Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

American Red Cross Blood Drive
(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

Nature of the Situation:
GPSA is working to recruit blood donors and provide funds to sponsor a blood drive hosted by the American Red Cross on November 7, 2019. The blood drive is part of the PSU vs. MSU challenge, where Penn State and Michigan State compete to see which school can amass the most blood donations over the period of several weeks. Financial assistance from GPSA is sought for purchasing pizza for blood donors and the cost of room reservations. Typically, the Student Red Cross Club pays for the pizzas, but with this legislation, GPSA would purchase pizza for the donors and spare the Student Red Cross Club the expense. The purchase of these pizzas will assist in the recruitment of blood donors and provide post-donation nourishment for those already planning to donate.

Recommended Course of Action:
The Graduate and Professional Student Association authorizes the Community Outreach Committee to purchase pizza as refreshment for blood donors and to use funds to cover the cost of renting Alumni Hall (or similar venue). The blood drive will take place on November 7, 2019 as part of the MSU vs. PSU blood drive challenge.

Renting Space in the HUB (Alumni Hall or similar venue $95 x 6 hours) = $570
Papa John’s Pizza: 10 pizzas x ~$12.50/pizza + 15% tip = $143.75

Total: $713.75

Respectfully submitted,

Trevor Bero
Delegate, College of Liberal Arts

Steven Baksa
Delegate, Intercollegiate Graduate Degree Programs

Min Gyung Yu
Delegate, College of Engineering

Richard Canevez (nee Caneba)
Delegate, College of Information Sciences and Technology

Rufina Roy
Delegate, School of International Affairs

President _______________________________________________ Affirm Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association
GPSA Co-sponsorship Request

GPSA must follow certain rules when providing funding for co-sponsorships. Please make sure you read these guidelines carefully before requesting GPSA funding.

- A GPSA delegate must submit a funding bill to the assembly, and GPSA must be involved in planning the event. Visit gpsa.psu.edu/membership to find contact information for assembly delegates
- The event must be open to all students
- Payment must be made by GPSA directly to vendors for specific line items (ex. food, room rental, speaker fees, etc.); funds will not be transferred to a student organization account or reimbursed to an individual for payments made
- Student Activity Fee money, which include funding from GPSA, may only be used to fund up to 90% of the event cost

Organization Name: American Red Cross
Organization Contact Person: Melissa Wolf
GPSA Representative Sponsoring Request: Trevor Bero
Request Date: 10/16/2019
email: melissa.wolf@redcross.org
e-mail: tjb86@psu.edu

Event Details

Event Name: Penn State vs. Michigan State Blood Drive Challenge
Date of Event: 11/7/2019   Time of Event: 10a.m.-4p.m. Event Location: Alumni Hall- HUB
Estimated Attendance: Total: 30   Graduate/Professional Students: At least 20
Is a ticket or pre-registration required for your event? Pre-registration
Is there any cost to attend your event? Yes  □ No  □ If yes, how much per person? N/A

Brief Event Description: The Red Cross will be hosting a blood drive to collect as many units of blood as possible. Our goal is to recruit at least 20 graduate students as donors. The results of this blood drive will be added to various others held during the month of November to calculate Penn State's contribution. This total will then be compared to a total number of units collected at Michigan State University and whichever university has more will win the challenge.

How are you going to advertise your event? Advertisement will be done by word of mouth recruitment of blood donors.

Funding Details

Total Requested from GPSA: $713.75
Total Cost of Event: ~$4500-5000
Please also submit a budget breakdown of event costs with this form.

Have you requested funding from other sources? □ Yes  □ No
If yes, please list those sources: N/A

What vendors are you planning to use? Papa John's
Do these vendors accept Penn State Purchase Orders? □ Yes  □ No
Is the vendor willing to invoice GPSA? □ Yes  □ No
If you answered no to both above questions, you will need to discuss payment options with the GPSA treasurer at least one month before your event.
For GPSA Treasurer Use:
Bill Number:
Total Approved: Total Paid:
Bill Close Date:
Resolution # 69-01

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University

of the 69th Assembly
October 2, 2019

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

Constitutional Amendment
Faculty Senators
(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

Nature of the Situation:
Currently there is no distinction between the two Faculty Senators. One Faculty Senator is appointed by GPSA. The other Faculty Senator is voted on by the graduate student body during yearly elections. The Faculty Senator who is voted on by the graduate student body should not be considered a voting member of GPSA executive board because they are not a representative of both the graduate and professional students at large.

Recommended Course of Action:
It is proposed that the GPSA adopt the following amendment to the GPSA Constitution:

ARTICLE VIII – EXECUTIVE BOARD of the Constitution will now read:
The following shall be considered members of the Executive Board:
1. President
2. Vice President
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. University GPSA Faculty Senators
6. Graduate School Student Faculty Senator*
76. Chair of the Graduate Council Student Caucus*
87. Chief Justice*
98. Speaker of the Assembly*
109. Advisor*

*Non-voting member

ARTICLE VIII, SECTION B. Voting of the Constitution will now read:
The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and the University GPSA Faculty Senators shall be considered voting members of the Executive Board. Quorum shall be 2/3 of the voting members. A simple majority carries the vote. The presiding officer of the Executive Board shall only vote in the event of a tie.

ARTICLE VIII, SECTION E. University Faculty Senators of the Constitution will now read:
The University Faculty Senators shall attend all meetings of the University Faculty Senate and assigned committees. The University Faculty Senator representing the GPSA (GPSA Faculty Senator) shall be bound by the legislative authority of the GPSA and be a voting member of the executive board, while the University Faculty Senator representing only the graduate student body (Graduate School Student Faculty Senator) shall not be bound by the legislative authority of the GPSA nor be a voting member of the executive board.

ARTICLE XIV – ELECTIONS, SECTION A. of the Constitution will now read:
Elections shall be held once a year in the spring semester. All elections shall be carried out in accordance with this Constitution and the Bylaws. Elections for the Graduate Council Student Caucus Delegates, University Graduate School Student Faculty Senator representing only the graduate student body, and University Park Allocation Committee representatives shall be conducted in accordance with their respective governing documents.

ARTICLE XIV, SECTION C. of the Constitution will now read:
The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and University Park Allocation Committee representatives shall be elected by the majority of the votes cast in the election by the graduate and professional student body. The Graduate School Student Faculty Senator representing only the graduate student body and Graduate Council Student Caucus Delegates shall be elected by the majority of the votes cast in the election by the graduate student body. The GPSA Faculty Senator representing the GPSA shall be filled by presidential appointment and approved by a majority vote of the Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Burton
Delegate, College of Agricultural Sciences
President

Affirm  Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association
Resolution # 69-02
The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University

of the 69th Assembly
October 16, 2019

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

Bylaws Amendment
Faculty Senators
(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

Nature of the Situation:
Currently, there is no distinction between the two Faculty Senators. One Faculty Senator is appointed by GPSA while the other Faculty Senator is elected by the graduate student body. Similar to the Constitutional Amendment (Resolution #69-01), an adjustment in the Bylaws is necessary.

Recommended Course of Action:
It is proposed that the GPSA adopt the following amendment to the GPSA Bylaws:

ARTICLE III, Section F. of the Bylaws will now read:
“The Faculty Senators shall be responsible for attending all appropriate meetings of the University Faculty Senate and speaking on behalf of the graduate and professional student body. The Faculty Senators shall report reporting back to the Assembly and Executive Board on all issues relating to the business of the Senate.”

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Baksa
Delegate, Intercollegiate Graduate Degree Programs

President ___________________________________________________ Affirm  Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association
Resolution # 69-03

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University

of the 69th Assembly
October 16, 2019

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

Support of Update to Leave of Absence Policy
Encouragement to the Graduate School to Update the Leave of Absence Policy
(GCAD-906) and Related Documents
(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

Nature of the Situation:

The hardest part of graduate school is often thought to be conducting research at the cutting edge of science. However, many graduate students find the most difficult part to be everything else, such as advising relationships, maintaining work-life balance, being able to pay bills, battling discrimination, etc. We believe that a critical step to improve graduate student life is for the Graduate School at Penn State to establish up-to-date leave of absence policies that allow graduate students reasonable time away from their studies without fearing loss of assistantships or negative consequences or retaliation from advisors. This would result in great improvements in graduate students’ mental health and quality of life. We also hope that modernization of this policy would allow for increased conversations between advisors and advisees about mental health.

The stated goal of Penn State’s Leave of Absence policy, discussed in detail below, is to “reduce the various stresses that can develop when graduate students encounter extenuating circumstances that warrant a temporary absence from their studies.” However, the current policy is inadequate when it comes to achieving this aim.

Penn State’s current leave policy raises several concerns. Regarding the short-term absences:
Although short-term absences are all paid, requests are still subject to approval by the graduate student’s advisor and Graduate Program Head. No official time off is guaranteed for illness, bereavement, or vacation aside from official university holidays. This means that time off and time-off requests are at the discretion of a graduate student’s supervisor. The power imbalance and nature of the workplace may then discourage graduate students from requesting this time off.

Many of Penn State’s peer institutions have clearly-defined policies for the short-term leave and vacation to which graduate students are entitled, providing a clear framework and reasoning by which to request time off.

Regarding extended absences:

- There is currently no guarantee that these absences would be paid. This is of particular concern for new parents who may not be able to fulfill assistantship and/or academic requirements for extended periods of time and who would be required to pay for health insurance during that period. Additionally, students recovering from long-term illnesses or long-term emergencies almost invariably depend on pay and benefits.
- If this extended absence aligns with the end of the current appointment, there is currently no guarantee of continuation of the assistantship into the new period, which places a further strain on graduate students requiring extended absences.
- Many of Penn State’s peer institutions have clearly defined policies for family leave time to which graduate students are entitled, providing a clear framework and reasoning by which to request time off.

Recommended Course of Action:

The GPSA Executive Board has conducted extensive benchmarking in order to create recommendations that are feasible based on the models of other schools. Those benchmarking efforts are included in detail as an appendix to the resolution. Research on time off and leave of absences is also included in the appendix. Based on this benchmarking and research combined with the current Penn State policy on leaves of absence, we have the following recommendations.

By adopting this resolution the GPSA formally recommends the Graduate School adopt the following or comparable policy changes.

1) Penn State’s policies on leave time are highly reliant on the relationships between students and their advisors. There is a petition process, but students are not guaranteed any time whatsoever and have to process every request with their advisors, committee chairs, and Graduate Program Heads, even for short-term absences. We recommend that the Graduate School provide graduate students with time off, as part of their contracts, that needs to be coordinated with one party. Of course, as with any time off by faculty and staff, the leave time would need to be coordinated with relevant parties, but it could not be denied to the student.

2) We recommend having a specific policy/section about vacation time, given that, as stated above, the short-term absences are also stated to be for very serious events, such as bereavement, illness/injury, etc. We recommend that the Graduate School adopt a specific
number of vacation days for graduate students. Based on our research and benchmarking, we believe one vacation day per month, not including University recognized holidays, as a minimum in order to improve mental health and well-being as well as productivity. Full-time employees receive two vacation days (16 hours) per month, and vacation time has historically been prorated for employees who work less than 40 hours per week (someone working .75 FTE would receive 1.5 days/12 hours per month). Because most graduate assistantships are 20 hours per week, the proration would be one day per month. In situations where GAs are contracted to work more than 20 hours, the proration should be computed based on the number of hours.

3) We recommend that the Graduate School create a specific policy/section about family leave, as our peers have clearly implemented in their policies. This is a unique circumstance that does not cleanly fit into extended leaves of absence or full leaves of absence. We also recommend that the family leave should be paid, without having to go through the request for approval for paid leave. In accordance with our benchmarking, we suggest 6 weeks of paid family leave time for graduate students as a minimum.

4) **GSAD-906: Policy Statement, Section 7:** The policy currently states the following: “Students will notify their Graduate Program Head of their intent to resume their studies at least 30 days before the end of their Leave of Absence.”
   a) We recommend that this section of the policy be revised to state that “Students will notify their Graduate Program Head of their intent to resume their studies at least 30 days before the end of their Leave of Absence. If this is not possible, reasonable attempts will be made to allow the student to return to study.”

5) **GSAD-906: Process, Section 1:** The policy currently states the following: “At least thirty days prior to the date of return from the Extended Absence or Leave of Absence, the student must notify their Graduate Program Head and advisor (if applicable) of his/her intent to return.”
   a) According to the policy, an Extended Absence may be shorter than 30 days, as Extended Absences are specified to be at least 3 weeks. Therefore, if the student takes a leave of 3 weeks, they would have to notify the program of their date of return before they leave with the 30 day timeline. We recommend putting Extended Absences on a different timeline from Leaves of Absence. We recommend that Extended Absences should have a deadline of one week prior to the date of return to notify relevant parties. We also recommend changing the language to become gender neutral, i.e., “their intent.”

6) **Management of Graduate Assistantships…, Guidelines Section, Paid Short-Term Leave:** The current policy states that the student may or may not have to perform assistantship responsibilities during the short-term absence. However, during the paid extended absence, appointees are “excused from their regular activities.” Due to the fact that a short-term leave is for less time than an extended leave, we recommend that responsibilities also be excused during a short-term leave given the conditions of the leave recommended in this policy.
7) We recommend that the policy explicitly state that, in compliance with Title IX, family leave as the result of the birth of a child cannot be grounds for an assistantship to be denied upon return.

8) Lastly, we recommend that the Graduate School work continually with Human Resources at Penn State to ensure that graduate student leave is up-to-date with Penn State’s leave policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Kelling Amanda Burton
President, GPSA Delegate, Agricultural Sciences

Alex Wilson-Heid
Graduate Council

President __________________________________________________ Affirm Veto

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The Graduate and Professional Student Association
Benchmarking Appendix:
We have conducted an extensive benchmarking study against other Big Ten universities and additional comparable universities. We present a brief summary of those findings here.

We note that most schools have separate policies for (1) vacation leave, (2) sick/personal leave, and (3) family leave. We believe that this is helpful for graduate assistants in justifying time away. For example, it is often difficult for graduate students to request time away for vacation when even the stated use of the short-term absence for Penn State involves very serious events.

**Vacation Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Time Allowed</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>22 days (including holidays)</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>5 days per semester (academic year/semester appointment), 15 days for fiscal year appointments</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>10 days for 12-month assistantship 7.5 days for 9-month assistantship Called &quot;Time away from Duty&quot;</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers</td>
<td>1 month per 12-month appointment</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois-Urbana</td>
<td>24 days for 12-month assistantship</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champaign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>4 weeks (including holidays)</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>2 weeks (plus holidays)</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CalTech</td>
<td>2 weeks (plus holidays)</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU Denver</td>
<td>14 days (plus holidays)</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sick/Personal Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Time Allowed</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>10 days for sick leave + 3 days for family illness</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>13.5 days for academic year appointment</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 days for 12-month appointment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>Paid medical leave for 2 months or to the end of the employment period, whichever is first</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Discretionary, but if longer than two weeks, must use &quot;vacation&quot; days mentioned previously</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>10 days if on a non-hourly appointment</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If on hourly appointment only available if work hours are fixed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>1-3 days, up to 3 times for illness per semester</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers</td>
<td>Undefined length of time</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois-Urbana Champaign</td>
<td>6.5 days per semester</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>3 weeks per 12 months</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>case-by-case</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>2 weeks per 12 months</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>case-by-case</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CalTech</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU Denver</td>
<td>15 days per 12 months</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Family Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Time Allowed</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>2 months - paid for the first week, then unpaid. Must be completed within 6 weeks of birth or adoption</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Policy Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>6 weeks paid leave for birth/adoption, must happen between two weeks before birth/adoption and 13 weeks after</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>6 weeks, all paid w/ benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>Up to 3-6 weeks, but must use all available other forms of leave first</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers</td>
<td>6 weeks recuperative for person giving birth, additional 8 weeks for parental release time (all paid). All parents eligible for the 8 weeks of parental leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois-Urbana Champaign</td>
<td>12 weeks, unpaid unless claiming sick/vacation leave concurrently. You can take 6 weeks of parental leave, two weeks of which is paid immediately following the birth. The remaining four weeks can be taken at any time during the appointment period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Up to 8 weeks, must be used within 8 weeks of birth/adoption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>Case-by-case, must be approved - must petition to return &gt;6 weeks before the start of the quarter you will return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>12-week suspension of work&lt;br&gt;An additional term of enrollment, should a student require it&lt;br&gt;An additional term of financial support, should a student require it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>2 months (research and academic) for childbirth, 1 month for parental leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CalTech</td>
<td>No Policy Listed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU Denver</td>
<td>60 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Links for more information:
Research Appendix:

There are many distinct areas in which researchers have engaged with this topic, summarized below. In short, the ability to take leave time with modified return policies has been linked with improved mental health. It is widely known that graduate student mental health is becoming a crisis at institutions across the United States. We find through our research that our recommendation of more structured leave time for graduate students is likely to improve graduate student mental health and well-being.

Graduate School and Mental Health

Graduate students are at high-risk for mental health issues due to the pressure, competition, and stress experienced during graduate studies (1, 2). A study by Levecque and colleagues found that the prevalence of having or developing a common psychiatric disorder was 2.43 times higher in Ph.D. students compared to the highly-educated individuals in the general population (3). A separate study from Harvard found that 18 percent of graduate students experience moderate or severe symptoms of depression and anxiety — more than three times the population average, and this number grows as students spend longer periods of time in their programs (4). As this topic gains more attention, there are foundations being formed to study the issue and the inaugural International Conference on the Mental Health & Wellbeing of Postgraduate Researchers was held in 2019 (5). It is important that Penn State administrators recognize these issues and react in a manner that will benefit both current and future students, enabling them to continue doing the great work that has contributed to the global influence of Penn State.

Links between leave time and mental health

The awareness of mental health and well-being for employees at workplaces in America has been said to be reaching a “tipping point,” such that many employers are beginning to invest both capital and policy to improve the employee experience (6). In graduate school, many factors can influence mental health, such as long work hours. Afonso and colleagues found that long work hours were associated with poorer mental health status (7). One method for addressing mental health issues is to review and modify leave time and vacation policies. The American Psychological Association’s 2018 Work and Well-Being survey indicated that 59 percent of American workers said their employers do not provide sufficient mental health resources, while 68 percent of the same respondents indicated that their moods were more positive after time away from work (8). These findings indicate that one potential strategy for improving mental health and well-being is time away from work. A study by Andren concluded that employees with mental disorders were able to gain workplace efficiency improvements with the introduction of part-time sick leave policies after those same workers took 60 days of full-time leave, suggesting that part-time reintroduction back to the workplace provides added productivity benefits (9). For employees returning after a mental health problem, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends, “Allowing part-time work for several weeks may help reduce stress, leave time for additional medical counselling and allow the worker to quickly get back into a normal routine” (10). Studies on vacation time have found that vacation provides improvement in short-term well-being (8, 11), thus increasing the
number of vacation days can provide more overall benefit to the well-being of employees. Recent research has shown clear links between workers taking leave time/vacation along with modified return policies and improved mental health, making it clear that reanalysis of Penn State’s policies would be beneficial to the graduate student population.

**When people take leave, they are more productive**

Research has demonstrated the connection between paid leave time and productivity at work. With regard to sick leave in particular, workers without paid time off to see a physician are more likely to report missing work or being unable to concentrate on their jobs (12). The lack of preventative care – and the ability to seek preventative care – ultimately compounds during working hours and hurts all parties. Conversely, taking more vacation days is positively associated with both overall health and life satisfaction (13). Improved health and satisfaction contribute to improved productivity at work and help prevent burnout – something frequently experienced by graduate students in pursuit of advanced degrees for 5+ years. An additional resource on the benefits of instituting paid sick leave/personal leave can be found in “No Time to be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don’t Have Paid Sick Leave” (14). Many workers, when faced with no designated sick leave, either go to work anyway or take unauthorized time off. Inadequate designated sick leave leads to negative health effects for the workers, increases the risk of getting other employees sick, and leads to lost productivity.

**When people have “unlimited” leave or leave without defined term lengths, they take less leave**

While the unstructured, “unlimited” nature of the current leave policy may seem more flexible, overall it is not beneficial to our graduate students. According to Namely’s 2017 HR Mythbusters report (a survey of more than 125,000 employees), employers who instituted unlimited vacation time policies saw employees take fewer days off than their counterparts at employers with defined vacation benefits (15). The nebulous leave structure oftentimes combined with lack of communication regarding acceptable annual leave time creates confusion for employees and encourages them to take or request less time off.

**References:**

1. (2019) Being a PhD student shouldn’t be bad for your health. Nature 569:


