

Date: January 21, 2009

To: Martin Sancho-Madriz
Chair, Academic Senate

Copy: Provost
Cabinet
Deans
AVP's

From: _____
J. Michael Ortiz, Ph.D.
President

Subject: AS-2291-089/AA Update of University Course Syllabus Policy

I am pleased to support the Academic Senate's recommendation. The new text for the catalog will clarify for students their responsibility to attend classes and to notify instructors about absences. I ask that Claudia Pinter-Lucke, Undergraduate Studies, ensure that this text is included in the next catalog.

I am sure that new and experienced instructors will find the information about the required and recommended items for the syllabus to be very helpful. I direct Gary Hamilton of Faculty Affairs to update the University Manual, Claudia Pinter-Lucke to find an appropriate place for the advice about transmittal of grades on the BroncoCompass website, and Kathy Street to post online an annual calendar of religious holidays so that the information is easily accessible to students and instructors.

Recommendation:

After weighing these issues the Academic Senate proposes the following:

1. On page 77 of the 2007 - 2009 University Catalog under Academic Policies, Scholastic Requirements the first paragraph now reads:

Each student is expected to meet the academic standards required by the state, the university and by the instructors. Every student is expected to attend classes regularly. The instructor of a class may excuse absences from the class.

This paragraph should be replaced by:

Each student is expected to meet the academic standards required by the state, the university and by the instructor of a course. While class attendance is not recorded officially by the University, students are expected to attend all class meetings. Instructors' standards, particularly as they impact grades, must be explained in the syllabus made available in each class near the beginning of the quarter. It is the students' responsibility to make themselves aware of each faculty member's guidelines by carefully reading the syllabus.

It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor in advance of any planned absence and to request arrangements to make up academic work that is missed for any reason. The instructor is the judge of the validity of the reasons for absence and of what arrangements, if any, are to be provided for the student to make up class work. Instructors may require students to provide documentation for excused absences. It must be recognized that not all learning activities and exercises related to a class can be replicated.

2. The following rules, essentially identical to current rules about class syllabi, should be inserted in section 302.4.1 of the University Manual:

A syllabus should be prepared for each class section an instructor teaches. The syllabus should be distributed to students either on paper or electronically before the second week of the quarter. At a minimum a syllabus should contain these items:

1. The instructor's name, office location, phone number, and e-mail address;
2. The instructor's Office Hour schedule;
3. A brief statement of course objectives (this might be limited to saying a course 'covers chapters one through six of the text');
4. Titles(s) of required and recommended text(s);
5. Course prerequisites and co-requisites;
6. A tentative schedule of assignments and exams;
7. An explanation of the class grading system;
8. Examination methods (objective, essay, Scantron, other);
9. A policy statement regarding the make-up of assignments and exams (this could be that there will be no make-ups);
10. A policy statement concerning attendance, particularly as it affects the grade (this could be that a student is responsible for all material and activities covered in a class period whether the student chooses to attend or not);
11. The instructor's information on academic dishonesty as it applies to the class.

Instructors are free to elaborate on or add to this list as they deem appropriate for their class.

3. The following should also be included in the University manual in four new sections (302.4.2 through 302.4.5):

302.4.2 The following policies are not required, but should be considered for inclusion, in syllabi.

1. Statements about campus Disability Resource Center services, the campus address, the telephone number, and/or the URL, and further statements that encourage students who qualify to register with the DRC.
2. Information about final exam schedules.
3. Course-specific Student Learning Outcomes.
4. A reference to campus resources that students can access if they are having difficulties.

302.4.3 When enforcing policies related to absences and make-up work, instructors may take the following considerations into account:

1. Federal, State, and Municipal laws can place duties on citizens that may not be avoided. Students may be asked to serve in the National Guard, to perform on juries or grand juries, or to participate in emergency response obligations.
2. Many students have family responsibilities.
3. Students' may have chronic or unexpected medical problems.
4. The university generally encourages co-curricular activities such as the Model United Nations, athletic activities, theatrical and musical performances, etc., in recognition of the educational value of these activities.

302.4.4 The California State Education Code, as law, supersedes all campus policies. In particular, section 89320 states:

The Trustees of the California State University shall require each state university, in administering any test or examination, to permit any student who is eligible to undergo the test or examination to do so, without penalty, at a time when that activity would not violate the student's religious creed. This requirement shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship which could not reasonably have been avoided. In any court proceeding in which the existence of an undue hardship which

could not reasonably have been avoided is an issue, the burden of proof shall be upon the institution.

302.4.5 Faculty are reminded that, while email is the official way to communicate with students, it is a violation of federal law to transmit grade information by email even if the student requests it. It is recommended that faculty use a Course Management System page to transmit grades instead of email.

4. The Division of Student Affairs should keep an annual calendar of religious holidays with notations about the importance of observing the holiday. This information should be available to faculty making decisions on student requests for rescheduling exams. Examples of this type of calendar from other academic institutions can be found at:
<http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/religiousholidays/calendar.htm>