

FINAL POLICY RECOMMENDATION REGARDING CLASS ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

Background:

The College established a committee to examine loss and transition issues among students. The committee looked at College policies that might impact students in these circumstances. Their examination produced two main conclusions: 1) that the College has two policies, one on attendance and one on absence, which, although not mutually exclusive, might best be consolidated into a single policy; and 2) that only limited types of loss were acknowledged as justification for student absence.

Charge:

The Steering Committee asked that CAP consider both the Loss and Transition Committee's prologue and suggested policy. In doing so, CAP should consider:

- 1) Whether there should be two separate policies addressing attendance and absence.
- 2) Whether changes addressing types of loss should be revised in college policy/ies.
- 3) Given that current policies on attendance (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/attendance.html>) and absence (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/absence.html>) are at least 15 years old, which, if any, additional changes are needed.

CAP should consider the revisions to current policy suggested by the Loss and Transition only as a starting point and should not limit itself to these recommendations as it goes forward with its discussion and review.

Testimony:

During the Fall 2012 semester a subcommittee of CAP prepared a preliminary recommendation which was reviewed and accepted by the full CAP committee in February 2013. The preliminary recommendation carefully considered and utilized information from the Loss and Transition group. Public testimony was gathered at an open forum jointly sponsored by CAP and Faculty Senate. This was held on April 10, 2013. The preliminary recommendation was modified based on the testimony heard. SGA also gave testimony on the preliminary recommendation in April 2013. SGA had no suggestions or changes. A final recommendation was drafted by the CAP subcommittee in September 2013 and accepted by the full CAP committee in October 2013.

Recommendation:

- 1) CAP recommends that all members of TCNJ staff and faculty should be educated about the attendance and absence policy. This should include an orientation for new faculty and staff on the procedures outlined in the policy specifically in regard to reporting of extended absences.
- 2) CAP recommends the following policy on class attendance and absence.

Class Attendance Policy

Students are expected to check the College calendar, and plan their course schedules and vacations so as to enroll only in those classes that they can expect to attend on a regular basis. Students are expected to participate in each of their courses through regular attendance at lecture and laboratory sessions, complete assignments as scheduled, and to avoid outside conflicts. It is further expected that every student will be present, on time, and prepared to participate when scheduled class sessions begin.

At the first class meeting of a semester, instructors are expected to distribute in writing the attendance policies which apply to their courses. While attendance itself is not used as a criterion for academic evaluations, grading is frequently based on participation in class discussion, laboratory work, performance, studio practice, field experience, or other activities which may take place during class sessions. If these areas for evaluation make class attendance essential, the student may be penalized for failure to perform satisfactorily in the required activities.

In all circumstances, it remains the student's responsibility to initiate discussion about absence and arrangements for making up any missed work with each instructor.

Class Absence Policy

Absences from class are handled between students and instructors. The instructor may require documentation to substantiate the reason for the absence.

- **For Extended Absence**

Extended absence is defined as the number of consecutive class sessions missed that will severely impede the student's successful completion of the course. This number depends on a number of factors such as the course content and schedule, number of the hours in a session, whether the course is taken in a regular semester, winter term, Maymester, blended learning, etc. *The student should consult with the instructor to clarify this for the specific course.*

Extended absence from classes is to be reported by the student, or his/her responsible designee (including College officials), to the **Dean of Students**. As a courtesy to the student, the Dean of Students office will then notify 1) the student's instructors, 2) the student's academic advisor(s), and 3) the Dean's office of the student's school. Such notification will **not** be provided in cases where the absence is reported to the Dean of Students **after** the student has returned to class. If the student desires, the reason for the absence may be included in the notification. By forwarding such information, the Dean of Students is **not serving to authenticate any reason** for absence, nor is it serving to excuse any absence.

A student who has had an extended absence must be in contact with faculty as soon as possible, but no later than returning to campus. The Dean of Students office may, when asked by faculty, verify a student's absence. In cases of lengthy absence, make-up

opportunities may not be feasible. The student must consult with the course instructor and his/her academic advisor to discuss other options such as withdrawal from the course, an incomplete grade, or a leave of absence within the parameters of existing College policies on these topics.

Faculty may consult with the Office of the Dean of Students and/or with a Dean's office for guidance in how to make reasonable accommodations for a student, if such accommodations are possible. If student absence is caused by: illness, injury, bereavement, or similarly compelling personal reasons, it is recommended that the instructor provide fair and reasonable make-up opportunities when possible. However, it is recognized that in some courses and situations it may not be possible for a student to resume taking a course.

- **For Absence Due to Religious Observance**

Students are expected to notify their instructors of anticipated absence for religious observance well in advance of the date on which any absence will occur. As with other substantiated reasons for absence, and in consideration of the needs of our diverse campus community, it is recommended that the instructor provide a fair and reasonable opportunity for work to be made up by the student, whenever possible. The Office of Academic Affairs will notify the faculty of the dates of religious holidays on which large numbers of students are likely to be absent and are, therefore, unsuitable for the scheduling of examinations.

- **For Absence Due to Official College Events**

Students who are absent due to participation in a field trip, conference, or other official College event should communicate with their instructors about the absence well in advance. Instructors may require documentation to verify the reason for an absence. The Office of Academic Affairs will verify, upon request, the dates of and participation in such college functions.

- **For Absence Due to Participation in NCAA-Sanctioned Intercollegiate Sports**

TCNJ encourages student athletic participation as well as academic achievement. Therefore, competition that is scheduled by local TCNJ officials should be scheduled at a time that is likely to cause minimal academic disruption. Contests that are scheduled by outside bodies such as NJAC or the NCAA are sometimes scheduled at inconvenient times and may be more disruptive. All athletic contests should be treated like an absence for an official college event. The student should communicate with the faculty member well in advance of the event and make arrangements to make up missed work. In the event that a scheduled contest conflicts with an exam (including a scheduled midterm or final), the student should be allowed a reasonable opportunity to make up the exam.

It is a violation of NCAA rules to miss class for an athletic practice. Therefore, such absences are not excused (unless the practice takes place during travel to take part in an athletic contest). Coaches are expected to schedule practices at times that are not likely to conflict with classes. Coaches are also expected to excuse without penalty any student who misses practice because of a scheduled class meeting. If there are consistent conflicts

between class and practice times and the coach, in consultation with the athletic director, cannot change practice times or excuse the student from practice, the student must either withdraw from the class or leave the team. Any conflict between the coach and the student over course and practice times should be resolved by appeal to the athletic director. The Vice President for Student Affairs serves as the final appeal for such conflicts.

In the event that any NCAA policy regarding absences changes, this policy will change accordingly to remain compliant with NCAA regulations.