

Proposal to clarify the attendance policy in the Bakersfield College Catalog

Issue: The Academic Senate voted on November 13, 2013 to not include class non-participation in the definition of attendance in the attendance policy in the Bakersfield College (page 22-23 of the current catalog). However, it left intact the current ambiguous language in the attendance policy and discussion before the November 13th vote made clear that the Senate did not want to enable faculty to use academic progress or participation as a reason to "involuntarily remove" a student from a course.

Rationale: The current language of the attendance policy in the Bakersfield College Catalog is unclear to both faculty and students as to when a student can be removed from enrollment in a course. Inconsistency across the faculty in how the attendance policy is applied decreases student success, counter to the main college goal. Further specifics of the rationale is contained in the "whereas" statements below.

Opposition: (1) Instructors of courses that require active classroom participation by all of the students in order to create a conducive learning environment will need to find another way to work with those non-responsive (or clueless) students besides dropping them from the course. (2) The suggested changes do NOT affect the non-participation language of the distance education courses as stated in the "Extended Learning Attendance and Non-Participation Policy" of the Bakersfield College catalog (p. 23) because participation is the only way online instructors have of measuring/determining attendance in an online class. Furthermore the extended learning attendance policy is a requirement from the federal government regulators in order to keep our federal financial aid.

Solution: Below is a suggested resolution to change the attendance policy in the BC catalog in order to tighten up and clarify what the faculty can do and what the students can expect.

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(1) **Whereas** current attendance policy in the Bakersfield College (page 22-23) includes the statements, "The attendance policy for each course is established by the instructor and communicated to each class, preferably in writing. Attendance policies will be reasonably related to course objectives, the requirements of institutional reporting and legitimate absences" and "it is the responsibility of students to know the policy in each of their classes" and "If particular circumstances warrant and can be justified academically, faculty members may drop students after less than two weeks of absences";

(2) **Whereas** current attendance policy in our catalog is not clear on whether or not we can drop students for non-participation--for not doing required classwork, including meaningful classroom discussions or other in-class participation;

(3) **Whereas** Title V Section 55003(o) and Legal Opinion 11-04 from the Legal Affairs Division of the state chancellor's office state that "the student may only be involuntarily removed from a course due to excessive absences or as a result of disciplinary action taken pursuant to law or to the student code of conduct";

(4) **Whereas** there are faculty who interpret the catalog language to drop students for insufficient academic progress (i.e., when a student has no way of passing the class with a "C" or better);

(5) **Whereas** the Academic Senate voted on November 13, 2013 to not develop language in the attendance policy in the catalog that would enable faculty to drop students for not doing required assignments;

Therefore,

(1) Be it resolved that the first statement in the Bakersfield College attendance policy quoted in the first "whereas" above be changed to "The attendance policy for the college is communicated to each class in writing"; and

(2) Be it resolved that the second statement in the Bakersfield College attendance policy quoted in the first "whereas" above be changed to "it is the responsibility of students to know the college attendance policy"; and, finally,

(3) Be it resolved that the third statement in the Bakersfield College attendance policy quoted in the first "whereas" be deleted.

With the three "Be it resolved" statements, the new Bakersfield College Catalog language will state:

Attendance Policies

Regular class attendance is expected of all students enrolled in the college. It is especially important that students attend the first sessions of each class for it is during those classes that instructors may distribute syllabi and course requirements, and explain what is expected in terms of attendance. Students enrolled in classes that are full may be dropped by the instructor if they do not attend the first class sessions. Students on a course waitlist should also attend the first class meeting to avoid being dropped.

The attendance policy for the college is communicated to each class in writing. Instructors are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance and scholarship records.

While it is the responsibility of instructors to communicate attendance policies and to apply them equally to all students, it is the responsibility of students to know the college attendance policy and to be aware of their current attendance status. Students who have been absent from a class should notify the instructor of the reason for the absence. Absence in no way relieves students of responsibility for work missed. Excessive absence may result in the student being dropped from the course. Instructors may drop a student from a course when absences number the equivalent of two weeks of class recorded from the first day of instruction.

Instructors may give consideration to excusing students from classes to participate in scheduled college activities; e.g. athletics, music, field trips, etc. The student must make arrangements in advance to make up the work to be missed.

Students are responsible for officially withdrawing from any class or classes in which they no longer wish to be enrolled. Non-attendance does not release the student from this responsibility.

[The First-Day Drop Policy and Extended Learning Attendance and Non-Participation Policy are NOT changed with this resolution.]

===== end of resolution =====