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Is there an university policy or Board of Regents policy on excused absences, particularly for athletes in sanctioned/approved events?

Submitted by Lanell VanLandingham UAC Admin. Asst. 12/03/2007

Question:

The information request pertains to the policy of excused absences as it relates to students who represent our university in sanctioned/approved off campus events and activities where missing classes due to those sanctioned/approved events and activities negatively influence the students' course evaluations and ultimately, final course grades. The information request follows: Is there an university policy or Board of Regents policy on excused absences, particularly for athletes in sanctioned/approved events? The request for information is respectfully submitted. "Dr. Gerald (Jerry) Ledlow, Chair, University Athletics Committee (for the committee in unanimous passed motion for information)."

Rationale:

In order to foster fairness for students, faculty representatives/sponsors, organization directors, athletic and performance coaches, and others engaged in sanctioned and approved student off-campus activities within the modern university community, a review of the excused absence policy is requested.

Response:
From the SEC 12-4-2007: "According to Provost Bleicken, there is no University policy re: excusing absences for school-related activities. Attendance policies are at the discretion of individual professors, and this includes whether or not they will excuse absences for particular reasons. A Request for Information on this same general topic came forward to the Senate on 3-2-06; a motion on the same general topic came to the Senate on 4-2-06 and was defeated. A historical note from SEC Chair Marc Cyr: Lo these many (maybe 15?) years ago, I served as a faculty (not senatorial) member on an ad-hoc committee -- I think David Alley chaired it, and I seem to remember that Jill Lockwood was a member -- reviewing GSU's attendance policies. As I recall, this committee was formed in response to an SGA initiative to abolish all direct penalties for absences, that is, any penalties imposed on students for simply missing class(es); penalties for missing tests or other required assignments were not at issue (that would be a question of individual negotiation between student and professor). The basic SGA argument was that our students are adults and should have the right to decide whether some other activity took precedence over attending class; if their academic performance suffered as a result, that was their responsibility. The basic opposition to this was that for a variety of reasons, professors are best positioned to determine what level of attendance is necessary for the pedagogical goals of any particular class to be met; there were also the issues of the logistical difficulty/impossibility of piecemeal set-ups for certain kinds of labs, and the consequent concern for physical safety.