Southeastern Louisiana University
Campus Correspondence

DATE: July 25, 2006

TO: Deans and Department Heads

FROM: John L. Crain, Provost
and Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Attendance Policy

We are seeing an increasing number of instances where there are disputes between students and faculty regarding absences from classes and whether or not such absences should be considered excused, along with the resulting implication for grades, etc.

The Dean’s Council has recommended adoption of the attached draft policy on class attendance, and I concur. This draft will be shared with the Faculty Senate and Council of Department Heads, and after their review and recommendation, adoption will be considered by the Academic Affairs Council. If adopted, the policy would replace the existing policy on attendance which appears in the Faculty Handbook and University Catalogue.

I strongly encourage departments and faculty to utilize the guidelines contained in the proposed policy, particularly as it relates to student absences from class. As indicated previously, there is an increased occurrence of faculty including class attendance in determining students’ grades, and precluding students from makeup work without due consideration of reasons for the absences.

While it is entirely defensible for faculty to base students’ grades partly on their participation in activities and assignments that require their presence in class (indeed grades in some labs and practica courses are based largely on such activities), determination of a component of a course grade based solely on student attendance is problematic. Furthermore, refusal to provide opportunities for missed assignments to be resolved where it is otherwise feasible, particularly when the absence results from a valid reason (e.g., sickness), is difficult to defend.

Finally, if a student is able to otherwise earn a high grade in a course, only to receive a low or failing grade due to excessive absences, one must question the rigor of the course objectives as well as the efficacy and value of class activities.

I would appreciate your sharing these materials with your faculty. Please let me know if there are any questions.

Xc: Ms. Peggy Gonzales-Perez, President, Faculty Senate
Dr. Lucia Harrison, Chair, Council of Department heads
Class Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend regularly and punctually all classes in which they are enrolled. Because regular and punctual class attendance is typically associated with higher course grades, it is in students’ best interest to attend all of their classes.

Each instructor shall keep for a period of 5 years an attendance record for each class. These records are subject to inspection by appropriate college or university officials and on a need to know basis by state, federal, and/or legal entities. Faculty shall have their attendance policies clearly delineated on their course syllabus.

Students with a valid reason for missing class are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and discussing with the class instructor the feasibility of making up any missed exams and/or assignments. The class instructor will determine the validity of a student’s reason for an absence and will work with students who have an excused absence. Please note, however, that it is not always possible to make up some in-class assignments, particularly for laboratory classes and practica. Also please note that excessive absences, even though they might be excused, will impact the student’s ability to meet the learning objectives of the course and, in some classes, can impact other students.

Valid reasons for absences include:

1. Personal illness or injury
2. Illness of a family member for whose welfare the student is responsible (e.g., dependant child, elderly or seriously ill parent)
3. Death of an immediate family member
4. Emergency (e.g., automobile accident, serious family emergency)
5. Court-imposed legal obligations (subpoenas, jury duty)
6. Military obligations
7. Serious weather conditions
8. Religious holidays
9. Authorized trips from the University or special duties or activities at the University (may be excused by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs only; see the following section on "Southeastern Attendance Procedures")

The student is responsible for providing documentation of the reason for the absence no later than 2 class periods following the absence. Absences due to valid, documented reasons will be considered excused. An instructor may also deem an absence valid and excused for circumstances beyond the control of the student that are not included in the above list. If the instructor and student disagree over the validity of a reason for an absence, the student may appeal to the department head of the course within 5 working days of the instructor’s decision. If the department head and student disagree, the student may appeal to the
academic dean of the course within 5 working days of the department head's decision. The dean's decision is final.

If a student misses 10% or more sessions of any class due to unexcused absences prior to the published withdrawal date, the instructor may withdraw the student with a grade of "W."

Specific policies regarding (but not restricted to) the makeup of missed exams and/or assignments, submission of excuses for absences, procedures for appealing unexcused absences, and the manner in which attendance and participation in class activities impact course performance is to be established by individual departments, approved by the academic dean, and explicitly defined and expressed in instructors' syllabi or course information sheets.