

University Academic Affairs Committee  
Minutes

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
3 pm, HCC 307

**Committee:** Davis Oldham (chair), Karen Anewalt, Rachel Graefe-Anderson, Gonzalo Campos Dintrans, Jane Huffman

**Ex officio:** Rita Dunston, Tim O'Donnell, Wes Hillyard

**Student representatives:** Alexander Lee

**Guests:** Matt Good, Marissa Alessi (students supporting Day on Democracy)

1. Approval of previous minutes
  - a. The January minutes were previously approved electronically.
  
2. Old business
  - a. Revision to the catalog requirements for attendance.

Davis circulated the final draft of the new language prior to the meeting. Everyone reviewed the final draft.

Someone asked if the policy would be improved if the statement about including class participation information on syllabus were more general to allow freedom to discuss participation criteria and grading during the first week of classes. The administrators in the group reminded the committee that nearly every time a student has had an academic dispute related to class participation, the syllabus in question doesn't specify the details about participation.

The committee voted unanimously to send the language to UFC for the 2019-2020 catalog.

Approved language:

~~Strikethrough~~ indicates deletions; new language is in red.

### **Attendance and Class Absences**

A primary responsibility of students is class attendance. Learning is an experience which requires active participation, and the University expects participation of students in all their scheduled classes be they lectures, online collaborations, laboratories, seminars, studios, field trips or other types of activities. It is understood that occasional absences are unavoidable, but the student is responsible for his or her decision to miss a particular class meeting. In deciding to miss a class, a student must be aware that he or she is accountable, nonetheless, for any test or quiz and all assignments, material covered, and announcements made in that class.

Because of the wide variety of courses and teaching methods employed, requirements for attendance in class and laboratory/studio sessions is not prescribed on a university-wide basis. ~~Furthermore,~~ Class participation itself is an appropriate criterion for grading and a student's failure to participate can be expected to affect his or her grade in the course. **The expectations for class participation, the manner in which it is to be evaluated, and the impact of student absences on a class participation score should be clearly stated on the course syllabus.**

~~While faculty are entirely at their~~ **have** discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments, **the following guidelines should be taken into consideration regarding student absences in a course.** ~~Failure to drop or withdraw from a course that the student is not attending may result in a final grade of F.~~

**Disability-Related Absences.** A student who has a disability-related need for flexibility with regard to attendance expectations may register with the Office of Disability Resources (ODR). This accommodation would be listed as "Disability-Related Absences" on their accommodation letter, and it is the student's responsibility to provide their accommodation letter to each faculty member for whom they wish to receive accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive. Please see Disability-Related Absences Guidelines and contact the Office of Disability Resources for questions.

**Religious observances.** Requests by students whose religious observance precludes class participation on specific days to reschedule graded work will be honored. Graded work includes final examinations, scheduled tests, graded written assignments, graded laboratory projects, and graded oral assignments. Alternative dates will be set by consulting with the instructor or instructors and, if necessary, through consultation with the Office of Academic Services. It is the student's responsibility to make alternative arrangements as early as possible.

**Jury duty.** UMW students may be summoned to serve as trial jurors. Jury duty is a legal obligation and those who fail to respond to a summons are subject to

criminal prosecution. The University supports jury service as an important civic duty and community responsibility. Students who will need to miss class in order to fulfill their jury service obligation should promptly notify all instructors, provide a copy of the summons as documentation of the absence (if requested by the instructor), and make arrangements to complete any missed work. Absences from class because of jury duty service will not be penalized. Students should contact the Office of Academic Services if they have any questions or if they need assistance in making arrangements for missed class time due to jury duty service.

**Military Service.** UMW recognizes and appreciates the important contributions made in service to our country by Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard members. Requests to reschedule graded work due to short term military absence will be honored. Short term military absence will be recognized either as a result of regularly scheduled drill/training, unexpected training/drill or short term activation/deployment (e.g., National Guard activation in response to a natural disaster or civil unrest). Details on the procedure for Military Service absence can be found in the *Directory of Academic Procedures*. (Note: military obligation requiring withdrawal from the University for the remainder of a term is covered elsewhere.)

**Scheduled Absences.** Certain absences are usually considered legitimate and should not negatively affect a student's class participation score in a course nor should they prevent the student from being allowed to reschedule or make-up missed assignments (such as a test, paper, presentation, etc.). Work conflicts, scheduled medical procedures, participation in intercollegiate athletic competitions, and participation in any academically-related performance activity (such as an academic conference, musical recital, theatre performance, debate team competition, art exhibition, etc.) are examples of scheduled absences for which students should be given consideration and their work should not be disadvantaged because of such absences. Students must notify the faculty by no later than the end of the first week of the course of potential scheduled absences. Once notification is made, the student and faculty member will determine if mutually acceptable alternatives exist for completing any classroom, lab, clinical/field or other required activities or assignments that would be missed due to the scheduled absences. If it is determined that missed academic activities cannot be rescheduled in a reasonable fashion, or that the absences would prevent adequate mastery of required course material, the student is advised to either drop the course or alter planned scheduled absences. Students must submit written verification of scheduled absences to the faculty by no later than the first class period of the second week of the semester.

**Unscheduled Absences.** Events or activities initially scheduled for one time, then changed (with limited notice) or unforeseeable unscheduled absences (compelling, verifiable circumstances beyond the student's control) may sometimes interfere with the student's ability to attend class or submit required work on schedule. In these cases, faculty should work with students to reschedule missed assignments or to develop alternative procedures for completing course requirements. Examples of such absences include student

injury or illness, the extending of an athletic or academic team season due to qualification for post-season tournament competition, death of an immediate family member, last-minute work conflict that cannot be rescheduled, or any other similarly unforeseen, compelling, and verifiable absence. Students must notify instructors of each unexpected absence within one week of becoming aware of the projected absence. If required by the faculty member, students must submit written verification of any unscheduled absence. If possible, verification should be provided prior to the absence or immediately upon return to class if not possible prior to the absence. Faculty may consider the absence as unexcused if the student fails to comply with published notification and verification timeframes or procedures.

Students who face an emergency and/or who expect to be absent for more than a full week of classes ~~may~~ **should** contact **the Office of Academic Services** to report the absence **and request assistance (if necessary) in working with faculty members to reschedule work or to develop acceptable alternatives for completing course requirements.** ~~If contacted by a student, the Office of Academic Services will contact the course instructors as a courtesy.~~ **While there are no excused absences at the University of Mary Washington, the Office of Academic Services will provide assistance to students and faculty members in developing mutually acceptable alternative methods for completing or demonstrating mastery of missed learning activities.** ~~There are no excused absences at the University of Mary Washington.~~ **Decisions about** ~~make up work are entirely at the discretion of~~ **made by** each instructor and ~~may~~ **require documentation when deemed necessary by the instructor.**

b. Change in requirements to walk at graduation (motion from UFC)

Please review the proposal

Davis circulated a draft of new language for the graduation policy prior to the meeting. He tried to make it clear that there is a distinction between participating in commencement and earning degree.

The committee engaged in some minor editing for clarity. The revised policy was unanimously approved to send to UFC.

Approved Language:

Language in the catalog (new language is in **red**)

**UMW holds commencement annually in May.** The date for the degree awarded is the conclusion of the summer, fall or spring terms in which all

the degree requirements were completed. The student is cleared for the degree award and the degree is posted on the official transcript at the conclusion of the summer, fall or spring terms in which all degree requirements were completed and all other obligations to the university have been met. Students submit degree applications during the second semester of the junior year. In extraordinary situations, a student who requires no more than one course (up to a maximum of 4 credits) for graduation and plans to complete the degree requirement following commencement may petition the Office of the Registrar for special consideration to participate in the commencement ceremony no later than the close of business on the Tuesday immediately preceding commencement for special consideration to participate in the commencement ceremony..

Language in the Academic Procedures Directory:

UMW holds commencement annually in May. The date for the degree awarded is the conclusion of the summer, fall or spring terms in which all the degree requirements were completed. The student is cleared for the degree award and the degree is posted on the official transcript at the conclusion of the summer, fall or spring terms in which all degree requirements were completed and all other obligations to the university have been met. Students submit degree applications during the second semester of the junior year. In extraordinary situations, a student who requires no more than one course (up to a maximum of 4 credits) for graduation and plans to complete the degree requirement following commencement may petition the Office of the Registrar for special consideration to participate in the commencement ceremony no later than the close of business on the Tuesday immediately preceding commencement for special consideration to participate in the commencement ceremony.

Following receipt of the petition, the Registrar will initiate a formal review of the request. The petition will be considered by a committee consisting of the Dean of the College in which the student is enrolled, the Registrar, the Dean of Student Life, and the chair of the University Academic Affairs Committee. At the conclusion of this process, the Registrar will communicate the final decision of the committee to the student.

3. New business to research for next meeting
  - a. Permission for class council to wear stoles indicating their services at commencement

The committee considered the request from class council to wear stoles at commencement as well as issues related to whether an additional process is needed to approve future requests.

There are multiple groups interested in having some regalia at commencement for recognition. Class Council submitted the most recent request, but there are other groups.

The committee discussed how we currently monitor what students wear during commencement. The Dean of Students and other designated staff police the students during the line up time period and ask students to remove unapproved items. Davis consulted with Cedric who said he and his group will enforce whatever the faculty decides.

Rita talked to CNU & W&M. Both have similar processes for approving regalia. Student groups address requests to the Dean of Students. Academic groups address requests to someone in an academic position (Dean, Faculty Marshall, etc).

Student representatives shared that SAE already has a process through which student groups can request cords and approved cords are publicized on the UMW website. Academic departments with honor societies, special majors, etc that earn cords already act autonomously to approve and distribute cords for academic groups. The committee determined that an additional process for approving cords is not needed.

The committee decided to continue to limit stoles to students graduating in the Honors Program in recognition of their academic achievement. Other groups will be eligible to apply for cords.

Davis will send a statement to UFC with the decision on stoles and clarification on the existing channels for approval of cords.

b. Canceling of classes on election day.

Students provided a thorough? discussion of their robust proposal to cancel classes on election day. While classes would be cancelled, the University would remain open. Students have drafted a multiphase plan with support from the Mayor of Fredericksburg, various volunteer organizations, and plans to eventually have a polling location on campus.

The committee discussed how the proposal supports values of community involvement, civic engagement, and is in line with ASPIRE. While the committee supports the proposal, the best way to make up the lost instructional hours is not obvious.

The students met with the Provost to talk about the impact to the academic calendar. Some potential options would be removing a date from fall break or having classes on Labor Day in place of Election Day. Committee members asked how students would feel about losing a day of fall break. This would make it much more challenging for many students to travel home for break. Additionally, Tim spoke against losing a day of break as time off mid-semester is important for student success and mental health.

It would be challenging to trade Labor Day for Election Day because on Labor Day, the University is closed which provides staff with a day off. The Day of Democracy would cancel classes rather than close the University.

Including an extra Friday the week before classes begin was considered. This would not be ideal because some students taking a Tuesday course would be unavailable to makeup the time on a Friday. Additionally, this calendar change would impact student programs that are held just prior to the first week of classes (NEST, etc).

Similarly, extending the semester to the first Monday of exam week would pose many challenges. There would be a similar issue where students wouldn't necessarily be free to make up a Tuesday class on a Monday. The exam schedule can't be easily compressed to include fewer days. If the exam week were extended to the following Monday, that poses challenges with staff leave.

The committee decided to send a statement of general support to UFC with the goal of continuing conversations related to the Academic Calendar and receiving input from additional sources. An additional item

for future consideration is how cancelling classes on Election Day may affect advanced registration, which is normally held during that week.

c. Alternative M/W time slots

This issue was discussed extensively during the 2017-2018 academic year. Davis asked if there was any interest within the committee of revisiting this issue. No one indicated an interest in discussing further.

Adjourn 4:27