

## RESOLUTION-POLICY

X	Action Item
	For Information Only

From: Dr. Eric Milou, Rowan University Senate President  
To: Dr. Ali Houshmand, Provost  
Date: 3/23/09  
RE: Senate Resolution **090323-2**

### **Resolution to Revise the Attendance Policy**

Background on the resolution:

Last year, the Senate approved a revised version of the Attendance Policy proposed by the APP Committee. The impetus for the revision was the inclusion of language requiring faculty to accommodate students who miss class for legitimate reasons. The version that was implemented included language added later by the Provost's Office, shown in italics below:

Faculty (singularly or as part of a department or program) may establish additional attendance criteria that are consistent with the above. *This may include referring students who have missed more than 25% of scheduled class times for reasons listed in #2 under student responsibilities to the Dean of Students to arrange a hardship withdrawal from the class.*

This language replaced the statement shown below, again in italics:

Faculty (singularly or as part of a department or program) may establish additional attendance criteria that are consistent with the above. *This may include setting a maximum number of absences for a course—whether excused or unexcused—after which a student fails the course.*

The problem with this version was that it would permit an instructor to fail a student on the basis of excused absences, which the University does not believe to be legally defensible. Since the resolution was passed at the end of the semester and it was not possible to bring it back to the Senate, the policy was revised by the Provost's Office and implemented. It was expected that the Senate would review and if necessary revise the policy this year.

During this academic year, several faculty have expressed concerns about the existing policy. The main issue is that it places a considerable burden on faculty to document excuses and to provide alternative assignments to students with excused absences. The burden is considerable because 25% of the course—a month's worth of classes—may be missed. In addition to the logistical issues, the very large proportion of classes that may be missed undermines stated

institutional values, including learning communities, collaborative and cooperative learning, project-based learning, and interactive learning. To address this situation and further clarify the policy, APP proposes the following resolution to again revise the policy. **Revised language has been highlighted, and the current policy is attached for comparison.**

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WHEREAS, implementation of the new attendance policy this year has revealed that missing 25% of a course is excessive, and that providing alternative assignments or not counting activities for up to 25% of a course is not appropriate for many courses, such as lab courses, collaborative and cooperative learning-based courses, project-based courses, etc.;

AND WHEREAS, faculty should have the authority to determine how important attendance is to the learning experience in their classes;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the University adopt the following revised attendance policy for all students:

### **Proposed Revision to Attendance Policy**

Because classroom experiences vary greatly among disciplines, deliveries and instructors, Rowan's community of learners is best realized when teachers and learners interact in ways deemed appropriate for any particular class. Thus, although what constitutes attendance can differ from course to course, the following applies to all courses:

#### **Responsibilities of Students**

- 1) Students are expected to be present at each meeting of each scheduled class for which they are officially registered. Students are responsible for knowing the instructor's attendance policy as stated in the syllabus.
- 2) Students absent for any of the following reasons:
  - Religious observances
  - Official University activities
  - Documented illness
  - Death of a family member or loved one
  - Inclement weather

must inform their instructor with **official or verifiable written documentation** before the fact in cases of religious observances and official University activities, or as soon as possible thereafter in cases of illness, death of a family member or loved one, and inclement weather. Students should consult with their instructor regarding acceptable documentation.

- 3) In the case of rare and compelling circumstances not listed in #2 above, students should make every effort to discuss reasonable accommodations with the instructor in advance if feasible or as soon as possible afterward .

### Responsibilities of Faculty

- 1) Faculty are expected to keep accurate attendance records.
- 2) Attendance requirements must be part of the syllabus provided to students prior to the end of the drop/add period.
- 3) In the case of #2 under Student Responsibilities, faculty must make reasonable accommodation to provide these students the opportunity to make up their written work, tests, or other assignments at the earliest possible convenient time. In cases where graded classroom activities cannot be repeated **and** the student has not exceeded the maximum number of allowable absences (as explained below under #6), the faculty member will either provide an alternative graded exercise to replace the missed activity or remove the activity from the calculation of the student's final grade.
- 4) Faculty are under no obligation to make special provisions for students who are absent for reasons other than those listed above. However, faculty are encouraged to consider accommodations for rare and compelling circumstances.
- 5) If a student develops a pattern of excessive and/or unexplained absences, faculty should advise the student to request assistance from the Dean of Students.
- 6) Faculty (singularly or as part of a department or program) may establish additional reasonable attendance criteria that are consistent with the above. This may include setting a maximum number of absences for a course—whether excused or unexcused—after which a student should withdraw from the class with a WF. If the Dean of Students determines that excused absences were a significant factor, the withdrawal may be altered to a simple W.

## **Current Attendance Policy**

### **Effective Fall 2008**

Because classroom experiences vary greatly among disciplines, deliveries and instructors, Rowan's community of learners is best realized when teachers and learners interact in ways deemed appropriate for any particular class. Thus, although what constitutes attendance can differ from course to course, the following applies to all courses:

#### **Responsibilities of Students**

- 1) Students are expected to be present at each meeting of each scheduled class for which they are officially registered. Students are responsible for knowing the instructor's attendance policy as stated in the syllabus.
- 2) Students absent for any of the following reasons:
  - Religious observances
  - Official University activities
  - Documented illness
  - Death of a family member or loved one
  - Inclement weather

must inform their instructor with official written documentation before the fact in cases of religious observances and official University activities, or as soon as possible thereafter in cases of illness, death of a family member or loved one, and inclement weather.

#### **Responsibilities of Faculty**

- 1) Faculty are expected to keep accurate attendance records.
- 2) Attendance requirements must be part of the syllabus provided to students prior to the end of the drop/add period.
- 3) In the case of #2 under Student Responsibilities, faculty must make reasonable accommodation to provide these students the opportunity to make up their written work, tests, or other assignments at the earliest possible convenient time. In cases where graded classroom activities cannot be repeated, the faculty member will either provide an alternative graded exercise to replace the missed activity or remove the activity from the calculation of the student's final grade.
- 4) Faculty are under no obligation to make special provisions for students that are absent for reasons other than those listed above.
- 5) Faculty should counsel students who develop a pattern of excessive and unexplained absences, and to request assistance from the Dean of Students if the pattern continues.
- 6) Faculty (singularly or as part of a department or program) may establish additional attendance criteria that are consistent with the above. This may include referring students who have missed more than 25% of scheduled class times for reasons listed in #2 under student responsibilities to the Dean of Students to arrange a hardship withdrawal from the class.

Acceptance:

I give my approval. I have forwarded this item to \_\_\_\_\_ for implementation.

No approval is actually needed. I have forwarded this item to the following individual or office for informational purposes only:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL REVIEW NEEDED:**

I am willing to give approval if the following modification(s) are made:

Before I can approve or reject this item, I need clarification on the following:

I have forwarded this item to the following individual or office for further consideration and consultation.

Rejection:

I decline acceptance of this item for the following reason:

*Please Return this Copy to the University Senate President ~ Retain a Copy for Your Records*