

REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

Ad Hoc Caregiving Taskforce, whose active membership includes:

Silviana Amethyst, Mathematics; Jasmine Case, Academic Affairs; Peter Hart-Brinson, Sociology; Melissa Kozma, Barron campus; Katie Larson, CETL; Jill Markgraf, Libraries; Robin Miller, Libraries; Sara Potter, Barron; Teresa Sanislo, History; Jodi Thesing-Ritter, EDISA

Brief History of Issue - why the issue is being considered:

The pandemic called attention to challenges faced by enrolled UW-Eau Claire students who are also caregivers. While these challenges were always present, they were not widely acknowledged in university policies. To address this gap, a group of faculty, academic staff, and university staff have come together to propose two additions to the list of Authorized Absences included under "Class Attendance and Authorized Absence Policies" (FASRP Article 6, section B).

Points Discussed by Committee:

A student with caregiving responsibilities may be absent for reasons like:

- A parent or guardian must take a person under their care to a medical appointment;
- A school, childcare facility, or other care aid becomes unavailable due to weather, a health emergency, or other unexpected event; or
- Someone in the household - parent, sibling, partner, roommate - needs emergency care, and the student must assist.

Caregiving obligations are diverse and may include, but are not limited to:

- Students who reside in intergenerational households often have regular and emergency caregiving responsibilities.
- Emergency care for a member of their household.
- Mourning or participating in funeral rites.

The seven authorized absences currently listed in the FASRP do not acknowledge the experience of caregiving.

The proposed additions to the list of authorized absences do not grant caregiving students special privileges. All authorized absences have reasonable limits, as acknowledged in the FASRP. We expect similar limitations would be applied to the caregiving authorized absence. Furthermore, procedures exist to allow students to take an Incomplete in a course, or similar action, in cases of prolonged absences.

Further reading

Armstrong-Carter, E., Panter, A.T., Hutson, B. *et al.* (2022). A university-wide survey of caregiving students in the US: Individual differences and associations with emotional and academic adjustment. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9, 300.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01288-0>

Soria, K. M., McAndrew, M.; Horgos, B. *et al.* (2020). Undergraduate student caregivers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic: Financial hardships, food and housing insecurity,

mental health, and academic obstacles. SERU Consortium, University of California - Berkeley and University of Minnesota. <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/216248>

The challenges of student caregivers: How higher ed can better support those caring for adults. (2021, June 10). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

<https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/ChallengesofStudentCaregivers.pdf>

Pros of Recommendation:

- Authorized absence language that explicitly acknowledges care responsibilities will foster greater inclusion for students who are caregivers.
- Recruitment and retention of a diverse student body begins with adopting policies that students understand and that instructors can apply consistently.
- The proposed language supports the university's mission statement, our collective work towards equity, diversity, and inclusion, and our commitment to helping students remain enrolled. Seeing the whole person – acknowledging students as people with relationships to others – and accommodating caregiving needs of students is part of our duty and our obligation.

Cons of Recommendation:

Changing the policy will require minor adjustments to syllabi and other official documents.

Technology/Human Resource/Workload Impact:

Instructors in all colleges, college deans, and the Dean of Students Office may need to adjust existing procedural documents and syllabi language to reflect additions to the list of authorized absences.

Committee Recommendation:

MOTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The Ad Hoc Caregiving Taskforce on March 7, 2023

Recommends:

Revision of the Authorized Absence Policies stated in FASRP Article 6, section B, starting on page 133, to be published in the July 2023 FASRP:

Class Attendance and Authorized Absence Policies (US 11/09)

Instructor's Responsibility University Senate action provides as follows: Instructors will maintain student attendance records. The instructor will keep such records and student course-related work for reference during the session and for at least one year following the end of the session. (US 5/10)

At the beginning of each course, the instructor must provide students in class a written copy of his/her policy specifying the role of attendance in the instructor's method for evaluation of student achievement. A copy of the statement must also be given to the instructor's immediate supervisor. (FS 4/86)

In the event a student is found by an instructor to be absent without explanation for an extended period, usually in excess of one week, this absence is to be reported directly to the Dean of Students Office. The absentees will be contacted immediately in an effort to determine the cause(s) of the absence. The instructor will be informed of their findings (FS 5/71; 11/79; US 10/09).

In matters of student absence, the Dean of Students Office is available to assist instructors where there is concern regarding the excessive absence of a student. The Dean of Students Office can be of greatest assistance when concerns are brought to his/her attention early in a semester.

Student's Responsibility (US 11/09)

Because class participation is an integral component of the development of a successful learning community, all students are expected to attend all class sessions of courses in which they are enrolled. While attendance is expected, it is recognized that absences are at times unavoidable. If an absence is necessary, the student should take responsibility for contacting her/his instructor(s) as soon as possible to discuss the ramifications of being away from class. In some instances, significant personal issues result in the need to seek additional assistance [see Authorized Absences below].

It is important for the student to realize that when classes are missed she/he may be at a disadvantage as it is often impossible for the instructor to reconstruct activities that took place in the classroom, laboratory, or field during the absence. Additionally, missing any classes may result in lower grades because the student may miss foundational material needed to succeed in the course. Even under the best of circumstances, extended absences can be problematic, with the real possibility that the student may not be able to complete the course successfully.

Authorized Absences (US 11/09, 03/23)

Absences that fall under one of the following categories are considered authorized: (1) participation in an approved field trip listed in the catalogue as a requirement for a course in which the student is enrolled; or (2) participation in an authorized extra-curricular activity on the regularly approved calendar of university events [such absences are reported by the dean to each department at least 48 hours in advance of the trip or event]; or (3) Labor Day employment; or (4) active military service; or (5) accommodation of students' religious beliefs [see Accommodation of Students' Religious Beliefs Policy below]; or (6) illness, injury, or emergency of such severity as to prevent the student from being able to attend class; ~~or~~ (7) being summoned to court or requested to appear in court or having to serve on jury duty; **or (8) absences due to accommodations for pregnancy or related conditions covered under Title IX, (9) parenting and caregiving obligations of such an unavoidable or critical nature as to prevent the student from being able to attend class. (US 03/23)**

A student should communicate directly with the instructor when an absence falls under one of the approved ~~seven~~**nine** categories. Instructors have discretion regarding requests for absences that do not fall under one of the approved ~~seven~~**nine** categories. (US 4/13, 10/21, **03/23**)

In the case of severe illness, injury, or emergency, instructors should be kept apprised of the situation through direct communication with the student and/or via the Dean of Students Office which will assist students and communicate with instructors as needed.

When absences are authorized, instructors are obligated to work with students to determine the best way for students to resume participation in the class without a penalty. However, if the absences are lengthy, **or recurrent**, the student, instructor, college dean, and Dean of Students Office should work together to determine if it will be possible for the student to successfully complete the course. **(US 03/23)**

Implementation Date: Upon publication of the July 2023 FASRP

Signed: _____
Chair of the Committee

Send to: University Senate Office