



October 30, 2013

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EXECUTIVE CORRESPONDENCE

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OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER
THOMAS P. DINAPOLI
COMPTROLLER

Honorable Thomas DiNapoli
Comptroller
110 State Street
Albany, NY 12236

Dear Comptroller DiNapoli:

In accordance with Section 170 of the Executive Law, this letter is the University at Albany's 90-day response showing the actions taken to address the recommendations contained in the Office of the State Comptroller's Audit Report on Sabbatical and Other Paid Leave, State University of New York: University at Albany (OSC audit report 2001-S-34). Our updates on the specific recommendations follow.

Recommendations

1. Ensure compliance with prescribed requirements for sabbatical leave. In particular, this includes compliance with provisions for the:
 - return to Albany for a full year of work at the conclusion of a sabbatical;
 - maximum amount of compensation to be paid to an employee on sabbatical leave;
 - completion of an activity and accomplishment report at the conclusion of a sabbatical;
 - reporting of prospective income and adjustment of salaries to reflect such income; and
 - appropriate use of sabbatical leave.

Implemented. The University at Albany has strengthened the protocol for the review and approval of applications for sabbatical leaves to ensure full compliance with all prescribed requirements contained in Article XIII Title E of the SUNY Board of Trustees Policies. A checklist has been developed to document the required elements of each sabbatical leave application and actions taken at the point of approval. A post-leave checklist has also been developed to document reports and actions as appropriate at the conclusion of the sabbatical leave.

2. Formally assess the instances of non-compliance and payroll system errors, as detailed in this report. Take actions as needed, including the recovery of improper compensation payments, to address the matters presented.

Implemented. The University at Albany has hired new staff in its Office of Human Resources Management since the OSC audit that process sabbatical and other leave transaction requests. These staff have been trained in the eligibility rules, processing procedures and proper coding of leaves. Additionally, auditing procedures have been reviewed with payroll staff to ensure that any data entries errors are identified and corrected in a timely fashion.

3. Develop and implement clear policies for accountability over other paid leave. These should include, but not be limited to:

- requiring employees to return for one year of professional service at the conclusion of their other paid leave; and
- requiring employees returning from other paid leave to complete activity and accomplishment reports.

Implemented. This recommendation requires making changes to the policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees, as well as statewide collective bargaining agreements. SUNY is committed to ensuring its policies and procedures regarding sabbatical and other leaves are clear and provide accountability over the use of such leaves. SUNY System Administration is putting together a workgroup consisting of campus and System Administration representatives to review existing SUNY regulations, policies, and procedures as well as provisions of the statewide collective bargaining agreements for sabbatical and other leaves and to assess the need for any changes.

4. Adopt guidelines that clearly distinguish between sabbatical and other paid leave, identify the expected purpose and benefit to SUNY from each, and identify the circumstances under which each type of leave is appropriate.

Implemented. This recommendation requires making changes to the policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees, as well as statewide collective bargaining agreements. SUNY is committed to ensuring its policies and procedures regarding sabbatical and other leaves are clear and provide accountability over the use of such leaves. SUNY System Administration is putting together a workgroup consisting of campus and System Administration representatives to review existing SUNY regulations, policies, and procedures as well as provisions of the statewide collective bargaining agreements for sabbatical and other leaves and to assess the need for any changes.

5. Implement controls to ensure other paid leave is granted for purposes consistent with the stated intent of such leave.

Implemented. The University at Albany has strengthened its protocol for review and approval of applications for other paid leaves to ensure full compliance with all prescribed requirements contained in Article XIII Title F of the SUNY Board of Trustees Policies. A checklist has been developed to document the required elements of each other paid leave application and actions taken at the point of approval. In addition, there will be a post-leave review to ensure that the approved activities were conducted.

6. Implement controls to ensure employees on other paid leave do not accrue leave credits. Also, as appropriate, adjust the leave balances of the employees who accrued leave credits while on other paid leave.

Implemented. The University at Albany has developed an audit query to review monthly accrual earnings for staff on leave to identify and correct any instances of improper crediting of accruals by the University's automated leave system. In addition, all inaccurate leave credits accrued for employees on other leave had already been removed from the University time and attendance system for these employees prior to the issuance of the OSC audit report.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on University at Albany and SUNY efforts in responding to the findings in this OSC audit. If you have any questions regarding this 90-day response, please feel free to contact me at 518-956-8010.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Jones', written over a horizontal line.

Robert J. Jones
President

Copy: Mr. Howard, SUNY
Mr. Haelen, SUNY
Mr. Abbott, SUNY
Ms. Phillips, University at Albany
Mr. Beditz, University at Albany
Mr. Hedberg, University at Albany
Mr. Walser, University at Albany
Mr. Wilcox, University at Albany