SNU Policy: Worker's Compensation Return-to-Work Policy
SNU Policy ID: Benefit Information D-08A
Reviewed by: Director of Human Resources
Approval Authority: Chief Financial Officer
Effective Date: April 27, 2027
Next Review Date: April 27, 2031

1. Purpose

The university is committed to supporting employees who experience a work-related injury or illness by facilitating a safe and timely return to work. This policy outlines procedures for returning employees to productive employment through full-duty, modified-duty, or transitional assignments consistent with medical guidance, operational needs, and state Workers' Compensation laws.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all university employees who experience a **compensable work-related injury or illness**, including:

- Faculty
- Staff and administrators
- Student employees while performing duties within the scope of their university employment.
- Temporary, seasonal, and grant-funded employees

Employees with **non–work-related injuries or illnesses** may be supported through ADA/interactive process procedures but are not governed by this policy.

3. Policy Statement

The university will make reasonable efforts, when operationally feasible, to return employees to productive work as soon as medically appropriate. Return-to-work opportunities may include:

- Return to **full duty**
- **Modified duty** within existing job tasks
- **Transitional assignments** in another department or role, temporarily
- Gradual return-to-work schedules consistent with medical recommendations

Participation in the Return-to-Work Program is intended to benefit employees, departments, and the institution by reducing lost work time, supporting recovery, and maintaining operational continuity.

4. Definitions

Full Duty:
The employee has no medical restrictions and can perform the essential functions of their position.

Modified Duty:
Temporary work adjusting duties, schedules, or responsibilities to meet documented medical restrictions.

Transitional Duty:
Short-term alternative work assignments not part of the employee's regular job duties but suitable for their temporary capabilities.

Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI):
A medical determination that the employee's condition is stable and not expected to improve significantly with additional treatment.

5. Employee Responsibilities

Employees returning to work after a work-related injury must:

1. Provide medical documentation from the authorized treating provider indicating work status and restrictions.
2. Communicate promptly with their supervisor and Human Resources regarding their ability to work.
3. Follow all approved work restrictions and report any change in condition.
4. Attend all required medical appointments.
5. Notify Human Resources of any updated medical restrictions immediately.

Employees may not perform work outside of medical restrictions under any circumstances.

6. Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors must:

1. Ensure the employee returns to work only with appropriate medical clearance.
2. Work with Human Resources to identify appropriate duties consistent with restrictions.
3. Monitor job performance to ensure restrictions are being followed.

4. Report concerns about employee safety, medical compliance, or duty assignments to Human Resources.
5. Provide ongoing support and clear communication to the employee throughout the Return-to-Work process.

7. Human Resources Responsibilities

Human Resources will:

1. Review medical documentation and coordinate return-to-work determinations.
2. Work with departments to identify modified or transitional duty options when available.
3. Issue written return-to-work or modified duty notifications to the employee and supervisor.
4. Maintain confidential records in compliance with state and federal laws.
5. Coordinate claim management with the Workers' Compensation carrier.

8. Medical Documentation & Work Restrictions

- The university requires written status reports from the authorized treating provider before an employee returns to any type of work.
- Restrictions must be clear, time-bound, and updated after each medical appointment.
- Employees may be required to undergo independent medical evaluations (IMEs) when legally permitted.

The university reserves the right to delay or deny return to work if medical information is insufficient or unclear.

9. Modified & Transitional Duty Assignments

When full-duty is not medically appropriate:

- Human Resources will evaluate whether modified or transitional duty assignments are available and operationally feasible.
- Assignments are temporary and typically limited to **90 days**, unless extended based on medical necessity and operational needs.
- Employees must perform only approved tasks within their restrictions.
- Duties may be assigned within the employee's department or another department.

Modified or transitional duty is not guaranteed and is provided at the University's discretion based on availability, medical restrictions, and operational needs.

10. Return to Full Duty

An employee may return to full duty when:

1. The treating medical provider releases them to full, unrestricted work; and
2. Human Resources confirms documentation and notifies the department.

Upon return to full duty, transitional or modified duty assignments end immediately.

11. Refusal of Suitable Work

If medically appropriate modified or transitional duty is offered and the employee refuses to participate:

- The employee may be subject to discipline.
- Workers' Compensation wage benefits may be reduced, suspended, or denied as permitted by state law.

12. Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI)

When an employee reaches MMI:

- The treating provider will determine any permanent restrictions.
- Human Resources will initiate next steps, which may include:
    - ADA/interactive process review
    - Job restructuring or reassignment considerations
    - Long-term disability evaluation
    - Separation options consistent with policy and law

13. Confidentiality

Medical information and claim records are confidential and maintained separately from personnel files in compliance with HIPAA and ADA and applicable state regulations and privacy laws.