

## **Amending Senate Policy 102.1: Policy on Class Attendance**

This proposal seeks to amend the current policy by limiting excused absences to those in which a student is absent due to an extenuating circumstance lasting 3 or more consecutive days of class or due to an off-campus university sponsored event. This proposal also modifies the documentation requirements for absences due to COVID-19.

### **Rationale**

#### **Excused Absences — 3 or more days**

The current *Policy on Class Attendance* requires students to provide documentation and obtain excused absences from the Dean of Students office for all absences, regardless of the duration. This causes an undue burden on the student, health care providers, and staff in the Dean of Students Office. Often, students are absent due to acute illnesses which do not require a visit to a health care provider.

Requiring documentation for these short duration absences places financial strain on students who otherwise would not require an appointment at a health care facility.

Due to recent budget constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant staff reductions in the Dean of Students Office. Minimizing the number of students requiring excused absences will allow staff to direct their time and efforts to more pressing needs of students.

#### **Documentation Requirement**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in the interest of public health, the American College Health Association recommends universities develop attendance and excuse policies that provide support to students who are ill without creating barriers or requiring unnecessary visits to health care facilities or the purposes of documenting the illness.

### **Proposal**

Amendments to the current policy are written below in red. Deletions have been struck through.

#### **Attendance Policy**

Attending class is essential for academic success. The University expects students to attend all scheduled class times unless an absence is excused under this policy.

An excused absence is one in which a student is absent due to an off-campus event (see below) or involves a legitimate extenuating circumstance which causes the student to miss 3 or more consecutive days of class or to miss an assignment, examination or other graded requirement of the class. Students are expected to contact the Dean of Students Office for excused absences of 3 or more consecutive days or if their absence resulted in missing a major assignment, examination or other graded requirement of the class. For absences involving fewer than 3 consecutive days, students are encouraged to work directly with their instructor.

Categories of University excused absences:

- Off-campus events:
  - Including intercollegiate athletics; fine arts performances; program-sponsored competitions; program-sponsored field trips; and similar official events where students represent the University in an official capacity.
  - The instructor or staff supervising students participating in these events must provide notice to the students' instructors and the Dean of Students Office prior to the date of the activity. The notice must include the name of the activity, the date(s) of class absence, the name of the supervising instructor or staff, and the names of all participating students.
- Absences involving legitimate extenuating circumstances beyond a student's control:
  - These include student illness or injury that prevents a student from participating in class for three or more consecutive days. Other examples are the death or critical illness of a family member; wedding of an immediate family member or member of the wedding party, birth of a child; military duty; jury duty or subpoena for court appearances; and similar extenuating circumstances.
- ~~If a student's absence causes the student to miss an assignment, examination or other graded requirement of the class, the instructor may require the student to provide documentation verifying the cause of the absence. The student may provide the documentation to the instructor or to the Dean of Students Office.~~

Documentation Requirements: With the exception of extended absences related to COVID-19, documentation will be required for all absences of three or more consecutive days or when the student missed a major assignment, examination or other graded requirement of the class.

- COVID-19 related absences - Students should contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance and support services. Students who become ill due to COVID-19 will not be required to make unnecessary visits to a healthcare provider for the purposes of obtaining documentation. Students advised by the university or through government recommendations/regulations to self-isolate for a period of time, will not be required to provide documentation from a healthcare provider. These students will work with the Dean of Students Office for assistance and support services.

Instructors retain the discretion to excuse student absences for reasons other than those described in the above paragraphs. Students participating in activities on behalf of a student organization may obtain a verified absence letter from the Student Activities Office. This letter is meant to confirm a student's participation in an extracurricular activity and may be presented to the instructor when requesting an absence from class.

Students are responsible for notifying their instructors prior to missing a class and arranging a mutually-acceptable make-up procedure. In emergency situations, where students are unable to notify their instructors, students should promptly contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance.

Students with an excused absence shall be allowed to earn full credit for missing assignments by performing equivalent work, as long as the instructor deems that the learning objectives of the course can still be met. Where this is in question, it should be determined in conversation between the student and the instructor, if necessary in consultation with the Dean of Students. This conversation should happen as soon as possible. The substance of the equivalent work and the deadline for its completion shall be determined by the instructor.

Instructors concerned with a student's excessive absence should contact the Dean of Students Office for advice and assistance.

The Dean of Students Office may be contacted by an instructor or a student for assistance in informally resolving any disputes under this policy. If a dispute

cannot be resolved informally, the student may follow the Student Academic Grievance policy.