

Rollins College

Rollins Scholarship Online

Curriculum Committee Minutes

College of Liberal Arts Minutes and Reports

6-25-2020

Minutes, Curriculum Committee Meeting, Thursday, June 25, 2020

Curriculum Committee

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Curriculum Committee Meeting Agenda

Date: June 25, 2020

Location: WebEx room

Voting members:

- Martina Vidovic (Chair)
- Valerie Summet
- Brendaliz Santiago-Narvaez (secretary)
- Mark Heileman
- Caitlin Mohr
- Gloria Cook
- Steven Schoen
- Brian Mosby
- Sarah Parsloe
- Rochelle Elva
- Kyle Bennett

Non-voting members:

- Ashley Kistler
- XStephanie Henning
- Rob Sanders

Guests:

- Mae Fitchett
- Toni Holbrook
- Tiffany Griffin
- Steve Booker
- Amber Taylor
- Gabriel Barreneche

Agenda

1. **Approve minutes from the meeting on June 15, 2020**
2. **Martina-** Changes were added to last meeting's minutes- Rochelle- comments. Approved.
3. **New business**
 - a. Attendance Policy for religious observances – Gabriel Barreneche
 - b. *Gabriel-* Provided details from peer institutions and how they work with their attendance policy due to religious reasons. We want a policy that is reasonable to the professor but it is fair to the student. The point is to give faculty the information they need to apply this policy in a just and fair manner.
 - c. *Mark H.* I think the policy is clearer and easier to interpret and apply. I noticed a request/ form of accommodation for religious observance, is there a reason for the form or is it just an example from another institution?
 - d. *Gabriel-* is just an example
 - e. *Martina-* The way it is worded for faculty who do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, they need to clarify how these will be counted. This leaves room for these absences to be unexcused. This is not the intention that you have in mind? When reading this the faculty can say it is unexcused and we are not accommodating the students...
 - f. *Gabriel-* struggled how to word that.
 - g. *Gloria-* Commented on not being able to hear the conversation
 - h. *Steve Schoen-* A thought in relation to this is. One of the things is we have a common policy in our department. .. (connection cut *Steve S.* off, we couldn't hear him).
 - i. *Steve Schoen-* I support the spirit of the policy but I just want to come from the standpoint, that my hope is student stake ownership. They take responsibility and

manage the way they organize their religious practices. I want to support that. I want them to be thoughtful about it. If they miss 3- 4 class days because of religious holidays, it requires negotiation in the sense of maybe I have less room for the mental health day I wanted to take etc... It is hard to because we are asking them to balance all of this and it hard to say how we want them to do that.

- j. *Mark H.* Peer institutions under the Massachusetts law- guideline for implementing. Those may be helpful in addressing Steve's concerns. *Mark H.* shared a policy through chat:
 - i. If a professor permits one or more excused absences in the syllabus, students may use such excused absences for the purposes of religious observance. Students shall make up in-class, take-home, and other work in consultation with the student's professors. Religious observances within all sincerely held religious traditions and beliefs have this right within the constraints of the credit hours per class.
- 4.
- a. *Sarah P.(chat)*- Here is how Illinois Wesleyan addressed this: "When a student's absences are more than those permitted by the policy of the faculty member, it will be assumed that unless otherwise demonstrated, the student has decided not to fulfill the requirements of the course." Perhaps this applies if a professor has a total number of excused absences or a percentage... This phrasing opens it up for you to negotiate with students but cannot have unlimited absences.
 - b. *Toni(chat)*- in regards to how this compares to athletics- I was just about to ask where athletics fits in. Should this be aligned?
 - c. *Martina*- do we want to add something like this? thinking about the wording?
 - d. *Gloria C.* We are digging very deep into this, part of this is because of COVID. There so many variables. We do not want to put too much into the rules right now. We can put ourselves into issues with non-discrimination. You cannot discriminate by religion. We have to allow students their religious observance. Think about wording it simply.
 - e. *Kyle(chat)*- You shouldn't be able to get more from athletics and by being on a team than from religious observances.
 - f. *Toni (chat)*- Perhaps a focus on "reasonable accommodations."
 - g. *Gabriel*- as it is written right now, are people supportive of it? or we try this again. *We do not want to over legislate.* Clearly students have had issues with this. Some faculty say it is ok and others say it is not.
 - h. *Steve S.* Faculty have to allow students to use religious holidays. The issue is about how it counts for or against it.
 - i. *Valerie*- I like it. I like how we currently manage policies, "you come talk to me". We can work out accommodations the problem here is that the students don't feel like they can speak up. It is not the policy it is a problem, it is that the students do not feel empowered to speak if they think it is not ok. Not sure who wrote comments in Katrina or Emily. I wonder if we are putting the focus on the wrong place in policy perhaps, putting focus on students being able to say I think I'm being penalized in this class, student speaking up, for them to have someone to advocate on their behalf? Will the new policy change anything? With this policy, are students still not going to feel empowered to speak up?

- j. *Gabriel*- I agree. Didn't now know students felt, that they would be penalized. Grades are at stake. I thought they would come to me. Ambiguity in catalogue. Make it clear you will not lose points in grade for observing religious holidays. Student can feel more empowered. Help with appeals.
- k. *Steve S.*- add a phrase to clarify? The following statement in policy...
 - i. **"The instructor will not lower a student's participation or attendance grade in the course due to absences for religious observance or college sanctioned events."**
- l. *Martina*- the "distinguishing" part of the policy..... feel wording put a lot of pressure on the faculty. We need something that is reasonable for both instructor or student. I like the Massachusetts policy example....
- m. *Rochelle*- exceptions exist for absences.... Instead use "Absences from religious and college business do not constitute violations of attendance policy. The professor needs to state the case where excessive absences will make it difficult to meet the requirements of the course".
- n. *Gabriel*- Feedback Remove the piece of the "if the professor does not distinguishing between excused and unexcused".... Student need to know that they do have to make up the work.
- o. *Sarah*- I like the policy as it is, I do not want us to miss Valerie's point. We should educate professors about the policy and why it is important. How we inform professors of change in policy? Why it is important to not penalize students? Add educational language. We need some wording for students who do not feel comfortable having this conversation- for them to know where to go Ex. go to Katrina Jenkins.. just so that students have this tool on how to broach the conversation.
- p. *Rochelle*- It seems like we are saying one thing and then undoing it. If they cannot fail because of excused absences.... Then we say Class participation may be affected.....
- q. *Sarah*- take out that sentence – "The student's class participation grade in the course, though, may be affected".
- r. *Kyle*- it is the students responsibility to discuss makeup. Added to both or removed from bullet points.
 - i. *In regard to absences due to religious observances, students must communicate any attendance conflicts to their professor before the end of the official add/drop period.*
 - ii. *In regard to absences due to college business (why this here? Why not religious observances too?), students must present to their professor written evidence of an upcoming absence as soon as they are aware of the conflict. It is the student's responsibility to discuss with his/her professor how and when make-up work should be completed before missing class.*
- s. *Stephanie*- Why do we have different bullet points- if policy addresses both. Why do we speak of them differently?
- t. *Martina*- they may not know when the absences are ahead of time by the end of add/ drop?
- u. *Brenda (chat)*- Not all religious holidays are known ahead of time. We talked about this last time ...

- v. *Martina*- add religious observances to the second bullet point. We want to change college sanctioned events (instead of college business)
- w. *Brian*- Students may not have written evidence for the religious holiday observance. We need to consider this. Take out written evidence part
- x. *Toni*- “except if excessive absences make it impossible to fulfill the competencies of the course.” Instead use to “fulfill learning outcomes or learning objectives of the course” .
- y. *Changed college business to college sanctioned events throughout document.*
- z. *Brian*- If a student misses class. Use future tense, make that more aligned with the rest....
- aa. *Kyle*- “were to miss class”.....
- bb. *Rochelle*- Issue with provisions in the policy- “*making up work. Including turning it in early*” What if professor does not want them to complete the assignment early. Example exams- Exams may not be given early as to not compromise integrity. Can we leave it out?
- cc. *Toni(chat)*- Agree with Gabriel on stating early as a possibility.
- dd. *Rob Sanders*- should apply to holt as well.
- ee. *Gabriel*- it is in the catalogue. I want it to be vague.
- ff. *Steve Schoen*- faculty are likely being intransigent for religious holidays. If students need assistance communicating absences..I want students to have a recourse. I hope this is not a problem for faculty members. I’m hoping they are willing to talk and be open about this with students.
- gg. *Sarah*- change wording so that it is not adversarial. Student and Family care (SFC). I like this idea. Triage to dean.
- hh. *Kyle*- My concern is academic deans keeps it general. I like the idea SFC. They have a title. Name, to quickly find an email.
- ii. *Sarah*- is this a syllabi statement?
- jj. *Gabriel*- This would be catalogue and syllabus statement.
- kk. *Martina*- will be included in syllabus statement
- ll. *Toni*- like the idea of student and family care.
- mm. *Stephanie*- Policy applies to Holt students. It is an academic policy , like the idea that we use Academic Dean.
- nn. *Sarah*- Like both SFC and Academic dean
- oo. *Sarah*- shared the following guidelines to be used for education of the faculty on *chat*
 - i. From William and Hobart: Some of our students come from very strong religious and cultural backgrounds where no classes are held on Rosh Ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, etc. Here are concrete ways you can support your religiously observant students.
 - ii. 1. Avoid scheduling tests, major quizzes, field trips, major lectures, and large campus events on major holidays.
 - iii. 2. Include a reminder of our campus policy in your syllabus.
 - iv. 3. Note the responsibilities students have in requesting accommodation.
 - v. 4. Note the ways you anticipate providing accommodations.
 - vi. 5. Talk about the issue when you address your attendance policy at the start of the semester.

vii. 6. Encourage your students to convey to you in advance when they will miss a previously scheduled class or examination due to religious observance so that they will not be disadvantaged by their religious practice

pp. *Toni*- Handbook vs catalogue ?

qq. *Sarah*- I was suggesting we use this for educational tool.

rr. *Gabriel*- I think it should be both.

ss. *Sarah*- use an advisor update? Yes, if it gets approved.

tt. *Martina*- we should vote? Need approval for this committee

uu. Passes by “ thumbs up” confirmation via Web ex ☺.

5. Announcements

6. Adjourn

Minutes by B. Santiago