

10-5-2010

## Minutes, Arts & Sciences Student Life Committee Meeting, Tuesday, October 5, 2010

Arts & Sciences Student Life Committee

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## Student Life Committee Meeting

October 5, 2010

Bib Lab, Olin Library

Minutes

Members present: Bill Boles, Dan Chong, Alice Davidson, Drew Doty, Joni Eden, Karen Hater, Ashley Kistler, Tricia Lynch

Guests: Laura Berk, Cristina Figueroa, Leon Hayner, Ken Miller, Rich Morris, Pennie Parker, Cynthia Rose, Jon Sjogren, Brent Turner

### MINUTES

1. The minutes from the Sept. 9 meeting were approved.
2. Announcements:
  - a. Students are now limited to 500 total email recipients per day. Student organizations are upset, but Rollins is also trying to prevent spam from off-campus. There is a one-time meeting to discuss the issue on Oct. 20 at 4pm. Currently seeking SLC faculty/students to attend the meeting.

### OLD BUSINESS:

3. Attendance policy. (See Attachment 1.) "Religious holidays" section: Davidson suggested including language that requires the student to initiate communication with faculty about missing class. Figueroa: How will students know this policy is active? Boles: It will be in the student handbook, RCC professors will tell their students, and it will require some initial outreach. Davidson: One week reporting period may be too short for add/drop period. Hater suggested that the policy should read that students "should" report religious holidays in the first week of classes, and "must" by the end of the second week. Boles: This raises the problem of faculty who don't recognize "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Hater: New students often misunderstand absences for health or other reasons as "excused," but it depends on the professor's policy. Kistler suggested replacing "will not be penalized" for "excused." Davidson: What about professors who limit the total number of absences? Chong suggested "excused" be changed to "not be penalized if an appropriate substitute is arranged between the student and professor." Morris: The draft policy does allow any conflicts with the professor's attendance policy to be worked out at the beginning of the semester. Hater: If faculty have stricter attendance policy, at least students will know during add/drop period and can make appropriate arrangements. Kistler suggested replacing "excused" with "will not be marked absent," but similar problems remain with excused/unexcused distinction. Figueroa: The likelihood of a student being in several

categories is very small, so they're unlikely to miss multiple classes. Berk: If the professor doesn't make excused/unexcused distinction, then there's no incentive for a student to talk to the professor about religious or other absences. Should the policy be focused on making up work, or excusing absences? Hater/Kistler: Are we talking about additional excused absences after the 2-3 free ones that professors already allow? Morris: If student/professor communicate early, then professor will know how many total absences a student will require, and will not need to give "extra" absences. Chong/Kistler: This policy would still require professors to have excused/unexcused policy, so perhaps it's better to have a policy require professors to provide a substitute for missed classes. "Official college business" section: Morris: The list of athletic absences can be confusing, so it's up to the student to know which classes they will miss. Kistler: We need clarity on how we define "sports event," so Sjogren suggested to replace it with "varsity competition." Morris: Athletics has always requested the 4-6pm block of time for practice, but it's not consistently given. It's become very difficult to schedule full practices because of class conflicts. Sjogren: Not all faculty members will comply with this policy, but at least this will encourage communication early. Boles will edit the working draft to incorporate changes, so please email him any suggested amendments.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

4. Alcohol Policy / Red Watch Band. Berk: The Red Watch Band is an organization on 300 campuses nationwide to promote responsible behavior toward alcohol. The social environment on campus has deteriorated, and we need faculty/student/administrative cooperation to address this. Berk proposed requiring every organization to have 30% of its members trained on the biological effects of alcohol (an Alcohol Action Protocol), with 30% participating in any organizational event to be trained and designated drivers. Also, Berk is concerned that the new alcohol policy has created a divide on campus, as underage students are afraid of socializing with over-21 students who are drinking. The strict alcohol policy is not encouraging responsible decision-making, and is contributing to binge drinking on campus because over-21 students don't want to get caught with underage students in the room. Morris: A Carnegie study links student retention to students' sense of empowerment and bond with campus. RCC courses help that process, but the new alcohol policy is undoing that by hurting the best students, taking away their choices. Good underage students can't socialize with over-21 students. Proposes a way for responsible students to attend social functions but identify themselves as non-drinking, such as with an orange wristband, plus agreeing to an instant breathalyzer, plus agreeing to have sanctions doubled if they are caught drinking. One responsible student was written up for a violation of the new alcohol policy even though she wasn't drinking and had medical evidence as such, with the

Hearing Panel taking a zero-tolerance approach. Berk: All it takes is one bad incident for word to travel around campus. Hater: If it's a problem for Winter Park police for underage students to be in the presence of alcohol off-campus, we need a policy that's consistent between on-campus and off-campus. Berk: My experience is that if students want to drink, they go off campus as quickly as possible. Kistler: The Hearing Panels do carefully weigh personal circumstances in relation to a rule violation. Boles: Would Campus Safety or RAs even get involved if no other violations were occurring in a room? Sjogren: Yes, it's happened. Berk: We really need to address students' fear that they will be documented for an unjust violation. Hayner: Overall alcohol policy hasn't changed; if you're over 21, you can drink; if under 21, you can't. The main problem is binge drinking, and I think the concern with the new policy is an excuse. Hater: There's been a large rise in the use of prescription medication on campus, and I'm concerned that students are mixing prescription drugs with alcohol, and threatening their own or others' safety. Sjogren: Of the 38 players on my team, only 8 are choosing to live on campus. The new alcohol policy may play a part in that. Figueroa: The alcohol problem on campus is more than a policy problem, it's part of the culture of Rollins, such as how Fox Day is understood. Berk: The main problem is that we're isolating responsible students under 21, who can't associate with over-21 drinkers. Miller: There have been seven medical transports, five emergency calls, two arrests, two arsons, one sexual assault, and one off-campus death in the first six weeks. The only thing that changed with the new policy is that you can't be in the room with a 21-year old, and it set out sanctions in a series of steps. There are very few students on campus from 7-10pm, when students are at house parties, then they go to clubs after 10pm. By 2-3am, drunk students are all over campus. Alcohol is a widespread problem. The actual number of under-21 students cited for the presence of alcohol is small, and we should do everything we can to fight underage drinking. Morris: I agree with Ken, but it's still important to address the small percentage of responsible students who can set a good example for the rest. Doty: Perhaps SLC can design something useful that will educate students about alcohol, not the online or BASICS program, which are ineffective. Sjogren: Does Rollins have faculty mixers with alcohol, to provide a responsible model for drinking? Hayner: Students don't want to go to responsible drinking parties, they want to binge drink. Boles: I will consult with Dean Hater's office to see how we can move forward.

5. Meeting adjourned at 1:57.

## ATTACHMENT 1

### WORKING DRAFT FOR ISSUES OF ATTENDANCE

#### CURRENT POLICY

##### **CLASS ATTENDANCE**

It is the responsibility of the faculty to publish attendance policies for their courses in the course syllabus. If a distinction is made between "excused" absences and "unexcused" absences, it must be conveyed in the attendance policy. At the instructor's discretion, a student's grade may be lowered for failure to comply with the attendance policy. If the student feels s/he must be absent from class for any reason, it is the student's responsibility to confer with the faculty member to determine whether the absence is to be considered "excused" or "unexcused" as defined by the attendance policies. The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs will communicate when students must be absent from campus for hospitalization, family emergencies, or similar contingencies. Students will be responsible for all work missed.

##### **CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY PROPOSED (New material in bold)**

It is the responsibility of the faculty to publish attendance policies for their courses in the course syllabus. If a distinction is made between "excused" absences and "unexcused" absences, it must be conveyed in the attendance policy. At the instructor's discretion, a student's grade may be lowered for failure to comply with the attendance policy.

**Rollins College recognizes that in some cases absences are unavoidable based on religion and college business and acknowledges that exceptions must be made. However, Rollins College also recognizes the importance of communication between students and faculty members so no confusion occurs over absences of this nature. The following policies address these conflicts.**

**In regard to religious observances, during the first week of school students must communicate any conflicts with their professor (for example if a religious observance prohibits any work [papers, tests, presentations, etc.] being done). The student must confer with his/her professor as to how and when the make-up work will be done. Absences for religious holidays cleared with the professor during the first week of classes will be “excused.” Students who fail to communicate this information to their professor during the first week of classes will not be covered by this policy.**

**In regard to students acting on college business, meaning representing Rollins College in an official capacity, for example at a professional conference, in a sports event, etc., students must communicate the conflicts to their professors as soon as they are aware of them. Since students representing the college are doing so at the request of a department/office on campus, the office is responsible for providing the necessary information to the student in a timely manner so they can communicate with their professor. For example, athletic teams know their schedule before the semester begins. (Coaches should provide students with travel days the first week of school.) Absences for official college business will be “excused.” Communication after the absence has occurred will not be an acceptable excuse.**

If the student feels s/he must be absent from class for any other reason, it is the student's responsibility to confer with the faculty member to determine whether the absence is to be considered "excused" or "unexcused" as defined by the attendance policies. The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs will communicate when students must be absent from campus for hospitalization, family emergencies, or similar contingencies. Students will be responsible for all work missed.

## EXTRA INFORMATION

The following are among the more significant high holy days where “work” cannot be done, if a student has a religious holiday not in the following list then that student will have to meet with a staff member in the Office of Multicultural Affairs to discuss the holiday:

Holidays Recognized- (This year for example 2009-2010):

\*Ramadan ends with Eid al Fitr sundown, September 19 through sundown, September 20 (Islam)

Rosh Hashanah is sundown, September 18 through sundown, September 20 (Judaism)

Yom Kippur is sundown, September 27 through sundown, September 28 (Judaism)

Diwali is October 17, 2009 (Hinduism)

\*Eid al Adha is sundown, November 26 through sundown, November 27 (Islam)

The beginning of Pesach/Passover includes the evening of March 29 through the evening of March 30, 2010 (Judaism)

Good Friday is April 2, 2010 (Christianity)

\*Islamic holidays are calculated on a lunar calendar and are approximate.

Peer and Aspirant School Data Considering Ethnic-Religious Holiday Policies:

1. 7 out of 8 Peer Schools have an Ethnic-Religious Holiday policy. (Two of these peer schools are not religiously affiliated.)

2. 7 out of 10 Aspirant Schools have an Ethnic-Religious Holiday policy. Six of these aspirant schools are not religiously affiliated.) (2 of the 3 that do not have a policy listed observances that faculty are encouraged to abide by.)

Specifics on the peer and aspirant schools:

#### **Elon University- Top Peer and Aspirant school**

- [http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/religious\\_life/ReligiousHolidays.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/religious_life/ReligiousHolidays.xhtml)
- Summary- A list of recognized holidays are on the website. If your holiday is not on the list, you have to contact your Academic Dean or the Office of Religious Life. You have the first week of the semester to request which days you will have off. Students are responsible for getting with their instructors and discussing how and when assignments will be made up.
- PDF of form- [http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/students/religious\\_life/ReligiousObservanceNotificationForm.pdf](http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/students/religious_life/ReligiousObservanceNotificationForm.pdf)

#### **Southwestern- Peer School**

- Methodist affiliated
- **It is an official policy in their student handbook**

#### **Willamette University- Peer School**

- In the Fall of '09 the faculty, staff and students drafted a proposal for a Religious Holiday policy and are in the process of making it an official policy.

#### **Colorado College- Peer School**

- A campus wide email is sent out informing faculty of upcoming ethnic/religious holidays and to be sensitive to them. They have not had an issue with faculty not allowing students to make up exams.

#### **Trinity University- Peer School**

- The following policy is in the faculty handbook

#### **VII. EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM CLASS**

(Approved by the Faculty December 9, 1991. Modified by the Faculty on December 12, 2003. Modified by the Faculty on October 19, 2007.)

Students who are absent from class **in order to observe a religious holiday**, who are absent from class while participating in a University-sponsored dramatic production, or who are absent from the campus because they officially represent the University in such sponsored activities as intercollegiate athletics, debate tournaments, and tours will be excused from classes under the following circumstances:

- A student's absence from class does not excuse the student from any work missed during the absence. Students may not be penalized for excused absences; the student and instructor will devise an appropriate substitute for missed work, classes, and examinations.
- The responsibility to make up work lies solely with the student, who should discuss the missed assignments with the instructor.
- Students must discuss with the instructor as far in advance as possible the fact that they will miss classes to observe a religious holiday or to represent the University.
- In cases of students representing the University, the names of students who will miss classes must be sent to their instructors by their instructor or coach as far in advance as possible of the class to be missed.
- Note: Coaches, sponsors, and instructors should make every attempt to schedule travel, games, matches, tours, and other University-sponsored activities at times that will have the least conflict with students' class schedules

#### **Rhodes College- Peer School**

- The following email is sent out: "The Chaplain's Office encourages all faculty to be aware of major religious holidays and to accommodate students who may wish to refrain from work or attend religious services." They have never had a student report that a faculty member was insensitive to such a request.
- They do not have an official policy in the faculty handbook

#### **Furman University- Peer School**

- They currently do not have a policy in place.

#### **Villanova University- Peer School**

- *Their policy excuses students from class and the opportunity to make up the work without penalty.*

#### **Bucknell University- Aspirant School**

### **ACADEMIC POLICIES AND SCHEDULE-FALL 2009**

- As you prepare for the fall semester, it may be convenient to have a summary of a number of academic policies regarding class schedules, attendance, suggested

examination schedules, and religious holidays. Feel free to contact this office if you have questions about any of these policies.

3. Numerous religious holidays occur in the fall semester. As you begin planning your events, syllabi, and activities for the upcoming academic year, please keep in mind that religious observances and holidays are important to many of our students, and represent an important aspect of the University's diversity. Please encourage your students to see you privately for alternative accommodations if your class or assignments conflict with religious observances during these religious holidays.

Holidays during Fall Semester 2009 that have presented major conflicts in the past include:

September 18-20 (sundown Friday through sundown Sunday): **Rosh Hashanah**

September 20: **Eid ul-Fitr**: (end of the Ramadan fast)

September 27-28 (sundown Sunday until sundown Monday): **Yom Kippur**

The following two days are Holy Days of Obligation for Roman Catholics, who are required to attend Mass these days:

November 1: **All Saints Day**

December 8: **Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.**

You can access the 2008-09 "Selected Religious Holidays and Celebrations Calendar via the Chaplains and Religious Life web-site at: [www.bucknell.edu/Documents/Chaplain/Religious\\_holidays\\_09\\_10.pdf](http://www.bucknell.edu/Documents/Chaplain/Religious_holidays_09_10.pdf).

#### **Macalester College- Aspirant School**

- The faculty created a policy in 2007.

#### **Davidson College- Aspirant School**

- They don't have a specific policy but the holidays are provided on a calendar and they encourage faculty and administration to not schedule any events on high holy days.

#### **Colgate University- Aspirant School**

- No official policy but a list of observances are on the school's website.

### **Carleton College- Aspirant School**

- They start school a day a later because of Rosh Hashanah, but they do not have an official policy. Cases are solved by a professor by professor basis only when a student shows that they need to observe this holiday.

### **Bowdoin College- Aspirant School**

- Their religious policy says no students are required to take any examinations or fulfill any scheduled course requirements on major religious holidays.

### ***Colby College- Aspirant School***

- They have a religious policy. All quizzes and other examinations are not scheduled on these days and students are excused.

### **Oberlin College- Aspirant School**

- Religious holidays or the day after Thanksgiving can be observed by using Spring/Fall break days(?)

### **University of Richmond- Aspirant School**

- All religious holiday observances are excused through the Dean's office.

### **Washington and Lee University- Aspirant School**

- They do have a policy.