11 March 2019

To: WCSU University Senate

From: Dr. Emily Stevens, Ms. Lori Mazza

Re: Proposed new University Class Absence Policy, with corresponding revision to the faculty handbook

Background/Rationale:

I've been the Faculty Athletics Rep on campus for the past several years. Each year, particularly in the spring, I get a handful of complaints/concerns from student athletes about not being able to make-up exams for athletic events. This is most common in May, as the teams are entering LEC Championships (and at that point the game schedule is hard to predict, as the teams that make the tournament often travel to the highest-ranking team, so within a few days’ notice they could be going to Southern Maine for a championship game). This is followed by NCAA Championship games if the teams make it. The student athletes train all year for these events, are an integral part of the team and represent the University, and then they are given a choice by professors (often adjuncts) to either take a final or play in the game and get a zero on the exam. This issue has now started popping up throughout the year. We had a few incidents of this in the fall semester this year. There is potential for this issue to arise across other co-curricular activities as well (music/theater events, debate, club activities/trips, etc.)

This fall I went to the NCAA hosted FARA conference, and the NCAA provided data suggesting that among all of the NCAA schools they surveyed (across D1, D2, and D3), 75% of schools have a policy about excused absences, and 2/3 of those require faculty to make accommodations for students missing class for sports events. Many other universities have a university policy that states typically 4 excused absences- medical issue, religious event, death in the family, and university sponsored events. There is actually language in the WCSU Student Handbook about informing professors when missing class for a university event-related to the expectation that students are responsible for making up work. It implies that they will be allowed to make-up the work. This language is inconsistent with a lack of policy for faculty to work with students when a situation arises that prevents them from coming to class.

That's the basic background for this proposed change. I think there are situations where students just can't make class and should be allowed to work with faculty to make-up work (within limits). Students shouldn't come to class when they are legitimately sick, for example. Faculty call out sick on occasion as well. I also believe, given the research supporting the link between
co-curricular activities and recruitment/retention, we as a University should have a stronger and more formal support process in place for student involvement in co-curriculurs. There seem to be class-related barriers against students being involved across campus. A policy encouraging faculty to work with students in specific situations to make-up work (within limits) would provide that support.

Current Policy in Faculty Handbook (p. 160)

Guidelines on Classes Missed Because of University Sponsored Events

Each semester students and professors must deal with the inevitable conflict between class and university-sponsored co-curricular activities. As the University grows and the student body becomes more diverse, it is clear that student activities outside the classroom will continue to increase. It is the purpose of these guidelines to spell out the relationship between the two activities, and to suggest a way of accommodating any potential conflict between the two.

At present, no written guidelines exist on the correct procedure for handling missed classes by a student as a result of participation in a university-sponsored event. A suggested protocol is needed to inform all members of the university community of this rights and expectations in this area, and to allow accommodation of the needs of all without destructive conflict. Students recognize that participation in co-curricular activities benefits the students themselves and the university as well. Opportunities for growth outside the classroom are important, but such participation does not take precedence over the academic mission of the school, and it cannot excuse students from required classroom work. It is the responsibility of all students to recognize that meeting the requirements of all classes is their first priority.

It is the students’ responsibility to communicate with their professors before a conflict occurs, if possible to insure that all classroom work is properly made up. It is also the students’ responsibility to make up all required work as well as to become familiar with the material presented in the class that was missed. By definition university-sponsored events are legitimate, co-curricular events which are scheduled through a university department or entity, with adequate notice to all parties. For example, participation in a sports contest or a museum trip for the university would be such an event, but attending a practice session would not. It is requested that faculty members understand the depth of the students’ commitment, allow reasonable accommodation of student activities, and permit work missed because of legitimate university events to be made up.

Form: Missed Classes Because of University Sponsored Events

Senate approval: (R-04-04-02) 10/20/04
Administrative approval: 12/22/04

(Missed Classes Forms [Because of University Sponsored Events] are available in all of the offices of the Academic Deans and the Dean of Student’s Office)
Missed Classes Because of University Sponsored Events

(Complete a separate form for each class missed)

Name of Student: __________________________________________________________________________
Course Title: ______________________________________  Course Number: __________________
Date of Absence: _________________________ ______________________________________________
Reason for Absence* (be specific):
__________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
Assignments/Missed Work: __________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
Date Work Will Be Completed __________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Student Signature: ____________________________ Date:__________/__________/______
Event Advisor or Coach Signature: ____________________________ Date:__________/__________/______
* For athletic absences attach a copy of the athletic schedule.
White Copy: 
Faculty Member
Yellow Copy: Event advisor or Coach
Pink Copy: Student
Senate approved: (04-04-02) 10/20/04
Administrative approval: 12/22/04
WCSU Faculty
Proposed Policy for Faculty Handbook

University Class Absence Policy
Faculty are encouraged to make accommodations for a student who will miss class for one of five circumstances.

1. Documented medical absence
2. Documented family emergency
3. Observance of a documented religious holiday
4. Participation in a University Sponsored Event*
5. Other (e.g., jury duty)

The type of accommodations made and the limits of those accommodations are to be determined by the faculty member. Limits on the ability to accommodate a missed class should be outlined in the course syllabus.

Student Handbook Language:

It is the responsibility of all students to recognize that meeting the requirements of all classes is their first priority. It is the student’s responsibility to communicate with their professors before a conflict occurs, if possible, to ensure that all classroom work is properly completed per the terms established with the professor. It is also the student’s responsibility to make up all required work as well as to become familiar with the material presented in the class that was missed.

*By definition, university-sponsored events are legitimate, co-curricular events that are scheduled through a university department or entity, with adequate notice to all parties. For example, participation in a sports contest or a museum trip for the university would be such an event, but attending a practice session would not. It is requested that faculty members understand the depth of the students’ commitment, allow reasonable accommodation of student activities and permit work missed because of legitimate university events to be made up.
**Proposed New Form for Faculty Handbook**

**Missed Classes Because of University Sponsored Events**

(Complete a separate form for each class missed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Absence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for absence (be specific)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments/Missed Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date work will be completed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Signature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the advisor/mentor/coach/faculty member supporting this event, I affirm that the student will be involved in the activities specified on the date listed above.

| Event Advisor/Coach Signature |   |

Faculty Response (select one of the options below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The date in question does not have an assignment due. The student is responsible for keeping up with readings and gathering notes on our discussions from another student.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I agree with the proposed schedule to complete the required work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not accept make-up work as per my syllabus. I have informed the student of the potential impact on their overall course grade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Faculty Signature |   |