Absence Policy

REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

University Senate Committee: Academic Policies Committee

Brief History of Issue - why the issue is being considered:
The current process of authorizing absences requires both the faculty member and the Dean of Students to collect absence-verification documents, after which the Dean of Students refers the student back to the faculty member. This is a duplicative process, since the faculty has the authority to approve/deny the absence in the first place.

The proposed modifications to the existing policy eliminate current duplication of services, streamline and clarify the authorized absence process, allow faculty to retain control over absences, and reduce frustrations among students and faculty regarding the current authorization process. The intent of the proposed modifications is to communicate to faculty their power in approving/denying absences.

Points Discussed by Committee:

1. Faculty already have the power to approve/deny absences that do not fall under one of the six “Authorized Absences” categories. Absences that do fall within the six categories are automatically approved. This proposal makes explicit the power of faculty to approve by themselves—without involving the Dean of Students—absences that are both within and outside the “Authorized Absences” categories and to deny—also without involving the Dean of Students—absences outside the “Authorized Absences” categories. The student does not have to submit duplicate paperwork to both the instructor and the Dean of Students.

2. The proposed changes do not change the categories for authorized absences. Instead, they just remove explicit reference to the Dean of Students and make explicit the authority of the faculty.

Pros of Recommendation:

1. The proposed changes make explicit the authority of faculty to approve or deny absences that do not fall under one of the six “Authorized Absences” categories.

2. Student frustration will be reduced by working directly with the faculty instead of having to duplicate paperwork for both the faculty member and the Dean of Students.

Cons of Recommendation:

Some faculty might prefer having the Dean of Students make the decision, even though the Faculty and Academic Staff Rules and Procedures authorizes them to make such decisions.

Technology/Human Resource Impact: None
Committee Recommendation:

Change the text on page 127 of the 2013 edition of the Faculty and Academic Staff Rules and Procedures as follows, with bold text indicating new text:

**Authorized Absences**

The determination of what constitutes an authorized absence involves a joint effort between the offices of the College Dean and the Dean of Students. Authorized absences include **Absences that fall under one of the following categories are considered authorized:** (1) participation in an approved field trip listed in the catalogue as a requirement for a course in which the student is enrolled; or (2) participation in an authorized extra-curricular activity on the regularly approved calendar of university events [such absences are reported by the Dean to each Department at least 48 hours in advance of the trip or event]; or 3) Labor Day employment; or (4) active military service; or (5) accommodation of students' religious beliefs [see Accommodation of student's religious beliefs policy]; (6) illness, injury, or emergency of such severity as to prevent the student from being able to attend class. **A student should communicate directly with the instructor when an absence falls under one of the approved six categories.**

Instructors have discretion regarding requests for absences that do not fall under one of the approved six categories.

In the case of severe illness, injury, or emergency, instructors should be kept apprised of the situation through direct communication with the student and/or via the Dean of Students Office which will assist students and communicate with instructors as needed.

When absences are authorized, instructors are obligated to work with students to determine the best way for students to resume participation in the class without a penalty. **However, if** the absences are lengthy, the student, instructor, College Dean, and Dean of Students Office should work together to determine if it will be possible for the student to successfully complete the course.
MOTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The Academic Policies Committee,

by a vote of 8 for to 0 against on March 26, 2013.

recommends that the text on page 127 of the 2013 edition of the Faculty and Academic Staff Rules and Procedures be modified as follows, with bold text indicating new text:

**Authorized Absences**

The determination of what constitutes an authorized absence involves a joint effort between the offices of the College Dean and the Dean of Students. Authorized absences include **Absences that fall under one of the following categories are considered authorized:** (1) participation in an approved field trip listed in the catalogue as a requirement for a course in which the student is enrolled; or (2) participation in an authorized extra-curricular activity on the regularly approved calendar of university events [such absences are reported by the Dean to each Department at least 48 hours in advance of the trip or event]; or 3) Labor Day employment; or (4) active military service; or (5) accommodation of students' religious beliefs [see Accommodation of student's religious beliefs policy]; (6) illness, injury, or emergency of such severity as to prevent the student from being able to attend class. **A student should communicate directly with the instructor when an absence falls under one of the approved six categories.** Instructors have discretion regarding requests for absences that do not fall under one of the approved six categories.

In the case of severe illness, injury, or emergency, instructors should be kept apprised of the situation through direct communication with the student and/or via the Dean of Students Office which will assist students and communicate with instructors as needed.

When absences are authorized, instructors are obligated to work with students to determine the best way for students to resume participation in the class without a penalty. **However, if the absences are lengthy, the student, instructor, College Dean, and Dean of Students Office should work together to determine if it will be possible for the student to successfully complete the course.**

Implementation Date: Immediate

Signed: ______Jean A. Pratt______
Chair of the Committee

Send to: University Senate Office