

# Attendance Policy Proposal

WHEREAS the Undergraduate Council formed an ad-hoc committee to examine the current Attendance Policy and make recommendations;

WHEREAS the current policy states that the University recognizes the importance of class attendance;

WHEREAS the current policy also states that faculty are expected to make their attendance policies known to students in writing within the first week of class;

WHEREAS an Attendance Policy Appeals Committee exists to hear appeals of unresolved conflicts that arise between students and instructors over matters of absences from class;

WHEREAS discussions with Student Senate, the Athletics Committee, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, and other various groups across campus have revealed a certain level of confusion over the process of making such an appeal;

WHEREAS these same discussions have also revealed some confusion as to the types of appeals that the current policy allows;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the language of the current policy be changed to the following *(changes to the current policy are highlighted in boldface type. The current policy is included as an appendix.)*

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

A student is expected to be present at all classes. Regular class attendance is necessary in order for a student to achieve the desired standard of academic achievement. Irregular attendance normally results in lower levels of achievement. **Students are therefore expected to contact instructors as soon as possible when an absence occurs.**

It is University policy that each instructor determines and communicates the attendance requirements for the class. Only the instructor can excuse missed classes or assignments. **When a conflict arises, a student is expected to resolve his or her situation first with the instructor, and if that fails, with the instructor's Department Chair and then the Dean. If unresolved issues remain, an Attendance Policy Appeals Committee exists to hear appeals.**

An appeal of the **instructor's attendance policy** will not be sustained unless there is clear and convincing evidence that it was applied in an unreasonable manner or is in violation of widely held ethical or legal principles.

## GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES

- (1) The University entrusts the faculty with the responsibility of determining how absences will affect student grades, recognizing that the instructor is in the best position to judge which educational activities are most critical in achieving the course's outcome objectives. The instructor is also best suited to determine what alternate means, if any, may most closely approximate those objectives if the student is unable to participate in the original educational activity/assignment.
- (2) University faculty must strive to ensure that all students in a given class are evaluated equitably.
- (3) University faculty are encouraged, whenever possible, to accommodate students who must miss class for important reasons. These reasons may include family and personal emergencies, special religious observances, **representing the University at an on- or off-campus event**, and extraordinary opportunities that lie beyond the classroom.
- (4) University faculty should make an attendance policy available to students in a written format within the first week of the class. The policy should be reasonably clear and help students understand how absences might affect their learning and grades. Not every eventuality can be foreseen, and the individual instructor **may need to make a judgment in an individual case** beyond the details outlined in this policy.
- (5) Students are encouraged to consult with faculty about absences, in advance if possible, to resolve scheduling conflicts.
- (6) The University community recognizes that on occasion an **Attendance Policy Appeals Committee** may be called upon to **review and settle disputes that result from either an inconsistent application of an instructor's policy, or from the policy itself. Such an appeal should** occur only after the student first seeks a satisfactory outcome with the instructor, and, if that fails, with the instructor's Department Chair and then the Dean.
- (7) **Also, before any meeting with the Department Chair, Dean, or the Attendance Policy Appeals Committee, the faculty member will be asked to provide a copy of the attendance policy in question as well as documentation of the student's attendance in the course. The faculty member will be allowed to provide input at all levels of discussion.**
- (8) **If the dispute is not resolved with the instructor, the student may initiate an appeal at the departmental level no later than fourteen calendar days after the first day of class of the following semester, spring or fall. If the grievance is not resolved at the departmental level, an appeal may be submitted to the Dean of the school/college of the instructor no later than fourteen calendar days after receiving written notification of the department's decision. After receiving written notification from the school/college, the student may appeal to the Attendance Policy Appeals Committee within fourteen calendar days. Once final grades have been issued, a student who intends to file a grade appeal where attendance is involved needs to file grade and attendance issues together as a single appeal according to the procedures in the grade appeal policy.**

**Appendix: Current Attendance Policy (From the 2008/2009 Catalog)**

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

A student is expected to be present at all classes. Regular class attendance is necessary in order for a student to achieve the desired standard of academic achievement. Irregular attendance normally results in lower levels of achievement. This policy does not relieve the student of contacting instructors as soon as possible.

It is University policy that each instructor determines and communicates the attendance requirements for the class. Only the instructor can excuse missed classes or assignments. An Attendance Policy Appeals Committee exists to hear appeals if a student cannot resolve his or her situation with the instructor and/or instructor's Department Chair and Dean.

An appeal of the instructor's application of the Attendance Policy will not be sustained unless there is clear and convincing evidence that it was applied in an unreasonable manner or is in violation of widely held ethical or legal principles.

**GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES**

- (1) The University entrusts the faculty with the responsibility of determining how absences will affect student grades, recognizing that the instructor is in the best position to judge which educational activities are most critical in achieving a course's outcome objectives. The instructor is also best suited to determine what alternate means, if any, may most closely approximate those objectives if the student is unable to participate in the original educational activity/assignment.
- (2) University faculty must strive to ensure that all students in a given class are evaluated equitably.
- (3) University faculty are encouraged, whenever possible, to accommodate students who must miss class for important reasons. These reasons may include family and personal emergencies, special religious observances, and extraordinary opportunities that lie beyond the classroom.
- (4) University faculty should make an Attendance Policy available to students in a written format within the first week of the class. The policy should be reasonably clear and help students understand how absences might affect their learning and grades. Not every eventuality can be foreseen, and the individual instructor will have to make some judgments beyond the details outlined in this policy.
- (5) Students are encouraged to consult with faculty about absences, in advance if possible, to resolve scheduling conflicts.
- (6) The University Community recognizes that on occasion, an Absence Policy Appeals Committee may be called upon to review and settle disputes that result from an inconsistent application of the absence policy as articulated in the class and in this catalog. Resort to this option would occur only after the student first seeks a satisfactory outcome with the instructor, and, if that fails, with the instructor's Department Chair and Dean.