

Resolution Adopted by Faculty Senate on November 13, 2008

Be it resolved, the faculty senate continues to support the quarterly statement distributed to faculty from the Vice President's office regarding religious observance and the faculty senate does not endorse the draft Religious Observance Policy dated 10-08-08.

Faculty Senate Human Relations Committee response to Draft Religious Observance Policy as sent to Mitchel Livingston, Vice President, Student Affairs and Services, and Faculty Senators on November 13, 2008

The Human Relations committee reviewed and discussed the draft Religious Observance policy. There were many concerns regarding the language of the document and the burden that it may potentially put on faculty. As such the Human Relations Committee is supportive of the principles of "respect for cultural and ideological diversity (as it) extends to the variety of religious practices in our community." However, the committee does not endorse the policy. The committee is supportive of the quarterly statement that is sent to faculty. The initial main points of concern regarding the draft policy are listed below.

- Due to the extensive number of religious groups represented at the university, the statement "potential conflicts with religious holidays" can never be inclusive of all types of religions that a student may practice at UC currently or that a future student may practice. This would make it difficult if not impossible to avoid all possible religious holidays. Many religious calendars are not established well in advance of the date and holidays that occur early in the quarter could not be appropriately addressed within the two week timeframe.
- It is important that the language of the document be consistent with that used to excuse student absences for other reasons such as athletics, military leave, illness and death of a family member, etc. others in order to assure that all excusable student absences are treated in an equitable manner.
- The draft language is so specific that it potentially infringes on the right of faculty to set grading policies and standards. Specifically, the lack of a limit for the amount of work that can be missed by students is of concern. The policy potentially limits the use of active learning strategies that require "in class" participation and/or group work as a component of the grade and the utilization and enforcement of attendance policies which may be used to develop professional skills. In other words, not all course objectives can be met through make-up work.

The quarterly statement sent to faculty is copied below.

TO: All UC Faculty
FROM: Anthony J. Perzigian
Mitchel D. Livingston

We write on behalf of our students to request your sensitivity for religious holidays that they may celebrate and that may cause them to miss class.

Since we do not close the university for all such holidays, students missing class for such reasons should make arrangements in advance and can, of course, be required to complete any missed assignments or coursework.

Our student population continues to grow, and we are also pleased by the increasing diversity of our community. We celebrate the uniqueness and individuality of each member of that community and recognize the ways in which it can be a powerful resource within our classrooms. To that end, we ask for your understanding of the unique needs that then arise for our students, such as through their observance of religious beliefs.

We thank you in advance for the appropriate accommodations that you are able to make in your classes.