

**VII – 3.00 – POLICY ON WELLNESS PROGRAMS**

(Approved by the Board of Regent October 9, 2015)

**I. PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY:**

To encourage University System of Maryland (USM) Staff employees to participate in Wellness programs offered by USM institutions and other state entities in order to improve health and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This policy applies to all Nonexempt and Exempt Staff Employees on Regular or Contingent status.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

Release Time – An approved absence from duty during the work day without loss of any pay for the purpose of attending an employer-approved wellness activity.

**III. WELLNESS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

Each institution shall establish a Wellness Program for employees.

- A. To the extent that such resources are available on campus, employees shall have access to:
  - 1. Institution recreation, fitness and pool facilities;
  - 2. Campus wellness and benefits fairs;
  - 3. Wellness information on campus websites, employee newsletters and other sources;
  - 4. Relaxation and meditation rooms on campus; and
  - 5. Retirement and other financial wellness planning workshops and other information sources.
  
- B. To the extent that such resources are available, institutions may provide low- or no-cost wellness activities and benefits to employees, which may include:
  - 1. Smoking cessation, nutrition and weight loss, stress relief, and other classes to promote wellness;
  - 2. Exercise, dance, and other physical fitness classes and programs;
  - 3. Collaborations with private and local government fitness and wellness program providers to provide discounted access to institution employees;
  - 4. Health screening programs;

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5. Employee Assistance services, including counseling and work-life referral services; and access to mental health counselors through an Employee Assistance program; and
6. Other wellness activities & benefits that the institution may establish.

### **IV. RELEASE TIME FOR WELLNESS ACTIVITIES**

Each institution shall provide a reasonable amount of release time for employees to participate in specified wellness activities and events taking place at the institution, operations permitting and with the permission of the supervisor.

- A. Such release time may be used for screenings, preventive health services, seminars, classes and other special events provided as part of the institution's wellness program.
- B. Release time may be in the form of sick leave, paid administrative leave, or other form of paid time away from duty, as determined by the institution.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES:**

Each President shall identify his/her designee(s) as appropriate for this policy, develop procedures as necessary to implement this policy, communicate this policy and applicable procedures to his/her institutional community, and post it on its institutional website.