VI. **Who has been involved?**

A subcommittee of the USAC Staff Life standing committee was formed to address issues related to Paid Time Off.

VII. **Recommendation:**

In splitting from the Medical Center, Vanderbilt University has a unique opportunity to reevaluate the paid time off currently provided to employees. As a University that prides itself on its world class faculty and staff, Vanderbilt should be setting the example for other institutions to follow. The University Staff Advisory Council has the following recommendations to better align with Vanderbilt's peers:

- Increase the total number of flexPTO days
 - Peer institutions range from 29 to 45.5 paid days off for new employees with 35 being the most common. Vanderbilt currently offers 24.
- Separate holidays from flexPTO
 - For the University, this means that staff would no longer be able to bank these days.
 - For staff, this means we would no longer need to be concerned with going into a negative PTO balance as a result of a holiday.
- Following the separation of holidays from flexPTO, recognize additional University holidays and/or grant University employees a number of personal days or floating holidays. Recommended days not currently observed are below:
 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 - Friday after Thanksgiving
 - New Year's Eve

- The week between Christmas and New Year's Day

While we understand it may not be possible to immediately increase the number of paid days off by fifteen (15) to match Cal Tech or Cornell, one possible compromise would be to separate Vanderbilt's seven existing holidays from flexPTO while allowing employees to accrue time off at the same rate. This would effectively increase the total number of paid days off by seven which would address the concerns above while returning Vanderbilt staff to the same total number of days off we received prior to the 2014 transition to a flexPTO system.

VIII. Ideal Positive Outcomes/Result

The potential results of implementing these recommendations include the following:

- Staff members would feel truly valued by Vanderbilt University and as a result would continue to provide their best work efforts and would implicitly be goodwill ambassadors for the University.
- Valued staff members would desire to remain employed with Vanderbilt, so retention rates could increase and staff satisfaction survey results could improve.
- Vanderbilt University could eventually join peer institutions as one of Forbes' top universities to work for, which could aid both in faculty recruitment as well as attracting the best and brightest staff to the University.

IX. Appendices

Appendix A.

	New Year's Day	MLK	Presidents' Day	Memorial Day	Independence Day	Labor Day	Thanksgiving	Day After Thanksgiving	Christmas Eve	Christmas Day	New Year's Eve	OTHER	TOTAL HOLIDAYS
Brown *												2	11
Cal Tech												3	12
Carnegie Mellon *												3	13
Columbia												2	12
Cornell												3	12
Dartmouth												3	12
Duke												3	13
Emory												2	12
Georgetown												2	13
Harvard									1/2			5	15.5
Johns Hopkins												3	13
MIT *												4	12
Northwestern												3	13
Princeton *												2	11
Stanford *												1	11
U of Illinois Chicago									1/2			2	11.5
Vanderbilt												0	7
Yale												4	14

* - named one of Forbes' "Top 10 Universities to Work For" in 2015.

	Observed
	Not currently observed
	Not currently observed (Vanderbilt)

Appendix B.

School	PTO	Holidays	Vacation/Personal	Sick	Total Days (Min-Max)
Brown	N/A	11	10-24	12	33-47
Columbia	N/A	12	23-28	12	47-52
Cal Tech	N/A	12	15-21	12	39-45
Cornell	N/A	12	15-20	12	39-44
Duke	N/A	13	10-20	12	35-45
Emory	N/A	12	12-25	12	36-49
Harvard	N/A	15.5	18-23	12	45.5-50.5
Johns Hopkins	N/A	13	10-22	12	35-47
MIT	N/A	12	15-20	5	32-37
Northwestern	N/A	13	15-25	15	43-53
Princeton	N/A	11	24	8	43
Stanford	N/A	11	12-26	12	35-49
U of Illinois - Chicago	N/A	11.5	12-28	12	35.5-51.5
Carnegie Mellon	17-30	13	N/A	N/A	30-43
Dartmouth	20-30	12	N/A	N/A	32-42
Georgetown	16-26	13	N/A	N/A	29-39
Vanderbilt	17-27	7	N/A	N/A	24-34
Yale	17-26	14	N/A	N/A	31-40

Sources:

<https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/human-resources/benefits/time-off>

<http://policylibrary.columbia.edu/paid-vacation>

https://hr.caltech.edu/documents/65-section_4_paid_leave_and_time_away.pdf

https://www.hr.cornell.edu/benefits/end_nonacademic.pdf

http://www.hr.duke.edu/policies/time_away/index.php

<http://www.hr.emory.edu/eu/benefits/timeoff/paidtimeoff.html>

<http://hr.harvard.edu/paid-time>

<https://hrnt.jhu.edu/pol-man/section/section11.cfm>

<http://hrweb.mit.edu/policy/4-0>

<http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/policies-forms/policies-procedures/absence-from-work/index.html>

<http://www.princeton.edu/hr/thrive/flexibility/>

<http://stanfordcareers.stanford.edu/pay-and-rewards/a-competitive-edge/benefits>

<https://nessie.uihr.uillinois.edu/cf/leave/index.cfm>

https://www.cmu.edu/hr/benefits/benefit_programs/time_off/pto.html

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/pdfs/Paid_Time_Off_Hourly.pdf

<https://sites.google.com/a/georgetown.edu/human-resources-policy-manual/section-600-time-away-from-work>

<http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/flexPTO-University.php>

<http://www.yale.edu/hronline/benefits/pto-recess.html>