



Voluntary Reduction in Work Schedule Program (VRWS Program – Appendix A-46)

The Voluntary Reduction in Work Schedule (VRWS) Program is a program through which annual-salaried, full-time employees can elect to take a temporary reduction in salary in exchange for additional time off. The program allows eligible full-time employees to voluntarily reduce their salary and work schedule for a defined period while retaining full-time appointment rights.

The VRWS Program was originally negotiated by UUP and New York State to provide interested employees with a means to generate and “bank” paid leave time in anticipation of a planned family leave event. However, this is not the only way the VRWS program can be used. In fact, the VRWS program was originally negotiated between the State and other state unions expressly as a voluntary means of generating savings to reduce the need for involuntary budget-driven staff reductions.

Employees can enter a voluntary VRWS agreement for any personal reason, included but not limited to:

- Banking paid time for anticipated parenting leave;
- Generating paid leave time to care for a family member;
- Reducing professional obligation to pursue endeavors work normally prevents;
- Generating paid leave time to use for extended travel;
- Reducing work time to enhance social distancing during the COVID pandemic;
- And finally, generating campus savings that can then be used to reduce the need to non-renew contingent co-workers during the current crisis.

UUP is actively advocating that SUNY campuses liberally consider and approve any employee request for VRWS for this upcoming year and utilize the savings generated to reduce the need for contingent faculty and staff reductions that may otherwise prove to be necessary in the current fiscal crisis.

The negotiated VRWS Program Guidelines can be found in Appendix A-46 of the 2016-22 State/UUP Agreement. Anyone interested in entering a VRWS agreement to reduce their work obligation this year should review Appendix A-46. A brief description of the key elements of the VRWS Program is provided below.

- To be eligible, employees must have full-time continuing, permanent or term appointments and at least one year of service.
- Eligible employees may temporarily reduce their annual salary and their professional obligation up to a maximum of 30%.

- VRWS arrangements are established in joint agreements between the employee and their campus in compliance with the VRWS Program Guidelines. The individual VRWS agreement defines:
 - the duration of the agreement,
 - the percentage reduction in professional obligation and salary,
 - the schedule for how “VR credit” (the leave time generated by entering a VRWS agreement) will be used.
- Individual VRWS agreements may be for any length of time of up to 26 pay periods but must expire (subject to possible renewal) at the end of the last payroll period of the SUNY fiscal year.
- Employees who enter VRWS agreements earn “VR credits” for each pay period on VRWS proportionate to the amount of salary reduction in each pay period.
 - E.g. an employee who has a VRWS agreement providing for a 20% reduction accrues 16 hours of VR credits per pay period and is paid 80% of full-time annual salary. These VR credits can then be used for “time off.”
- VR time may be used immediately as it is earned, banked for later use at a scheduled time, or used intermittently. For example:
 - If an employee with a 20% VRWS reduction is using VR time immediately, they are paid at 80% of full salary and their normal obligation each week is reduced by 20% (e.g. they might work 4 days per week instead of 5 and their salary is prorated to 4 days).
 - VRWS credits may be banked for later use (e.g. the employee works their normal obligation for 20 pay periods while receiving 80% of full pay and earns 2 days of VR credit per pay period, accumulating a total of 40 days that can be taken off).
 - If this time is used during the period covered by the VRWS agreement, the employee can take 10 weeks off (using VR credit at the rate of 4 days per week) while continuing to receive 80% pay.
 - If this time is used after the expiration of the VRWS agreement, the employee can take 8 weeks off (using VR credit at the rate of 5 days per week) and receive full pay.
 - VRWS credits may be charged intermittently (e.g. the employee receives 80% pay and accrues 2 days of VR credit per pay period while continuing to work their normal obligation. The employee uses the VR credits as needed to care for a family member).

- Regardless of how the employee charges accumulated VR Credit, the salary reduction that is agreed to in the VRWS agreement generates salary savings for the period covered by the agreement (e.g. an employee with a normal full-time salary of \$100,000 who enters a VRWS agreement providing for a 20% reduction for a year receives \$80,000 during the period of the VRWS agreement generating \$20,000 in savings for the campus).
- Generally, VRWS Agreements may only be discontinued at their expiration or by mutual agreement. However, VRWS agreements may be discontinued, at management discretion, if the employee is promoted, transferred, or reassigned within a campus or if the employee moves to another campus.
- VR credit which is unused at the conclusion of a VRWS Agreement must be used by December 31 of the fiscal year following the year in which the VRWS agreement expires.
- Unused VR credit will be paid out on a lump sum basis upon retrenchment, resignation, termination, retirement, or death. It is also paid out upon transfer to another campus unless the employee requests and the new campus accepts transfer of the VR credits to the new campus.
- Employees on VRWS retain full-time appointment rights including retrenchment rights.
- There is no impact on service credit. The employee remains in full-time status for this purpose.
- There is no impact on sabbatical or Title F leave eligibility. Employees taking sabbatical or Title F leaves will have VRWS agreements suspended while on leave.
- Leave accrual rates, retirement service credit (ERS and TRS), and retirement contributions (ORP) are prorated based on payroll percentage.
- Final average salary for calculating ERS or TRS retirement benefit level may be impacted if the employee enters a VRWS Agreement during their highest 36 months of employment.
- Location stipend (Downstate and Mid-Hudson Adjustments) and inconvenience pay are prorated by VRWS percentage.