

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Attendance Policy

February 10, 2020

Senators:

On October 2, 2019 the Faculty Senate requested that the Steering Committee form an ad hoc committee to propose a revised undergraduate attendance policy that would address concerns brought by the Jewish Faculty and Staff Council as well as additional concerns voiced by Senators. The Senate mandated that the ad hoc committee should include broader representation than the Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions, the standing committee of the Senate that typically reviews attendance policy.

The Steering Committee approved the following committee members by email on October 21:

1. Mark Cooper, FS Chair (Chair)
2. Sang-Eun Byun, Senator HSRM
3. Joseph Flora, Senator, Engineering and Computing
4. Patrick Greene, Student Representative to Standards and Petitions & Chair of the Student Senate Judiciary Committee
5. Lisa Jerald, Undergraduate Student Ombuds
6. Sandra Kelly, Vice-Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies
7. Val Littlefield, Faculty Athletics Representative, African-American Studies
8. Maureen Petkewich, Senator DMSB
9. Adam Schor, Jewish Faculty and Staff Council, History
10. Clifford Scott, EOP, Title IX Coordinator, ADA Coordinator
11. Joshua Stone, Senator Biological Sciences
12. Karen Worthy, Senator Nursing
13. Representative of military students' association—invitation extended to Jake Tyler, Graduate Student in Biology
14. Faculty representative from the Palmetto College—David Dangerfield, History, USC Salkehatchie joined 10/22.

Henry White, Associate General Counsel, and Maria Hickman, Senior Associate Athletics Director for Academics and Student Development, attended meetings as needed at the request of the committee chair.

On October 29, the committee met to discuss its charge, review Senate discussion of the issue, and assign subcommittees follow-up tasks. The following tasks were assigned:

1. What do other SEC schools do?
2. Can we clarify the make-up work issue--when to allow--and find language that makes clear why attendance requirements differ in discussion-based, clinical, or experiential courses?
3. How would an appeals process work?
4. How do colleges with no percentage rule govern excused absences?

The committee next met on December 6, when it received a report from Associate General Counsel Henry White. White explained that we are legally required to excuse absences and to allow to make-up work for a list of reasons. The committee discussed reports from the subcommittees previously charged, identified features required and desired in a policy, and determined to bring three distinct proposals to the Senate for its review. Subcommittees were again assigned to:

- Draft language legally required of every policy.
- Draft additional language that describes three options as follows.
 1. A policy that would resemble current policy, with a percentage of unpenalized unexcused absences.
 2. A policy that would distinguish excused from unexcused absences, without setting a minimum percentage of allowable unexcused absences.
 3. A policy that would prohibit grade penalty for absence but allow participation grades.

The committee reconvened on January 9 to review subcommittee work. Areas requiring clarification and further discussion were identified and a subcommittee was tasked to refine drafts of the three proposals for review and comment on-line.

On February 3, the committee met to resolve a few issues remaining and unanimously agreed to review and approve this final report via email.

The ad hoc committee brings no specific recommendation. Time will be reserved for discussion of the proposals on the agenda of the March 4 Faculty Senate meeting. A motion to adopt will be in order and amendments may be offered from the floor.

Patrick Greene, the student representative, advises that option 3 (instructors may not assess grade penalty for absence) would be preferred by undergraduates, while option 2 (instructors may assess grade penalty for any unexcused absence) would be unpopular; option 1 may be perceived as a compromise.

Senators are advised that our current attendance policy is not helpful legally. We need to replace it. Language shared by each policy option reflects the guidance of General Counsel. Legal requirements will apply to graduate students as well as undergraduates. Because policy-making authority for graduate students rest with the Graduate Council, Senators should consider the attached proposals primarily from the point of view of undergraduate instruction.

Senators are encouraged to share this report with their colleagues and to discuss the proposals with them.

Sincerely,



Mark Cooper
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Attendance Policy

1 **Attendance Policy Option 1: 5% Rule**

2 **Policy Statement**

3 The University of South Carolina expects its students to commit to their educations by attending
4 class and participating in course activities. In assessing student attendance and participation, the
5 University aims to ensure the highest academic standards while recognizing that events occur
6 beyond the personal control of students or faculty. Different courses demand different
7 approaches to assessing student attendance and participation. Therefore, subject to certain
8 limitations described below, instructors of record are responsible for determining the attendance
9 and participation policies appropriate to their individual courses.

10 Each instructor should describe their attendance and participation policy in the courses syllabus,
11 if only to point to this general policy. Should an instructor fail to provide a written attendance
12 policy, this general policy applies.

13 If an instructor intends to assign a grade penalty for absence or a grade for participation the
14 instructor must: inform students in writing how attendance and participation will be measured,
15 particularly as such measurement goes beyond recording students' mere presence in the
16 classroom for all or part of a class session; maintain current, verifiable records; take care to apply
17 attendance and participation policies consistently and fairly for all students; and recognize that
18 failure to comply could constitute grounds for a grade appeal.

19 While instructors are not required to keep a record of attendance, they are encouraged to do so
20 whenever practical. Federal law requires institutions to document the last day of participation for
21 enrolled students who fail to complete a course.

22 Instructors must allow make-up work for excused absences as described below.

23 Students are responsible for satisfying the requirements for attendance and participation for any
24 class in which they are enrolled, including requirements for notification and documentation of
25 excused absences. Whenever possible, and as specified below, documentation is required in
26 advance of any excused absence.

27 This policy applies to all courses offered by the University of South Carolina, including
28 synchronous or asynchronous online courses.

29 **Excused Absences**

30 Instructors requiring attendance as a component of a student's grade must distinguish between
31 excused and unexcused absences in the written policy for the course.

32 Excused absences may not be penalized in a student's grade, and the student must be permitted
33 to make up coursework missed due to an excused absence or to complete an equivalent
34 assignment agreed upon with the instructor. Online courses, whether synchronous or
35 asynchronous, are not exempt from this rule. In all cases of excused absence, the instructor of
36 record must engage in an interactive process with the student to determine reasonable make-up
37 work.

38 Instructors may refuse to grant a request for an excused absence or for make-up work that
39 would result in a fundamental alteration of the essential academic requirements of the course. In
40 such instances, students should be apprised of the University's policy regarding course
41 withdrawals, including undergraduate hardship withdrawals.

42 The University of South Carolina is required by law to excuse absences from class for the
43 following reasons:

- 44 1. Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as
45 documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
- 46 2. Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding,
47 including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate
48 judicial or administrative authority.
- 49 3. Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the
50 student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.
- 51 4. A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by
52 the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student
53 from attending class.
- 54 5. Observance of a religious practice, holiday or holy day, if the instructor of the class is
55 provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious
56 practice, holiday or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly
57 scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of
58 the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:
59 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofterms/index>.
- 60 6. Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

61 The University of South Carolina requires that absences from class for the following reasons
62 must also be excused:

- 63 1. Participation in an authorized University activity, in which the student plays a formal,
64 required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances,
65 academic competitions, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of
66 participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
- 67 2. Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with
68 appropriate documentation.
- 69 3. Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate
70 documentation.
- 71 4. University closure for weather-related or other emergencies.

72 Instructors, at their discretion, may also excuse absences from class for the following reasons:

- 73 1. Non-closure weather-related emergencies that affect a student's capacity to reach
74 campus or that require a student's presence off-campus.
- 75 2. Mandatory interviews related to employment, professional school, or graduate school
76 that cannot be rescheduled.
- 77 3. Any other situation deemed excusable by the instructor. Instructors are encouraged
78 to show understanding toward students' needs while remaining mindful of the
79 University's high academic standards and the need to be scrupulously even-handed.

80 **Requesting Excuses**

81 To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but not
82 limited to, authorized university activities and religious observances--students should submit a
83 request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence, explaining the
84 reason for absence, providing supporting documentation as required above, and including any
85 request for make-up work. Students should submit this request no later than the end of the

86 second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term and within twice
87 the length of the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:
88 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofters/index>.

89 To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but
90 not limited to, legal proceedings or illness--students should submit in writing a request stating
91 the date of absence, the reason for absence, and any request for make-up work as soon as
92 reasonably possible after they become aware of the need to be absent. For instance, in the case
93 of a contagious illness a student should notify the instructor soon after becoming aware of this
94 illness. Instructors should not maintain records of student medical conditions. On the Columbia
95 campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to certify any excuses involving
96 confidential personal information.

97 **Unexcused Absences: The “5% Rule”**

98 The University recognizes that students may occasionally miss classes for legitimate reasons not
99 rising to the level of a formal excuse. For this reason, course attendance policies may penalize
100 unexcused absences in a student’s grade only after a student’s unexcused absences exceed a set
101 percentage of the total classes that the student missed without excuse. Once unexcused absences
102 exceed this set percentage, every unexcused absence may accrue a penalty to a student’s grade.

103 For traditional lecture-based, face-to-face classes, the minimum percentage of unexcused
104 absences allowed must be at least 5 percent of total class meeting time. For example, students in
105 a traditional, face-to-face 3-credit course, which meets in class for a total of 2100 minutes, may
106 not be penalized for absences that total less than 105 minutes of class time (a minimum of one
107 allowable unexcused absence for a class meeting two times per week for 75 minutes; two for a
108 class meeting three times per week for 50 minutes); students may be penalized for each
109 unexcused absence beyond 105 minutes.

110 Exceptions:

- 111 1. Clinical courses, “practicum” courses, laboratory courses, and certain other special
112 kinds of courses may have allowable percentages shorter than 5 percent of class time.
- 113 2. Online courses (asynchronous or synchronous) may also set their own policies for
114 participation in online activities and/or meetings, to which the 5-percent minimum
115 does not apply.

116 Any instructor assessing a grade penalty for absence must specify in the course syllabus the
117 percentage of allowable unexcused absences (with a minimum of 5% for traditional face-to-face
118 classes) and the penalty to a student’s grade for each unexcused absence in excess of that
119 percentage. Online courses should specify any penalties for not participating in activities in the
120 allotted time without a valid excuse.

121 Instructors have full discretion to set their own policy regarding the late acceptance of course
122 work missed due to an unexcused absence; this policy should be specified in the course syllabus.

123 **Assistance and Appeals**

124 On the Columbia Campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to assist instructors
125 and verify, in certain cases, students’ stated reasons for requesting excused absences. Palmetto
126 College campuses should work with their Faculty Organizations to define similar agencies.

127 Any student who is denied a request for an excused absence from class for any of the reasons set
128 forth herein may appeal the decision per the STAF 6.30 Academic Grievance Policy. As

129 described in STAF 6.27, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is also available to help students
130 resolve grievances and maintain policy compliance.

131 Students are expected to be fully honest with instructors, university staff and administrators
132 when they make requests to excuse absences and when they work with instructors to arrange
133 terms for the completion of coursework missed due to excused absences. Any dishonesty in
134 requesting excused absences or accommodations for the timely completion of missed work is
135 regarded as a violation of academic integrity and is subject to disciplinary action through the
136 Office of Academic Integrity.

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1 **Attendance Policy Option 2: Excused Only**

2 **Policy Statement**

3 The University of South Carolina expects its students to commit to their educations by attending
4 class and participating in course activities. In assessing student attendance and participation, the
5 University aims to ensure the highest academic standards while recognizing that events occur
6 beyond the personal control of students or faculty. Different courses demand different
7 approaches to assessing student attendance and participation. Therefore, subject to certain
8 limitations described below, instructors of record are responsible for determining the attendance
9 and participation policies appropriate to their individual courses.

10 Each instructor should describe their attendance and participation policy in the courses syllabus,
11 if only to point to this general policy. Should an instructor fail to provide a written attendance
12 policy, this general policy applies.

13 If an instructor intends to assign a grade penalty for absence or a grade for participation the
14 instructor must: inform students in writing how attendance and participation will be measured,
15 particularly as such measurement goes beyond recording students' mere presence in the
16 classroom for all or part of a class session; maintain current, verifiable records; take care to apply
17 attendance and participation policies consistently and fairly for all students; and recognize that
18 failure to comply could constitute grounds for a grade appeal.

19 While instructors are not required to keep a record of attendance, they are encouraged to do so
20 whenever practical. Federal law requires institutions to document the last day of participation for
21 enrolled students who fail to complete a course.

22 Instructors must allow make-up work for excused absences as described below.

23 Students are responsible for satisfying the requirements for attendance and participation for any
24 class in which they are enrolled, including requirements for notification and documentation of
25 excused absences. Whenever possible, and as specified below, documentation is required in
26 advance of any excused absence.

27 This policy applies to all courses offered by the University of South Carolina, including
28 synchronous or asynchronous online courses.

29 **Excused Absences**

30 Instructors requiring attendance as a component of a student's grade must distinguish between
31 excused and unexcused absences in the written policy for the course.

32 Excused absences may not be penalized in a student's grade, and the student must be permitted
33 to make up coursework missed due to an excused absence or to complete an equivalent
34 assignment agreed upon with the instructor. Online courses, whether synchronous or
35 asynchronous, are not exempt from this rule. In all cases of excused absence, the instructor of
36 record must engage in an interactive process with the student to determine reasonable make-up
37 work.

38 Instructors may refuse to grant a request for an excused absence or for make-up work that
39 would result in a fundamental alteration of the essential academic requirements of the course. In
40 such instances, students should be apprised of the University's policy regarding course
41 withdrawals, including undergraduate hardship withdrawals.

42 The University of South Carolina is required by law to excuse absences from class for the
43 following reasons:

- 44 1. Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as
45 documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
- 46 2. Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding,
47 including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate
48 judicial or administrative authority.
- 49 3. Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the
50 student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.
- 51 4. A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by
52 the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student
53 from attending class.
- 54 5. Observance of a religious practice, holiday or holy day, if the instructor of the class is
55 provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious
56 practice, holiday or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly
57 scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of
58 the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:
59 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofterms/index>.
- 60 6. Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

61 The University of South Carolina requires that absences from class for the following reasons
62 must also be excused:

- 63 1. Participation in an authorized University activity, in which the student plays a formal,
64 required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances,
65 academic competitions, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of
66 participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
- 67 2. Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with
68 appropriate documentation.
- 69 3. Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate
70 documentation.
- 71 4. University closure for weather-related or other emergencies.

72 Instructors, at their discretion, may also excuse absences from class for the following reasons:

- 73 1. Non-closure weather-related emergencies that affect a student's capacity to reach
74 campus or that require a student's presence off-campus.
- 75 2. Mandatory interviews related to employment, professional school, or graduate school
76 that cannot be rescheduled.
- 77 3. Any other situation deemed excusable by the instructor. Instructors are encouraged
78 to show understanding toward students' needs while remaining mindful of the
79 University's high academic standards and the need to be scrupulously even-handed.

80 **Requesting Excuses**

81 To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but not
82 limited to, authorized university activities and religious observances--students should submit a
83 request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence, explaining the
84 reason for absence, providing supporting documentation as required above, and including any
85 request for make-up work. Students should submit this request no later than the end of the

86 second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term and within twice
87 the length of the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:
88 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofters/index>.

89 To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but
90 not limited to, legal proceedings or illness--students should submit in writing a request stating
91 the date of absence, the reason for absence, and any request for make-up work as soon as
92 reasonably possible after they become aware of the need to be absent. For instance, in the case
93 of a contagious illness a student should notify the instructor soon after becoming aware of this
94 illness. Instructors should not maintain records of student medical conditions. On the Columbia
95 campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to certify any excuses involving
96 confidential personal information.

97 **Unexcused Absences**

98 Course attendance policies may penalize unexcused absences in a student's grade; such policies
99 must be specified in the course syllabus. Online courses should specify any penalties for not
100 participating in activities in the allotted time without a valid excuse.

101 Instructors have full discretion to set their own policy regarding the late acceptance of course
102 work missed due to an unexcused absence; this policy should be specified in the course syllabus.

103 **Assistance and Appeals**

104 On the Columbia Campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to assist instructors
105 and verify, in certain cases, students' stated reasons for requesting excused absences. Palmetto
106 College campuses should work with their Faculty Organizations to define similar agencies.

107 Any student who is denied a request for an excused absence from class for any of the reasons set
108 forth herein may appeal the decision per the STAF 6.30 Academic Grievance Policy. As
109 described in STAF 6.27, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is also available to help students
110 resolve grievances and maintain policy compliance.

111 Students are expected to be fully honest with instructors, university staff and administrators
112 when they make requests to excuse absences and when they work with instructors to arrange
113 terms for the completion of coursework missed due to excused absences. Any dishonesty in
114 requesting excused absences or accommodations for the timely completion of missed work is
115 regarded as a violation of academic integrity and is subject to disciplinary action through the
116 Office of Academic Integrity.

1 **Attendance Policy Option 3: No Absence Penalty**

2 **Policy Statement**

3 The University of South Carolina is committed to providing compelling and enriching
4 educational experiences of the highest quality. It considers its students to be adults who are
5 responsible for their own decisions regarding course attendance and does not assess grade
6 penalties for absence. Instructors may, however, require and evaluate course participation.
7 Different courses demand different approaches to assessing student participation. Therefore,
8 subject to certain limitations described below, instructors of record are responsible for
9 determining the participation policies appropriate to their individual courses.

10 If an instructor intends to assign a grade for participation the instructor must: inform students in
11 writing how participation will be measured, particularly as such measurement goes beyond
12 recording students' mere presence in the classroom for all or part of a class session; maintain
13 current, verifiable records; take care to apply participation policies consistently and fairly for all
14 students; and recognize that failure to comply could constitute grounds for a grade appeal.

15 While instructors are not required to keep a record of attendance, they are encouraged to do so
16 whenever practical. Federal law requires institutions to document the last day of participation for
17 enrolled students who fail to complete a course.

18 Instructors must allow make-up work for excused absences as described below.

19 Students are responsible for notification and documentation of excused absences. Whenever
20 possible, and as specified below, documentation is required in advance of any excused absence.

21 This policy applies to all courses offered by the University of South Carolina, including
22 synchronous or asynchronous online courses.

23 **Excused Absences**

24 Students must be permitted to make up coursework missed due to an excused absence or to
25 complete an equivalent assignment agreed upon with the instructor. Online courses, whether
26 synchronous or asynchronous, are not exempt from this rule. In all cases of excused absence,
27 the instructor of must engage in an interactive process with the student to determine reasonable
28 make-up work.

29 Instructors may refuse to grant a request for an excused absence or for make-up work that
30 would result in a fundamental alteration of the essential academic requirements of the course. In
31 such instances, students should be apprised of the University's policy regarding course
32 withdrawals, including undergraduate hardship withdrawals.

33 The University of South Carolina is required by law to excuse absences from class for the
34 following reasons:

- 35 1. Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as
36 documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
- 37 2. Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding,
38 including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate
39 judicial or administrative authority.
- 40 3. Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the
41 student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.

- 42 4. A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by
43 the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student
44 from attending class.
- 45 5. Observance of a religious practice, holiday or holy day, if the instructor of the class is
46 provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious
47 practice, holiday or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly
48 scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of
49 the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:
50 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofters/index>.
- 51 6. Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

52 The University of South Carolina requires that absences from class for the following reasons
53 must also be excused:

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55 required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances,
56 academic competitions, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of
57 participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
- 58 2. Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with
59 appropriate documentation.
- 60 3. Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate
61 documentation.
- 62 4. University closure for weather-related or other emergencies.

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65 campus or that require a student's presence off-campus.
- 66 2. Mandatory interviews related to employment, professional school, or graduate school
67 that cannot be rescheduled.
- 68 3. Any other situation deemed excusable by the instructor. Instructors are encouraged
69 to show understanding toward students' needs while remaining mindful of the
70 University's high academic standards and the need to be scrupulously even-handed.

71 **Requesting Excuses**

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73 limited to, authorized university activities and religious observances--students should submit a
74 request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence, explaining the
75 reason for absence, providing supporting documentation as required above, and including any
76 request for make-up work. Students should submit this request no later than the end of the
77 second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term and within twice
78 the length of the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:
79 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofters/index>.

80 To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but
81 not limited to, legal proceedings or illness--students should submit in writing a request stating
82 the date of absence, the reason for absence, and any request for make-up work as soon as
83 reasonably possible after they become aware of the need to be absent. For instance, in the case
84 of a contagious illness a student should notify the instructor soon after becoming aware of this
85 illness. Instructors should not maintain records of student medical conditions. On the Columbia

86 campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to certify any excuses involving
87 confidential personal information.

88 **Assistance and Appeals**

89 On the Columbia Campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to assist instructors
90 and verify, in certain cases, students' stated reasons for requesting excused absences. Palmetto
91 College campuses should work with their Faculty Organizations to define similar agencies.

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93 forth herein may appeal the decision per the STAF 6.30 Academic Grievance Policy. As
94 described in STAF 6.27, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is also available to help students
95 resolve grievances and maintain policy compliance.

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97 when they make requests to excuse absences and when they work with instructors to arrange
98 terms for the completion of coursework missed due to excused absences. Any dishonesty in
99 requesting excused absences or accommodations for the timely completion of missed work is
100 regarded as a violation of academic integrity and is subject to disciplinary action through the
101 Office of Academic Integrity.