

Proposal for Revising the Student Attendance Policy

In support of student success and well-being, the Student Success Steering Committee, a cross-campus leadership team with representatives from all academic colleges, the Office of Student Success, the Office of the Provost, the Honors College, Global Campus, and the Division of Student Affairs, propose a revision to the current attendance policy to provide students with guidance for managing short-term absences. This change aligns with our institutional commitment to fostering a productive learning environment focused on student well-being and student success, while maintaining the integrity and rigor of our academic curriculum.

Rationale for Change:

1. Barriers to Documentation

Under the current policy, instructors can require students to produce documentation of an illness to receive an excused absence. The University Health Center does not provide students with documentation to excuse absences due to HIPPA concerns and has seen an increased number of students requesting a doctor's appointment to receive an excuse, but where the underlying illness did not require a visit with a doctor. This unnecessarily impedes students whose medical condition requires a doctor's appointment from getting one and is inefficient use of limited medical resources.

Additionally, obtaining medical documentation from a medical provider can be costly, time-consuming, and logistically challenging for students, especially those without easy access to healthcare, those uninsured, or those managing financial constraints. Requiring such documentation for brief absences may inadvertently penalize students who are acting responsibly by staying home when they are unwell and unable to participate in academic activities.

2. Proposed Policy Adjustment

We recommend that instructors refrain from requesting documentation unless the student is experiencing significant absences that are detrimental to the student's progress in the course. This threshold balances the need for academic accountability with the recognition that short-term health issues are a normal part of life.

3. Safeguards Against Misuse

This policy change allows students to continue to advance in their academic success while also recognizing the importance of maintaining academic standards and the importance of class attendance in the student's ability to succeed in courses. Instructors have always had the ability and are encouraged to report concerns about fraudulent claims or patterns of abuse to the Office of Academic Initiatives and Integrity.

By adopting this revised approach, we affirm our trust in students' integrity, reduce unnecessary burdens, and create a more supportive and wellness focused academic environment.