Student Attendance Policies

In the following report, The Hanover Research Council provides an overview of best practices in student attendance policies. The first section of the report offers a discussion of research exploring the relationship between attendance and student success as well as various perspectives on attendance policy development and mechanisms for enforcement at higher education institutions. In the second section, we provide a discussion of the attendance policies in effect at a variety of smaller institutions.
Overview: Issues in Student Attendance Policies

Over the past few decades, the positive effects of student attendance on academic performance at higher education institutions have been widely documented within the scholarly arena. In the following section we explore key findings in recent literature on student attendance, including an overview of how student attendance impacts student performance, as well as offer some perspectives on attendance policy development and related enforcement mechanisms.

Student Attendance and Academic Success

As institutions of higher education face continuing concerns over student retention, it is important for colleges and universities to consider any factors that may contribute to a student’s decision to discontinue his or her studies. A number of research studies indicate that, among the many factors contributing to student attrition, student success may be a significant underlying variable. Thus, in an effort to elucidate factors related to student attrition, in this sub-section we explore the debate on how the use of attendance policies may indeed contribute to increased student success.

In a 2001 study published in *Teaching of Psychology*, Schimoff and Catania observed the effects of recording attendance on the grades of more than 50 students in an Introductory Psychology course. This study’s findings were twofold. Firstly, Schimoff and Catania concluded that “simply recording attendance [dramatically] increased attendance.” Furthermore, the study found that students whose attendance was recorded performed better than students whose attendance was not recorded; specifically, “students who signed in attended more classes and scored higher grades on weekly multiple-choice quizzes, even on material from the textbook not included in lectures.” In contrast with earlier literature that suggests a positive correlation between student attendance and academic success, Schimoff and Catania emphasize that it is a causal relationship, concluding: “we can indeed increase attendance, and increased attendance does indeed improve academic performance.”

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4 Ibid.
Similarly, in a 2003 study of more than 250 “pre-service” teachers enrolled in education methods classes over a period of three semesters, Silvestri found a “relation between absences and final grades.” As the study concludes, students “earned higher final grades when absences were kept to a minimum.” Ultimately, as Silvestri notes, one potential explanation for this relationship is that class attendance in pre-service courses permits students to gain a more thorough understanding of course material and by observing the teacher’s model and acquiring teaching strategies.

This positive relationship between student attendance and academic success is further corroborated by a 2005 study published in *College Teaching*, which observed 300 students enrolled in an undergraduate “general education course at a large Midwestern state university.” Ultimately, as in the 2003 Silvestri study, this research found that there was “a strong negative correlation between absences and final grades.” Its final recommendation was simple: “[s]tudents who wish to succeed academically should attend class, and instructors should likewise encourage class attendance.”

**Attendance Policy Development and Enforcement Mechanisms**

Ultimately, these studies lend credence to the suggestion that strong student attendance may in fact improve student performance. In 1996, for example, University of Maine Professor Kenneth Petress examined “the dilemma of undergraduate student attendance policies.” According to his piece, anti-attendance policy sentiments are held by students and faculty alike. Students may claim that “they are adults who can decide for themselves what behaviors are in their best interests.” However, citing his own experience, Petress claims that “not all students are mature,” and that often “the very students who get themselves in trouble due to excessive absences are the very ones who vociferously object to attendance policies.” In fact, for mature students, class attendance is rarely an issue. Another student claim is “that they are customers and [the university] is the seller who is obliged to make the product (class) appealing enough to attract students.” Meanwhile, faculty may argue that they are ‘playing God’ when discerning between excused and unexcused absences, but Petress suggests that the distinction need not always be made. Using an analogy from the workplace, he states that “not showing up to work results in no

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
pay,” and that frequently-absent employees’ positions often “become jeopardized.”

Petress also rejects faculty complaints regarding “attendance procedure,” asserting that “requiring students to sign a daily attendance sheet and counting heads are not complex nor arduous tasks.” Lastly, instructors may also claim that attendance policies restrict “academic freedom” and “individual teaching styles.” This, too, is untrue according to Petress, who states that these policies “do not limit what is taught in the classroom nor how it is taught.”

Yet, Petress concludes that “pro-attendance policy arguments seem more constructive to quality education than do anti-attendance policy claims.” He concludes that, among other considerations, the presence of a student in class is often vital for the progress of that student’s peers, stating that “[a]bsent students comprise an obstacle to peer progress and to their right not to have to tolerate incessant catch-up time and frustration to accommodate absentees.” Beyond this, attendance is a “requisite for true education to be accomplished.” As the arguments for the use of attendance policies “outweigh” those against it, Petress puts forth the following conclusion:

Student attendance contributes to superior classroom management, student learning, and meeting legal and moral professional responsibilities. It seems sensible that students, faculty, and administrators can meet to form a reasonable and understandable attendance policy. Such a policy would clearly demonstrate an institution’s search for quality education.

Due to the importance of student attendance, as it relates to student performance and academic achievement, many institutions provide guidance to faculty in the development of attendance policies. Ball State University in Indiana, for example, has developed a series of guidelines and best practices for the development of a successful attendance policy. According these guidelines, the first rule in developing an attendance policy is to “be clear about policies and repercussions.” With this objective in mind, the following issues should be kept in consideration:

- Will students be allowed to miss a certain number of classes without repercussions? Many teachers allow 2-3 “no questions asked” absences (“freebies”), with grade reductions or other consequences kicking in after that.

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11 Ibid., 2.
13 Ibid., 3.
14 Ibid., 3.
16 Ibid.
What will those consequences be for missed classes? Perhaps a certain number of points could be deducted from the final grade for each additional absence after the three “freebies.”

Will absent students be able to make up missed work, such as in-class assignments, papers or other assignments due in class, or tests/quizzes?

How will tardiness be handled?

What should students do in order to catch up? Can they contact you, or do you expect them to get assistance from classmates? If you want to avoid, “What did I miss in class?” questions, you should make this clear up front.

Secondly, as Ball State’s guidelines note, the policy should “put attendance in a positive light.” In other words, institutions should not “make attendance all about punishment.” Rather, instructors should detail the many benefits of attending class for students. Explaining the policy in this way avoids “appearing arbitrary or simply authoritarian.”

The University’s guidelines also stress the importance of considering excused and unexcused absences, an issue that may be more complicated than it ostensibly appears:

Will you make a distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences? Excusing particular absences due to illness or other circumstances can complicate your policies and lead to questions of fairness. What type of illness is bad enough to be excused—a minor cold, the flu, or hospitalization? What if a student has a court date, and does it matter if it is a DUI appearance or a child custody hearing? Some faculty members avoid the “excused” distinction and provide those 2-3 “freebies” no matter what the reason—illness or vacation. Students just need to be reminded of the consequences of their blowing off their “freebies” for a long fall break, then coming down with a cold in December.

In these instances, faculty should define “excused” and “unexcused” absences for the policy if they intend to distinguish between the two, and ensure that these standards are communicated to students at the start of a course. In developing these standards, instructors must also take into account absences for university-sponsored events such as field trips or athletics events. Faculty must also consider “funeral and bereavement leave,” as well as absences that may arise from a student’s disability.

The University’s guidelines also encourage instructors to “make class worth attending,” by explaining to them what they can “get from class that they cannot get from the textbook, a classmate’s notes, or even a recording of the class.” To get

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
students more involved, instructors can incorporate “collaborative and active learning strategies” such as “discussions, small group activities, student-led projects or presentations.”

Finally, the University identifies various ideas for “creative attendance policies.” These are as follows:22

- **Alternative educational tasks** can be used as a way for students to “make up” missed classes. If students are missing an educational opportunity by missing class, they can substitute a different educational event such as a speaker, play, or field trip. Consider whether you want that event to be connected to the course topic, and what type of report students must submit afterwards.

- **Rely on professional standards** whenever possible. If you are teaching in a professional area—business, nursing, education, etc. - draw on a sense of professionalism to encourage attendance.

- **Use clickers** to ensure students are in class and are engaged. Using clickers only to take attendance may frustrate students, since they are spending money on the devices, but many of the systems allow you to track student participation and give students points for answering questions.

Given this overview of key issues in the development of student attendance policies at higher education institutions, in the remainder of this report we profile best practices in attendance policies at twelve peer institutions to XYZ University.

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Institutional Attendance Policies

As part of a discussion of innovative practices in student attendance policies, it is essential to evaluate the practices of other institutions. In order to build a list of peers for XYZ University, Hanover relied upon the following criteria, as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS):23

- Degree-granting;
- Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above;
- Between 1,000 and 5,000 students;
- Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs);
- Title IV participating institution;
- Total enrollment: Fall 2008; and
- Percentage of full-time/part-time first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students in Fall 2007 returning in Fall 2008

Each of the twelve institutions discussed in this section falls within 500 students of XYZ’s Fall 2008 enrollment figures and within 5% of XYZ’s Fall 2008 full-time student retention rate. Figures from these institutions are provided in Table 1 below:

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Table 1: Institutional Enrollment and Retention Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total Enrollment: Fall 2008</th>
<th>Undergrad Enrollment: Fall 2008</th>
<th>Grad Enrollment: Fall 2008</th>
<th>% of Full-time First-time Degree/Certificate-seeking Undergrad Students in Fall 2007 Returning in Fall 2008</th>
<th>% of Part-time First-time Degree/Certificate-seeking Undergrad Students in Fall 2007 Returning in Fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alvernia College</td>
<td>2,809</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster College</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>2,131</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American International College</td>
<td>3,112</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otterbein College</td>
<td>3,131</td>
<td>2,754</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian Court University</td>
<td>3,189</td>
<td>2,067</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach Atlantic University-West Palm Beach</td>
<td>3,226</td>
<td>2,424</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Park University</td>
<td>3,244</td>
<td>2,263</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia University</td>
<td>3,360</td>
<td>2,782</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital University</td>
<td>3,632</td>
<td>2,675</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LeTourneau University</td>
<td>3,662</td>
<td>3,371</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stetson University</td>
<td>3,696</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Park University</td>
<td>3,784</td>
<td>3,259</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these institutions, the majority holds some form of overarching attendance policy. Only one peer institution (Westminster College) appears to have an openly relaxed attendance policy, which states that instructors “do not need to require attendance unless [they] feel it is desirable for pedagogical reasons.”

Generally speaking, however, attendance policies at peer institutions share certain key characteristics:

- These policies communicate the expectation of class attendance, define the nature of excused and unexcused absences, and detail the repercussions of excessive absence.
- These policies also traditionally detail the lengths to which students must go to notify instructors of an absence and to make up missed work.
- Attendance policies frequently outline procedures for faculty members in defining and communicating attendance requirements to students (such as in course syllabi) and administrative procedures for handling students with excessive absences.

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In the following pages, we provide the details of student attendance policies at each of these institutions.

**Alvernia University (Reading, PA)**

Alvernia University publishes an attendance policy in its 2009-2010 Student Handbook, which articulates that “[a]ttendance and participation in class are integral parts of the educational process and are significant factors in academic achievement.”\(^{25}\) The policy further outlines a number of expectations for students, including that they “attend all classes, take exams during scheduled times,” and take responsibility “for all material covered in class.” In turn, the University expects its instructors to report “excessive” absences. However, the manner in which “excessive absences or tardiness” affect a student’s grade is “at the discretion of the instructor.”\(^{26}\)

In the course syllabus, instructors have the power to “identify more specific attendance requirements.” To this extent, the University’s policy includes the following guidelines for consideration in the development of course attendance policies: \(^{27}\)

- The course syllabus should clearly state the instructor’s policies on attendance, tardiness, class participation, make-up tests, etc. The syllabus should be distributed at the first class meeting.
- Instructors have the right to include class attendance and participation as part of the final grade.
- A student who has been absent or foresees the need to be absent has an obligation to consult with the instructor to make arrangements regarding missed work.
- A student who stops attending class without completing a withdrawal form is given a failing grade after the official date of withdrawal each semester.
- Students are not customarily excused from class for sports practice. However, they should be excused to participate in the intercollegiate competition/activities provided that they inform instructors in advance of the class(es) to be missed and that they make arrangements regarding missed work due to NCAA regulations.
- A student who misses a test because of an intercollegiate competition/activity should be provided an opportunity to take a make-up test, at a time and place scheduled by the instructor. Customarily, the make-up test should be given within a week of the original exam.


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 9-10.

\(^{27}\) Ibid. 9
Westminster College (New Wilmington, PA)

Westminster College does not have an overarching set of attendance guidelines for instructors but does provide guidelines for dropping students who fail to attend class entirely in its 2006-2007 Instructor Handbook. The Handbook states: “If a student fails to attend by the second meeting of the class, [instructors] are urged to administratively drop him or her and allow another student to enroll.”28 Likewise, instructors are also urged to contact the Registrar’s Office in the event of a student disappearance. The Handbook further notes that instructors “may not require attendance or grade on attendance,” and that instructors “do not need to require attendance unless [they] feel it is desirable for pedagogical reasons.”29 However, if an instructor does establish an attendance policy, the University requires that it is included in the course syllabus.

American International College (Springfield, MA)

While the College does not appear to have an explicit attendance policy, it does address student absence as a result of religious obligations. Students may be excused any “examination or study or work requirement” that may have been missed as a result of religious obligations.30 Under this circumstance, students may make up missed work or exams. However, students are responsible for notifying the University at least a week ahead of time. The College further states that students “who have not attended classes without having obtained a formal leave of absence” will be withdrawn from the program following a two-year absence, and must then reapply for admission to continue their studies.31

Otterbein College (Westerville, OH)

Generally speaking, Otterbein College’s policies communicate the expectation of regular class attendance, and require students to notify instructors ahead of time in the case of absence and to take responsibility for making up any missed work. These sample polices are provided in Table 2 below:

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29 Ibid., 3.
31 Ibid., 21.
Table 2: Course Attendance Policies at Otterbein College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Attendance Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELG 220 - Religion in America</td>
<td>Regular attendance at class sessions is expected, as well as active involvement in all phases of classroom work. Attendance will be taken regularly, and a pattern of absence from class will affect the student’s “Participation” portion of the final grade negatively (see below). Each student is allowed two unexcused absences for the term. An excused absence is for an approved co-curricular activity (like a baseball game, theatre performance, etc.) and illness that is documented with a note from the health center or a physician. In the case of deaths in the family, documented proof will be required (e.g., a dated death certificate, obituary, police report). Grandparents who have died one or more times in previous terms do not count. Each unexcused absence beyond the first two will drop the “Participation” grade by a half-letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOUR 191 - Copyediting</td>
<td>Students cannot miss more than two classes for any reason. Any further absences will result in points lost off of their final grades. Those who miss a class must consult a fellow student for the material covered in your absence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INST-400-01 - Earth Science and Humankind</td>
<td>Students are expected to attend all class meetings in their entirety. This is especially important because this is an intense course and because it is nearly impossible to reconstruct a particular class. Missed quizzes and exams must be made up before the graded items are returned to the class. The lowest quiz (zero if absent) will be dropped. Late assignments will be accepted, but grades will be reduced by one point for each day late. No assignments will be accepted after the final exam unless special arrangements are made with the instructor. If you anticipate being absent on a given day, notify me and I may be able to provide the assignments in advance. In extenuating circumstances I would appreciate an explanation (preferably in advance) for your absence, tardiness or early departure. Please approach me if personal problems and/or concerns come up. I’ll try to be reasonable!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Georgian Court University (Lakewood, NJ)

The Class Attendance Policy published in Georgian Court University’s 2009-2010 Student Handbook states that, at the start of every semester, “instructors advise students concerning the pattern of attendance needed for suitable performance,” and students “assume responsibility for their response to this advice.” The Policy also addresses student absence due to medical concerns:

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33 Otterbein College. “JOUR 191 – Copyediting.” http://www.otterbein.edu/graduate/summerschoolsyllabi/JOUR%20191.doc
34 Otterbein College. “Syllabus – Earth Science and Humankind.” http://www.otterbein.edu/graduate/summerschoolsyllabi/INST%20400-01%20Jackson%20Summer%202009.pdf
36 Ibid.
Students who are ill and who are advised by a doctor to remain out of class for more than a week should contact the dean of the school, who in turn will notify instructors of the prolonged absences.

In addition, the policy addresses vacation periods and the students’ responsibility to make travel arrangements, “enough in advance to ensure that they will remain on campus for their last classes and finals” and “arrive back on campus in time for their first classes following the vacation.”

**Palm Beach Atlantic University (West Palm Beach, FL)**

The attendance policy at Palm Beach Atlantic University, published in the University’s “Undergraduate Day Catalog,” requires students to notify their instructors as well as the Student Success Center in the event that an emergency or medical concern will cause them to miss considerable class time. According to the policy, “Students are required to make up missed work,” and “neither a professor nor a representative in academic administration…may excuse a student from the ongoing work in the course.” Any make-up work is “the responsibility of the student in every case.” The University also notes that certain schools within the institution have developed “specific attendance policies affecting grades.” The University also has an attendance policy relating to enrollment verification, stating in the Catalog that a “student who fails to attend classes in the first week of the semester will be dropped from the class(es) by the Registrar for non-attendance.”

**North Park University (Chicago, IL)**

At North Park, “[s]tudents are expected to be prompt and regular in attendance at all scheduled classes.” The specific requirements for attendance are “set by individual instructors.” According to its “Academic Policies for Undergraduates,” the only acceptable reason for absence is illness, and the student must make arrangements with instructors regarding absences during short-term periods of illness. In the event of long-term illness, “the student should notify the Dean of Student Development.”

**Philadelphia University (Philadelphia, PA)**

The University addresses attendance in its “Academic Policies and Procedures,” stating that along with the many “requirements outlined by the instructor’s syllabus,” a student must adhere to attendance requirements, and his or her grade may be

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38 Ibid., 100.
adversely affected by failure to do so.\textsuperscript{40} Students are required to contact the Dean of Students office in the event of absence resulting from “extended illness.” However, the University notes that this does not “override an instructor’s attendance policy,” and students are also required to consult with instructors regarding extended absences and their accompanying academic concerns related to the absence. If extended absence is the result of “personal circumstances,” students are to consult the University’s Counseling Center.

The University addresses extended illness-related absence in greater detail through its 2009/2010 Student Handbook:\textsuperscript{41}

> Any student who is unable to attend classes for five consecutive days or more due to illness must inform the Office of the Dean of Students as well as report to Student Health Services or a private physician during the period of illness. Once a diagnosis is documented in Student Health, a student may request that a verification be sent to designated faculty members and the appropriate academic advisor.

**Capital University (Columbus, OH)**

According to its “Class Absence Policy,” the University “expects students to attend all classes,” but recognizes that “there will be times when students do miss class.”\textsuperscript{42} As part of this Policy, Capital recognizes three forms of absence: Approved Absences, Excused Absences, and Unexcused Absences.

Approved Absences occur when students miss class for “a scheduled, university-approved event.”\textsuperscript{43} Such events include “musical or theater performances, academic conferences, and athletic competitions,” but exclude “practices, rehearsals, [and]…university-approved events in which the student is not a participant.” Under this situation, the “sponsoring faculty adviser or coach” must notify instructors “in a timely fashion.”\textsuperscript{44} Students are also responsible for communicating with instructors regarding the dates of anticipated Approved Absences – failing to do so may result in the absence counting as unexcused. These students should “generally” be allowed to “make up any scheduled assignments, quizzes, or exams,” and “bear the ultimate responsibility for all missed class material.” Instructors reserve the right to require “substitute assignments” if a student misses “unique in-class learning experiences.”

\textsuperscript{42} Capital University. “Capital University Class Absence Policy.” 1. http://www.capital.edu/16390.doc
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
Certain exceptions may apply to these rules, but instructors must clearly explain these exceptions in the syllabus. Faculty can designate absences as unexcused if:  

- No substitute assignment is appropriate for a unique in-class learning experience;  
- The number of approved absences appears excessive; or  
- A student is on academic probation.

With regards to Excused Absences, Capital University notes:

Certain unexpected events that cause a student to miss class should be considered excused. Examples of such events include class field trips, class-required attendance at special campus events, significant illness or injury, death in the immediate family, doctor’s appointments, and severe weather conditions. For such absences, individual instructors can determine whether make up work or substitute work is appropriate.

Naturally, absences that cannot be considered either “approved” or “excused” are then unexcused. Instructors are “under no obligation to allow students to complete work missed from unexcused absences,” and they “may have attendance policies that result in penalties that harm course grades.”

The University also addresses abuse of the absence policy, stating that “students who abuse the approved and excused absences policy will be considered to have committed academic misconduct.” These abuses may include “falsifying an illness or family emergency, falsely claiming that attendance at the event is required,” and so on.

Finally the University also outlines established guidelines for the implementation of the attendance policy:

- Faculty must state their attendance policy in the course syllabus.  
- Students must be responsible for understanding each professor’s attendance policy.  
- A central calendar should be maintained on Capital’s web site that communicates dates of university-approved events in which students may play a part.  
- Faculty and staff in charge of university-approved events should submit the dates of such events for publication on the calendar, preferably before the semester begins.  
- As soon as the names of the students involved in an event can reasonably be known, faculty and staff in charge of university-approved events should provide an alphabetical listing of the students to all faculty.

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45 Ibid.  
46 Ibid.  
47 Ibid.  
48 Ibid., 2
Except for university-approved absences, an instructor should limit outside-of-class activities that might cause students to miss classes. Students should understand that missing any classroom experience is likely to have a negative impact on their learning for that class and may affect their grade if they do not engage in compensatory study.

LeTourneau University (Longview, TX)

The attendance policy at LeTourneau articulates that students “are expected to be present and punctual at all times while attending classes.” According to the 2008-2009 Student Handbook, “[r]egular attendance at classes is expected and monitored.” Students are responsible for learning and adhering to the “attendance requirements and procedures of each instructor,” as well as for requesting an excused absence in advance of the date which they are unable to attend class. The following procedures apply to absences due to illness:

- The student requests verification from Health Services and a Health Information form be sent to the appropriate instructors.
- The Director of Health Services sends this to appropriate instructors through campus mail.
- The professor then has information from the Director of Health Services by which a decision may be made about whether to accept the excuse.

In the event of an absence resulting from “university-sponsored trips or activities,” the sponsoring group sends a memo to the instructor for notification. In this situation, students are “responsible for making up work missed.” Personal absences must be “arranged with the instructor,” but the effect of this kind of absence on a student’s grade is at the discretion of the instructor, who must communicate these repercussions in the syllabus. Meanwhile, emergency absences “should be reported to and handled by the Dean of Students.”

The University further provides information comparing its attendance policy for online courses and “on-ground” courses. These policies are provided at a glance in Table 3 below:

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49 LeTourneau University. “Class Attendance.” http://www.letu.edu/opencms/opencms/catalog/Academics/Class_Attendance.html
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
Table 3: Attendance Policy: On-Ground and Online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On-Ground</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❖ Only one emergency absence during a course allowed (may affect grade);</td>
<td>❖ Must log in and participate for every week of the course;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ A second absence results in automatic removal from the course;</td>
<td>❖ Participation includes the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ No absences are allowed in courses that are less than 4 weeks in length;</td>
<td>o Communication activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Arriving 30 minutes late or leaving 30 minutes early constitutes an absence.</td>
<td>o Submission of completed assignments;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Communication with instructor;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ One week of inactivity constitutes an absence;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❖ A second absence results in automatic removal from the course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stetson University (DeLand, FL)

At Stetson University, instructors set their own attendance policies and include these policies in their syllabi. Instructors are also expected to record attendance “regularly” because “poor attendance can be a sign of serious academic and personal problems.” According to the policy, “poor attendance can be a sign of serious academic and personal problems.” Accordingly, intervening at an early stage “can help students avoid falling into academic trouble or even dropping out.” In the event that a student has missed “three consecutive classes without explanation,” instructors must report the absences to the institution. From that point onwards, Stetson University’s Office of First Year Studies corresponds with the student.

Point Park University (Pittsburg, PA)

The University states as part of its “Undergraduate Policies,” that classroom attendance “is the responsibility of the student.” While attendance policies are determined by individual course instructors, the University outlines some basic guidelines for excused absences or leaves of absence.

In the event of two or more consecutive absences due to “illness or injury,” students must report their absence to the University’s Health and Psychological Services Information Center, which then holds the responsibility of notifying faculty in the event of prolonged absence. During these extended absences, faculty “have an obligation to try to accommodate the student attempting to satisfy all course requirements.” However, students are responsible for “arranging to make up missed assignments or to submit assignments late.” The policy also notes that absence

54 Stetson University. “Information For Adjunct Faculty” 4.
55 Ibid.
56 Point Park University. “Undergraduate Policies.”
57 Ibid.
resulting from students’ participation in various “University events and/or work related travel” may be excused at the discretion of their instructors.

Furthermore, students are also required to complete a Leave of Absence form if they are: 58

- Full-time and will miss one semester; or
- Part-time and will miss two semesters.

Otherwise, students will be required to reapply for admission to the University. The institution allows students to return within two years of leaving their studies if they have “completed 30 or more credits with a Q.P.A. of 2.00.” 59

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
Conclusion

Given the scholarly consensus on the role of attendance policies in contributing to increased student success, a consideration of the development and features of student attendance policies is indeed a worthwhile endeavor for all institutions of higher education.

As our discussion of student attendance policies reveals, these attendance guidelines often share certain key characteristics. For example:

- These policies communicate class attendance expectations, define the nature of approved, excused and unexcused absences, and detail the repercussions of excessive absence.
  - Policies frequently highlight particular situations where absences may be excused or unexcused, such as religious holidays, medical concerns or illness, or participation in extracurricular activities.
  - Further, policies often emphasize that students’ grades may be adversely affected by excessive absence.

- These policies also traditionally detail the lengths to which students must go to notify instructors of an absence and to make up missed work.
  - Students are often held responsible for requesting an excused absence or notifying instructors in advance of the date which they are unable to attend class.
  - Students are expected to coordinate with instructors to make up any missed assignments or exams in the event of an excused absence.

- Attendance policies frequently outline procedures for faculty members in defining and communicating attendance requirements to students and administrative procedures for handling students with excessive absences.
  - One common aspect of attendance policies is that instructors are required to communicate attendance requirements in course syllabi.
  - Colleges and universities often expect their instructors to report “excessive” absences to the institution and/or to administratively drop absent students.
Project Evaluation Form

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Note

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