

Voluntary Phased Separation Program

Final Approval: 9 November 2020

Summary

The Voluntary Phased Separation Program (VPSP) offers eligible tenured faculty members with Texas A&M University at Galveston the opportunity to make a gradual transition from full-time faculty status to separation from employment at a fixed date. The VPSP allows faculty members to retain tenure and benefits while decreasing responsibilities and commitments. The application form is linked here: <https://www.tamug.edu/AcademicAffairs/faculty/index.html#Rules-and-Guidelines>.

1 Eligibility

- 1.1 A full-time faculty member is eligible to apply for the VPSP if all of the following criteria are met:
 - holds tenure (Associate and Full Professors) at Texas A&M University at Galveston,
 - has completed at least 10 years of full-time employment at Texas A&M University,
 - is administratively located in Texas A&M University at Galveston, and
 - is paid 100% by Texas A&M University at Galveston.
- 1.2 Faculty members serving as department heads or in other leadership positions in the College or University are ineligible for the VPSP.
- 1.3 In unusual circumstances, the Chief Academic Officer “CAO” may make an exception to the eligibility requirements in 1.1 and 1.2.

2 Phased Separation Period

- 2.1 By participating in the VPSP, eligible faculty members elect to reduce their percentage of effort for a defined phased separation period (normally three years. Exceptionally, the VPSP may be extended to a maximum of five years).
- 2.2 Participating faculty members will retain their tenure and title during the phased separation period.
- 2.3 At the end of the phased separation period, participating faculty members will relinquish tenure and separate from employment.
- 2.4 The agreement to relinquish tenure and separate employment at the date mutually agreed upon is made before the phased separation period begins and is irrevocable (subject to section 3 below).

3 Modifying the Phased Separation Period

- 3.1 During the phased separation period, a participating faculty member may petition for an extension, providing that the total phased separation period does not exceed five years. Extensions require the approval of the CAO and are dependent on satisfactory performance (as identified in the required annual evaluation) and availability of sufficient financial resources.
- 3.2 A participating faculty member may choose to resign before the end of the predetermined phased separation period. No approval is required, but in order to allow affected departments to plan ahead, the proposed resignation date should be announced one semester in advance.

4 Percentage Effort and Workload

- 4.1 During the phased separation period, eligible faculty members will be appointed at 50% effort (0.5 FTE). This effort may be 50% over the full 9-month academic year, or it may be distributed differently (e.g. 100% effort for one full academic semester¹).
- 4.2 Workload during the phased separation period is determined in advance as part of the written agreement. Typically, faculty members in the VPSP would be expected to teach at least two courses each year, although there may be modifications based on research activity. For example, a faculty active in research would have to identify how in the phased separation period they would close out their research projects and graduate mentorship commitments (spending out grants, graduating graduate students, writing papers/reports, etc). Participating faculty members are expected to perform service obligations consistent with their rank and percentage of effort.

5 Compensation and Benefits

- 5.1 Participating faculty members will be compensated according to their percentage of effort during the phased separation period (e.g., at 50% of their regular 9-month base salary if effort is 50% for the full 9-month period).
- 5.2 Participating faculty members are eligible for merit raises during the phased separation period.
- 5.3 Participating faculty members are eligible for the benefits afforded to 50% FTE employees under the university's benefit plans, including health care and retirement plan contributions, during the phased separation period. Health care and other insurance premiums will be paid at the part-time rate.

¹ In the case where faculty member works 100% in one semester and 0% in the other, she/he will receive 100% of the state benefit contributions in the semester that they work full-time, and in the semester for which they are 0% effort, they are put on leave without pay. During that latter semester, they are responsible for the full premium and receive no state contribution.

- 5.4 Faculty members are not eligible for the 12-over-9 plan since they are no longer full-time for 9 months.
- 5.5 Faculty members considering participation in the program are advised to consult the Texas A&M Benefits Office for guidance on post-separation benefit.

6 Process for Requesting VPSP

- 6.1 Eligible faculty members interested in participating should submit an application to the CAO through their department head. The required VPSP application form can be accessed at:
<https://www.tamug.edu/AcademicAffairs/faculty/index.html#Rules-and-Guidelines>
- 6.2 Applications must specify:
 - the proposed date of separation,
 - the proposed duration of the phased separation period, and
 - the proposed workload and responsibilities during the phased separation period.
- 6.3 For eligible faculty members with joint appointments, or other significant responsibilities outside their department, the relevant unit head(s) must approve the proposal.
- 6.4 If the phased separation proposal is approved, then a Voluntary Phased Separation Agreement (the Agreement) will be prepared and signed by the CAO's Office.

7 Administrative provisions

- 7.1 The College may formally amend the VPSP or terminate it if changes in funding, system policy or regulation, university rules, or other unforeseen circumstances, make it necessary.
- 7.2 Changes to the VPSP made in accordance with 7.1 will not retroactively affect agreements that have been approved through the process described in section 6.

Related System and University Guidelines

<https://rulesadmin.tamu.edu/rules/download/12.01.99.M2>