

**Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate**  
**Resolution on Absence Policies for Professional Interviews**  
**Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> 2009**

On November 19, 2008, the Student Senate passed a resolution asking the Faculty Senate to consider absence policies for professional interviews (Appendix A). In response, the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate conducted a survey to assess the current policies in individual Departments. The majority of responses indicated that Departments did not have an official policy, and preferred to let each faculty member set the policy for his or her own course. (Summary of survey, Appendix B.)

Based on the results of the survey and further discussion among the Committee and Student Senate representatives, the resolution below was proposed. The intention of the resolution is to improve the information students receive of existing policies while maintaining faculty flexibility.

**Resolved:**

The Faculty Senate strongly encourages all faculty to address specifically a policy for absences for professional interviews in their course syllabi. Professional interviews may include those for internships, graduate and professional schools, and post-graduate employment.

Recognizing the importance of regular class attendance and of course-appropriate absence policies, the inclusion of this information in a syllabus would make students aware of the specific policy at the beginning of a semester. The Senate believes this action would help create a mutually professional environment where both faculty and students communicate effectively.

## **Appendix A: Student Senate Resolution**

**Resolution SS0809-17**

**November 19, 2008**

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AFFAIRS  
MR. BRELLENTHIN, CHAIRMAN

### **A RESOLUTION ADDRESSING ABSENCES FOR INTERVIEWS**

Whereas, For students at this university, the purpose of undergraduate education is not only to become more well-rounded people, but also to prepare for their chosen vocations;

Whereas, Internships for students between their junior and senior years are increasingly more important for pursuing many vocations;

Whereas, As the market becomes more competitive, there is a greater need for each student to schedule interviews for jobs, internships, graduate and professional school, and other opportunities whenever possible, including during class time;

Whereas, Flexible interview times will allow students to pursue more freely the most desirable opportunities;

Whereas, There is a need for understanding and communication between faculty and students on the issue of absences for interviews;

Whereas, Flexible interview times are only possible through cooperation between students and faculty;

Whereas, An occasional absence from class for the purpose of attending an interview is compatible with the mission of the university; and

Whereas, Student Government hopes to address student concerns by raising awareness of the issue to faculty rather than requesting a change be made to official university policy; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That Student Senate requests that Faculty Senate discuss the issue of absences from class for the purpose of attending interviews;

*Resolved*, That Faculty Senate be made aware that Student Senate requests appropriate flexibility on the part of professors when students request an absence to attend interviews;

*Resolved*, That Faculty Senate should inform Student Senate of the opinions of the faculty on this issue;

*Resolved*, That Student Senate hopes that, through entering dialogue with Faculty Senate, students and faculty members can reach a mutually agreeable way for faculty members to accommodate student needs without feeling as though students are abusing their privilege; and

*Resolved*, That Student Government will continue to investigate how absences for interviews are addressed by faculty members, with further action possible if necessary.

## **Appendix B: Summary of Student Affairs Committee Survey on Excused Absence Policy**

### **Total Responses: 22**

Arts and Letters – 9

Science – 3

Business – 5

Law School – 1

Engineering – 3

ROTC - 1

### **Does your Department consider an absence for a professional interview (internship, job, graduate or medical school, etc.) an official excused absence?**

The majority did not consider it an “official” absence or did not have a policy either way.

### **Does your Department have an official policy for absences for professional interviews? Or a common “unofficial” practice?**

1 department (Marketing) has a policy for seniors only. It does not cover internships. All other did not have an official policy. Several comments stated that a standardized approach was NOT preferred.

### **Is there a limit on the number of absences per semester or class?**

Individual faculty policy, but often listed as 2-3 unexcused. Not exactly clear whether an absence for an interview would count against this number, but in some Departments that seems to be the case.

### **Is there a different policy/practice for missing a class vs. an exam?**

Mixed responses. A few noted that students could not under any circumstance be excused from an exam for an interview.

### **Is official documentation of the interview required?**

Only for official excused absences in Marketing. Some comments that if it were to be “official”, then documentation would be required.

### **Is permission handled centrally (Dean’s office, etc.) or directly with each faculty member?**

Individual faculty member, except for Marketing.

### **General comments or questions for the Student Affairs Committee:**

- The flexibility in granting absences is usually inversely proportional to the class size. For large service courses, typically only the officially accepted absences are allowed. In smaller classes, more flexibility is common.

- The most consistent point is that it all depends on student's behavior. A student who has a record of multiple absences will get no sympathy when it comes to an interview. On the other hand when students have not had prior absences or have been good about communicating with the professor about conflicts, addressing them before the absence rather than after, then the professor has been generous with interviews. The overriding concern is the fact that if a student is not in class, they cannot learn the material.