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## DOC 2010-03 Attendance Policy

University of Dayton. Student Government Association

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## PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Attendance Policy

SUBMITTED BY: Student Government Association

DATE: April 12, 2010

ACTION: Legislative authority

REFERENCE: II. B.1.c. (Senate constitution), amendment to Senate document (I -93-2)

RATIONALE: Although it is clear in the Class Attendance Policy in the current *Faculty Handbook* that faculty may institute attendance requirements for their own courses (provided that the policy is approved by a faculty committee of the department and/or the department chair and is stated in writing in the course syllabus and explained during the first full week of the semester), there is no direct guidance in the policy on how faculty members should handle requests to excuse absences and allow make-up work in special circumstances beyond the immediate control of students that may affect their attendance.

Description of Proposal:

### **Amendment to Class Attendance Policy in the Faculty Handbook**

#### **Background**

*The best way to track the history of the class attendance policy at the University is actually through the Bulletin and the Student Handbook since the current policy in the Faculty Handbook actually evolved as changes were made to the Class Attendance Policy over the years. In the 1960's all students, not just first-year students, were covered by the Class Attendance Policy, and if they overcut the "tolerated" (6 for MWF or 4 for TTH), they were given an F for the course. Appeals to an Attendance Review Board could be made, but "no distinction" was made between excused and unexcused absences in the count (1966-67 Bulletin is the source here.) The students themselves were also ultimately responsible for making sure that they did not exceed the number of tolerable cuts. [There were so-called "double-absence" days to consider before and after holidays and special events as well, but that's another story.] In the 1970's, the policy was revised to exempt upper-class students from the policy. The Attendance Review Board continued to operate for the first-year students--with the allowable number of cuts remaining the same--and students receiving an F in a course if their appeals were not honored. In the 1980's the policy began to stress the importance of attendance at all classes, but also branched off in a new direction encouraging instructors to put their personal attendance policies in their syllabi and grading scales. By the 1990's the Attendance Review Board was dissolved, and the current policy as we have it today survives. We still count, but we simply send first-year students to the Dean for counseling. There is no punitive grade, and the universal W is in place as a 'free*

*pass." As instructors, we get letters from administrators telling us about planned student absences for various extracurricular reasons (which we are asked to sign), doctors' notes, parents' notes, even obituary notices, but we are charged with determining how we handle them. In a sense, we are back to the basic premise of the 1960's: Currently, there is no such thing as an "excused absence" at the University. The difference is faculty now determine for themselves what they choose to excuse along with any accommodations they care to make about deadline extensions and make-up work when special circumstances beyond the control of students apply.*

## **Rationale**

Although it is clear in the Class Attendance Policy in the current *Faculty Handbook* that faculty may institute attendance requirements for their own courses (provided that the policy is approved by a faculty committee of the department and/or the department chair and is stated in writing in the course syllabus and explained during the first full week of the semester), there is no direct guidance in the policy on how faculty members should handle requests to excuse absences and allow make-up work in special circumstances beyond the immediate control of students that may affect their attendance.

## **Proposal**

The following amendment should be made to the Class Attendance Policy.

### **5. Class Attendance Policy**

It is desirable for students to attend all classes. Listening to the lectures of instructors and being involved in classroom discussions should (1) provide guidelines and goals in the course of study, thus lending direction to the study activities of the student; (2) provide instances of the way of thinking and methodology employed by an academic discipline in formulating and solving problems; and (3) stimulate an awareness of/and interest in the course topics beyond the levels acquired by textbook reading.

Because textbook material is generally beneath the level of the current state of knowledge, instructors acquaint the student with new ideas and integrate this material into the course topics. Students are responsible for being aware of the proceedings and material covered in each class period.

Students must attend all announced tests and submit assigned written work on the date set by the instructor; it is recommended that the instructor announce such tests and assignments at least a week in advance. The action taken as a consequence of missing a test or an assignment will be determined by the instructor and will be based on a consideration of the individual circumstances involved.

To assist first-year students in their transition to college responsibilities, it is felt that a policy of compulsory attendance is necessary. Therefore, first-year students will be permitted only a limited number of absences. For first-year students, the allowable number of absences in the first

term or in the second term will be equal to twice the meeting times a week (or four class days in any third-term session).

A student exceeding this number will be referred to the student's dean for possible counseling and appropriate action. Any undergraduate student who has not yet accrued 30 semester hours of credit is considered a first-year student.

In addition to the first-year student policy, faculty may institute an attendance requirement. This may be done for any course (including seminars, laboratories, performance courses, clinical field-based courses, and the like) provided that the policy is approved by a faculty committee of the department and/or the department chair. If attendance is used as a grading component, the instructor is obligated to clarify his or her classroom policy regarding absences in writing in the syllabus provided during the first full week of the semester.

In cases where unusual circumstances combine to cause a student to miss any class time for reasons beyond the student's control (viz., personal illness, death in the immediate family, religious holidays, University-sanctioned activity, emergency limitations on commuter travel in severe weather-related conditions), faculty members should give due diligence to reviewing the student's particular case

Let it be noted that to insure accuracy of records, every student must be present at class during the first week of each term.