

BOARD OF REGENTS  
BRIEFING PAPER

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

**MEETING DATE:** ARSA, March 2, 2017

**2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

At its December 2016, meeting, the Board of Regents approved a revision to address a conflict in Board policy regarding student absences under *Title 4, Chapter 20, Section A.3* (Absence from Class) and *Title 4, Chapter 24, Section 1.3a* (Policies Concerning NSHE Intercollegiate Athletics - Academic and Athletic Standards). The approved policy addressed the conflict by removing the blanket prohibition on official absences from class and allowing institutions to adopt policies governing student absences.

In its discussions regarding the proposed policy, the Board's Academic, Research and Student Affairs (ARSA) Committee expressed concerns regarding the new language setting forth certain expectations for students regarding class attendance and the ability of instructors to set course attendance requirements under certain circumstances. The ARSA Committee recommended Board approval of the policy revision in order to address the conflict in Board policy, but the Chair of the ARSA Committee asked that a revised policy proposal be presented at ARSA Committee's next meeting to address the concerns raised by the members.

**3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

Amend *Title 4, Chapter 20, Section A.3* to delete language setting forth expectations for students to attend classes and the ability of instructors to set course attendance requirements under certain circumstances. Clarify that institutions may adopt policies allowing student absences for institutionally approved activities or other reasons allowed by the institutions.

**4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

The Chair of the Board's ARSA Committee requested this proposal for the Committee's consideration at the next meeting.

**5. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

- The revised policy provides institutions the flexibility to work with their respective faculty, staff, and students to adopt a more detailed institutional policy regarding absences for approved activities or other reasons.
- While attendance is a factor that may contribute to student success, establishing an expectation of course attendance for all students under Board policy may result in unintended consequences and may not be applicable for all students in all courses. Students should have the flexibility to determine the best use of their time with regard to the courses in which they enroll.

**6. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

None have been presented.

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

None have been presented.

**8. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- X Amends Current Board Policy: *Title 4, Chapter 20, Section A.3*
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Fiscal Impact: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X
- 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

....

Section 3. Absence from Class

1. [~~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 *allowing* [governing] student absences *for institutionally approved activities or other reasons allowed by the institutions*. [~~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]2. 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.

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