State University of New York

Memorandum to Presidents

Date: February 18, 1981

From: Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

Subject: Guidelines for Development of the Campus Instructional Calendar

The Board of Trustees, at its January 28, 1981 meeting approved a resolution which rescinds the 1977 Board of Trustee policy on the suspension of classes on certain designated religious holidays, and adopts the attached Guidelines for Development of the Campus Instructional Calendar.

These Guidelines, you may recognize, represent a revision of the administrative policy affecting your campus calendars since 1971. The rescission of the Board's 1977 policy and the adoption of the revised Guidelines return to the campuses the responsibility for the design of their respective calendars. You will note that the focus of these Guidelines is on the accommodation of students in the scheduling of classes rather than on University observance of designated religious holidays. Particular attention is drawn to the provisions of Section 2 of the Guidelines and Section 224-a of the Education Law.

The Guidelines for Development of the Campus Instructional Calendar shall be implemented no later than the academic year beginning September, 1982.

Please forward to me your 1981-82 academic calendar, if you have not already done so, and all future calendars. If your calendar arrangements should change as a result of these Guidelines, I would need a copy of your revised calendar.

This Memorandum supersedes Memoranda to Presidents, Vol. 77, No. 14, dated July 8, 1977, and Vol. 80, No. 2, dated April 1, 1980.

James E. Perdue

Attachments

This memorandum addressed to: Presidents, State-operated Campuses

Copies for information only sent to: Deans, Statutory Colleges Presidents, Community Colleges President Neville Vice Provost Spencer
Whereas it is desirable to establish guidelines for the development of campus instructional calendars which specify common procedures relating to length of the instructional year, observance of holidays and utilization of campus facilities; and

Whereas University policy mandating the suspension of classes at all State-operated campuses on certain designated religious holidays should be reconsidered (Resolution 77-150, adopted June 22, 1977) in view of the reported difficulties of compliance with academic calendar requirements; and

Whereas existing State law requires that a student shall be excused from study or work requirements on days of absence from classes because of religious beliefs; and that State University has the responsibility to make available equivalent opportunities to students to make up study or work requirements missed because of these absences (Education Law, §224-a); now, therefore, be it

Resolved that Resolution 77-150, adopted June 22, 1977, be, and hereby is, rescinded; and be it further

Resolved that the Guidelines for Development of the Campus Instructional Calendar, dated January 28, 1981 (copy on file in the Office of the Secretary), be, and hereby are, adopted; and, be it further

Resolved that the Chancellor, or his designee, be, and hereby is, authorized to review and coordinate the development of campus instructional calendars consistent with these Guidelines.
GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAMPUS INSTRUCTIONAL CALENDAR

The following guidelines should be observed in the development of campus instructional calendars. While discussions continue concerning the desirability of establishing a uniform University-wide calendar, such a rigid plan could seriously inhibit the flexibility required for the creation of imaginative and responsive academic programs and could significantly impair the University's energy conservation program. Thus the guidelines are not addressed to the issue of uniformity, nor do they attempt to prescribe specific numbers of days or hours of instruction, other than to support items in the Commissioner's Regulations. Course requirements have been described by the Regents and by normative academic practice. Rather, these guidelines specify common procedure in several areas, specifically length of instructional year, observance of holidays, and utilization of campus facilities.

These guidelines are intended to apply to normative campus-based situations of regular instruction.

Each campus should give careful attention to the relation between calendar and the number of hours of weekly obligation of faculty and students, and should take into consideration in calendar development the effect of the holiday guideline upon the total period of instruction.

1. The instructional year shall include a minimum of 30 weeks instruction, inclusive of periods for examinations. If the conventional semester plan is followed, no single semester shall consist of fewer than 14 weeks instruction, with a total of 30 weeks instruction for two semesters, inclusive of periods of examination. Other patterns may be developed subject to approval of the Chancellor.

2. In developing the campus instructional calendar, campuses should try to avoid the scheduling of classes or other courses of instruction on those days when a significant number of members of a religious faith at that campus typically observe the expectation of their faith and wish to be absent from school or work. Campuses should assure that instructional time or work requirements are met by other scheduling or calendar arrangements.

Within the instructional calendar, on those days when members of a religious faith at that campus typically observe the expectation of their faith and wish to be absent from school or work, campuses shall avoid the scheduling of such events as registration, examinations, the first day of classes, or student convocations.

Under existing State law (Education Law §224-a, attached), campuses are required to excuse without penalty individual students absent from class because of religious beliefs and to provide equivalent opportunity to students to make up study or work requirements missed because of such absences.
3. In developing the instructional calendar, attention should be given to the possibility of closing all college offices and not scheduling classes on those days observed by the State as holidays which fall on a Monday or Friday.

4. Attention shall be given to optimal utilization of campus facilities, with special consideration given to the summer period(s) of instruction.

5. A copy of the campus instructional calendar shall be filed with the Chancellor, or his designee.

These guidelines shall be implemented no later than the academic year beginning September, 1982.

January 28, 1981
§ 224-a. Students unable because of religious beliefs to attend classes on certain days

1. No person shall be expelled from or be refused admission as a student to an institution of higher education for the reason that he is unable, because of his religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirements on a particular day or days.

2. Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of his religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.

3. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty and of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of his religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which he may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said student such equivalent opportunity.

4. If classes, examinations, study or work requirements are held on Friday after four o'clock post meridian or on Saturday, similar or makeup classes, examinations, study or work requirements shall be made available on other days, where it is possible and practicable to do so. No special fees shall be charged to the student for these classes, examinations, study or work requirements held on other days.

5. In effectuating the provisions of this section, it shall be the duty of the faculty and of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to exercise the fullest measure of good faith. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student because of his availing himself of the provisions of this section.

6. Any student, who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith with the provisions of this section, shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of his rights under this section.

6-a. A copy of this section shall be published by each institution of higher education in the catalog of such institution containing the listing of available courses.

7. As used in this section, the term "institution of higher education" shall mean schools under the control of the board of trustees of the state university of New York or of the board of higher education of the city of New York or any community college.