



**Monroe Community College Voluntary Furlough Program**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

***1. What are the dates of the Voluntary Furlough Program?***

The Voluntary Furlough Program is available beginning June 29, 2020 through July 26, 2020.

***2. Who is eligible to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program?***

Faculty, staff, and administrators, including both hourly and exempt employees, are eligible to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program.

***3. What is the timeline for apply for the Voluntary Furlough Program?***

- Eligible employees must apply by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 2020.
- Applications will be reviewed by Human Resources and Vice Presidents (or designees).
- Approved applicants will receive an official Notice of Furlough on or before Friday, June 26, 2020.
- The furlough period will begin on Monday, June 29, 2020.

***4. How do I apply for the Voluntary Furlough Program?***

Staff, faculty, and administrators may apply for furlough using this form:  
<M:\Offices\President\Human Resources\Voluntary Furlough\Voluntary Furlough Application.docx>

***5. If I go on furlough, will I be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits?***

If you meet the minimum requirements set by the State of New York, you should be eligible for unemployment benefits because you are being placed on temporary furlough.

***6. Where do I apply for unemployment compensation benefits?***

Go to <https://www.ny.gov/services/unemployment-0> to learn more about unemployment benefits in New York and to file a claim. You may use your furlough letter as evidence of your employment status if requested by the unemployment office.

***7. What unemployment benefits may I receive?***

New York State uses a complicated formula to calculate the unemployment benefits available to applicants for those benefits. The minimum unemployment benefit in New York

State is \$104 per week and the maximum unemployment benefit is \$504 per week. At the time that this document was prepared, there is an additional federal unemployment benefit available of \$600 per week due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal benefit is only available to those who apply for unemployment benefits through their state.

Furloughed employees who qualify for New York State unemployment benefits will be eligible for the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program. This program offers the additional \$600 per week in federal unemployment benefits. Neither the College nor the union has any control or input into whether this benefit will remain available through the duration of your furlough.

***8. Are any staff not eligible for the voluntary furlough?***

Decisions about an employee's eligibility for the voluntary furlough program will be made on an individualized basis due to the availability of work.

***9. Can my request to participate in the voluntary furlough program be denied?***

Yes. Decisions about an employee's eligibility for the voluntary furlough program will be made on an individualized basis due to the availability of work.

***10. Will my position be protected if I participate in the voluntary furlough?***

Participation in the voluntary furlough does not protect your position from further employment actions in the event they become necessary. This program is being implemented with the goal of improving the College's financial situation so that we may avoid layoffs and other more drastic actions in the future. Whether this goal is achieved will depend on a number of factors. Participation in the Voluntary Furlough Program is voluntary and will not protect you from further cost saving measures going forward.

***11. Can an employee take a furlough and then move right into retirement?***

Yes. If you would be retirement eligible at the end of your voluntary furlough period, you may retire directly from furlough.

***12. Is keeping up with my email considered work?***

Yes. Under wage and hour laws, reading work emails during this time is considered work. It is expected that you do not perform any work during this time, nor engage in any work-related activities that would benefit the College. You should not be reading or responding to your work emails while on furlough. To do so could jeopardize your eligibility for unemployment compensation.

***13. What if a position is grant-funded?***

Employees who receive salary support through sponsored grants or awards may be eligible for the Voluntary Furlough Program, provided that it will not conflict with the terms of the grant or the award and based on the availability of work. If an employee who receives salary

support through a sponsored grant or award applies for the Voluntary Furlough Program, this application will be evaluated to ensure that the employee's participation in the program does not violate the terms and conditions of the grant, adversely impact the sponsored project, or harm our future efforts to secure or sustain external funding.

***14. Could the College end the furlough program early?***

If College operations require early recall from voluntary furlough, a minimum of one week's notice will be provided.

***15. What are the repercussions of not participating in the Voluntary Furlough Program?***

This initiative is a cost-saving measure and an attempt to minimize the need for further employment actions, such as mandatory furloughs, salary reductions, and/or layoffs. However, no supervisor or fellow employee can take any sort of retaliatory action against a person who chooses not to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program.

Any employee who feels that they have been retaliated against as a result of their participation or lack of participation in this program should contact Human Resources.

***16. Who should I contact if I have questions about participating in the Voluntary Furlough Program?***

Please contact Human Resources with any questions regarding this program. Questions can be addressed to Suzanne Bureau at [sbureau1@monroecc.edu](mailto:sbureau1@monroecc.edu), Melissa Fingar at [mfingar@monroecc.edu](mailto:mfingar@monroecc.edu), or Kristin Lowe at [klowe5@monroecc.edu](mailto:klowe5@monroecc.edu).

***17. If I am furloughed, will I continue to receive College benefits?***

Furloughed employees who are on a College-sponsored medical or dental insurance plan will continue to be covered. The College will pay both the employee and employer contributions for these benefits during the furlough period.

Furloughed employees will also continue to receive Tuition Assistance and Tuition Reimbursement benefits while on furlough, if they or a dependent are currently enrolled in an eligible academic program.

***18. What will happen to my voluntary benefits, such as supplemental life insurance, while I am on an unpaid furlough?***

Your current coverage will remain in place. Premium collection will be deferred until you return to a paid status. Or, should you elect to retire from furlough, from any payment due to you based on your decision to retire (i.e., accrued, unused vacation benefits).

***19. What will happen to my Flexible Spending Account while on furlough?***

While on furlough, you may continue to use your account for reimbursement of eligible expenses. When you return to a paid status, the College will collect any payment missed while on furlough through a payroll deduction.

***20. Will my years of service with the College be reduced due to the furlough?***

No. You will remain in active status as an employee while you participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program. There will be no break in your years of service during this furlough.

***21. How does furlough affect holiday pay?***

If you are furloughed over the Independence Day holiday (observed on July 3, 2020), you not receive pay for the holiday.

***22. How does the furlough affect my retirement benefits?***

Furloughed employees who are members of the New York State and Local Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System may not earn service credit for the time that that are on an unpaid furlough. Your final average salary for the year that you participate in the voluntary furlough will be reduced by the amount of salary that you forego while on furlough. Your years of service may also be impacted by the length of your furlough, because no earnings will be reported to the system on your behalf. Your unemployment compensation will not count toward your retirement earnings.

If you participate in the SUNY Optional Retirement Plan, contributions made on your behalf by the College will be based on your total salary for the year. If you elect to participate in the voluntary furlough program, you will not receive contributions on the salary that you are giving up during your furlough.

Unemployment compensation received during the furlough will not be counted as earnings or salary for purposes of retirement.

***23. What happens if I am on an unpaid furlough and I have a loan against my retirement with the state retirement system?***

Because loan payments to the retirement system are typically deducted from your earnings and paycheck and you will be unpaid, a loan payment will not be made on your behalf while you are on an unpaid furlough. It is the employee's responsibility to reach out to the retirement system to arrange for any necessary loan payments during the time of their furlough.

***24. Who should I contact if I have questions about my benefits?***

You should contact Suzanne Bureau at [sbureau1@monroecc.edu](mailto:sbureau1@monroecc.edu) with any questions you have regarding your benefits.

***25. If I contract COVID-19 while on furlough, will I be able to use COVID leave?***

No, you will not be able to use COVID leave while on furlough.

***26. Does the College have to pay out my accrued vacation time when I am furloughed?***

No. Since a furloughed employee is still considered an employee in active status, accrued paid leave would not be paid out. Your leave banks will remain in place during the period of your furlough and you will be able to access them once you return to paid status.

***27. Will I continue to earn sick leave and vacation time while on furlough?***

No, you will not earn vacation or sick time while on unpaid leave.

***28. I am currently on an approved leave. Can I begin my voluntary furlough period once my current leave concludes?***

Yes. Your voluntary furlough would begin the day after your last day of leave.

***29. I had previously requested to use vacation or sick time during the time that I would be on voluntary furlough. If I elect to participate in the voluntary furlough, will I be charged for those sick or vacation days? Can I be paid for those days while on furlough?***

The time that you elect to be on voluntary furlough is unpaid time. You are not able to use paid time off, such as sick time, vacation, or personal days, while on voluntary furlough. No sick time, vacation, or personal days will be deducted from your banks while on voluntary furlough.

Your leave banks will not be charged during the time that you are on voluntary furlough.

***30. If I am on a voluntary furlough, can I rollover my unused vacation time because I am unable to use it on furlough?***

No. Employees are limited to the carryover of vacation time set forth in their terms and conditions of employment or applicable collective bargaining agreement. No one will be permitted to carry over additional days of vacation for any reason.