

August 31, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Faculty, Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Directors

FROM: Winston Langley, Provost and Vice Chancellor for  
Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Minimum Faculty Responsibilities

As we prepare for the beginning of a new academic year, I wish to remind you that every faculty member is responsible for conforming to certain basic practices that promote meaningful educational experiences for our students. Most faculty members carry out these practices as a matter of course. I list them here to reaffirm their importance to our students, the faculty, and the university.

#### **OFFICE HOURS**

All full-time faculty members must schedule, post, and keep regular office hours. A minimum of three hours per week is required, with additional hours to be offered during peak advising times. Part-time faculty members should schedule office hours in proportion to the number of courses taught (e.g., one hour per week for those teaching one course.) Additional office hours may be scheduled by appointment.

#### **COURSE SYLLABI**

Faculty members are required to provide a syllabus for each course that they teach. Please see the memorandum on course procedures, appended to this email, for suggestions about the content of syllabi.

#### **MISSED CLASSES**

All planned absences for legitimate professional or personal reasons must be approved in advance by the department chair. In such cases, the instructor is responsible for arranging makeup classes or for providing alternative instructional activities. When an illness or unforeseen emergency results in the cancellation of a class, the instructor should notify the chair as soon as possible and arrange for notices to be posted informing students of the cancellation. In the event of an extended absence of the instructor, the chair is responsible for arranging continuing instruction of the course.

#### **FINAL EXAMINATIONS**

Faculty members are obligated to restrict the administration of final examinations to the official examination period, which for the fall 09 semester is Wednesday, December 16 through Tuesday, December 19, 2009. **Faculty members may not, therefore, administer final examinations during the last week of classes or during the study period.**

#### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities must be afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, all postsecondary education programs and activities. This includes any course, course of study, or activity offered. Rules or policies which would limit students with disabilities from participating fully in a program or activity may not be imposed. Academic standards should not be compromised, but accommodations must be provided, on a case-by-case basis, to afford qualified students with disabilities an equal education opportunity. Faculty members should not provide academic accommodations without approval from the Ross Center for Disability Services. Instead, faculty members should refer those students seeking accommodations to the Ross Center. Faculty handbooks containing detailed information on faculty responsibilities and rights are available at the Ross Center.

Thank you for your cooperation in supporting and adhering to these practices. I know that, collectively, the faculty takes its responsibilities very seriously. I view the requirements for holding office hours, distributing course syllabi, making arrangements for missed classes and administering final examinations during the designated examination period, only, as falling under the "minimum assigned duties," as defined by the faculty collective bargaining agreement, and I am asking for the cooperation of the deans and department chairs in ensuring that these duties are fulfilled in all instances.

## MEMORANDUM ON COURSE OFFERINGS

Each year an inordinate number of complaints and disputes about grades, evaluations, and course procedures come to department heads, deans, the Provost's Office, and the Registrar's Office. The great majority of those disputes could be avoided, if faculty members took note of the minimal guidelines suggested below.

These guidelines suggest possible ways of minimizing some of the confusions and misunderstandings that often lead to grievances. All courses cannot and should not be conducted identically. These guidelines are meant to be helpful. They are suggestions not prescriptions. They are not intended to limit faculty freedom or to determine course structure and modes of evaluation.

### GUIDELINES

1. The syllabus should contain the following information:

- your course objectives
- your expectations and any special requirements for papers, projects, lab reports or exams
- your attendance policies
- your grading and/or evaluation criteria and the approximate weight of each course requirement in the final grade or evaluation
- your examination schedule and any make-up or rescheduling policies
- your office, phone and mailbox numbers
- a brief statement about the university's policy on academic dishonesty, including plagiarism
- if you have a disability and feel you will need accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services (Campus Center Upper Level Room 211) at 617.287.7430.
- Academic Support Services

Try to avoid major changes as the semester progresses.

2. Since grading and evaluation policies often tend to be a focus of confusion or misunderstanding, take special care to articulate your criteria and invite students to discuss related questions with you early in the course.
3. Avoid further misunderstandings by reminding students of their responsibilities in your course. For instance, remind them that it is their responsibility to take exams at the scheduled times and know the location of their exams, to make alternative arrangements in advance if they have a legitimate reason for not being able to take an exam, and to provide appropriate explanation and documentation if they miss an exam without making prior arrangements. Remind students also of your policies on make-up exams.
4. Announce field trips and other special meetings, preferably in class and in writing. If these require activity on holidays and/or weekends, state this clearly.
5. If you do not return exams, lab reports, papers, and projects to your students, be sure to retain, for a reasonable period of time, all of your grading and evaluation materials for timely review with students both during the semester and after final grades or reports. Students have the right to discuss their grades and evaluations with faculty; they should be apprised of your grading policies, be able to see their work, and allowed, if they seek it, directly to hear your evaluation of their work.
6. Please remember to keep written records, especially on matters concerning academic dishonesty, and in cases of the latter, students must be informed in writing within ten days of the discovery of the alleged violation.

Allow me to remind you that all our discourse should be defined by civility.