

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER

1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Handbook Revision, Student Absences from Class

MEETING DATE: December 1, 2016 (ARSA)

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Existing Board policy specifies that there shall be no official absences from any university, state college, or community college class (*Title 4, Chapter 20, Section A.3*). Based on research by system and Board staff, the policy prohibiting any official absences from class has been in Board policy without amendment since prior to 1970. This policy prohibiting official absences now conflicts with a recently adopted Board policy governing intercollegiate athletics under *Title 4, Chapter 24, Section 1.3a* (Policies Concerning NSHE Intercollegiate Athletics - Academic and Athletic Standards), which states that each institution is required to “establish policies concerning class time, assignments, tests and final examinations that are missed by student-athletes due to participation in officially sponsored intercollegiate athletic events.”

Students are expected to attend the classes in which they are enrolled. Attendance is a basic, critical factor for student success. However, students may miss class for valid, compelling reasons, including participation in athletic and academic activities sanctioned by an institution. In situations where the absences may be anticipated for sanctioned activities, it is important for the instructor and student to discuss the course requirements at the beginning of the semester to determine how to manage such absences, including whether such absences are significant or would greatly impact the student’s ability to meet student learning outcomes.

System staff, with the support of the Academic Affairs Council, recommends amending Board policy to authorize institutions to adopt policies regarding student absences.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend *Title 4, Chapter 20, Section A.3* to specify that students are expected to attend the classes in which they are enrolled, allow institutions to adopt policies governing student absences, and specify that instructors may set course attendance requirements that do not conflict with the institutional policies governing student absences (See attached policy proposal.)

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This policy revision is recommended with the support of the Academic Affairs Council to address the conflict in Board policy, as described in the Background section above, and allow institutions to adopt policies governing student absences.

5. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Revising Board policy to allow institutions to adopt policies governing student absences will allow institutions to provide clear policies and protocols on how to handle institutionally approved student absences.
- Specifying that it is the student’s responsibility for the completion of all missed classroom work related to institutionally approved absences will provide the student with clear direction on the expectation to work with faculty to make up missed work.

6. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

Faculty members should have the ability to set attendance expectations, particularly for courses where in-class discussion is a major part of the grade. Faculty need the flexibility to ensure that students meet all graded requirements without placing undue burden on the faculty member.

7. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

None

8. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amends Current Board Policy: <i>Title 4, Chapter 20, Section A.3</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #_____ Section #_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fiscal Impact: Yes_____ No <u>X</u> _____
	Explain:_____

POLICY PROPOSAL
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 20, SECTION A.3
Students – Absence from Class

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

A. STUDENTS

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Section 3. Absence from Class

1. [~~There shall be no official absences from any university, state college, or community college class. It is the personal responsibility of the student to consult with the professor regarding absence from class.~~] *Students are expected to attend the classes in which they are enrolled unless absent for institutionally approved activities or other reasons allowed under institutional policy. For institutionally approved absences, it is the student's responsibility to consult with the professor in advance and as soon as possible regarding the absence and to arrange for the completion of all missed coursework.*
2. *Institutions may adopt policies governing student absences. Such policies should take into consideration absences in courses where specialized accreditation or the coursework's nature may necessitate the student's presence.*
3. *Instructors may set course attendance requirements, which may include consequences for absences that are not institutionally approved, but such requirements must not conflict with institutional policies governing student absences.*
4. It is the policy of the NSHE to be sensitive to the religious obligations of its students. Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall, whenever possible, be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor in advance in writing, according to the policy of the institution offering the class, if the student intends to participate in a religious holiday that does not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the assignment at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the institution that could not reasonably have been avoided.

Any student, who is denied a make-up option after appropriately noticing the instructor shall have the right to appeal that decision through the normal appeal mechanism in place at that institution.

- [3]5. This policy statement, along with additional relevant institutional policies, should be included in catalogues or handbooks distributed to students and faculty.