

**University Committee on Academic Policy
Subcommittee on Religious Observance Policy
Proposed modified Policy on Religious Observance**

October 19, 2006

Sekhar Chivukula, Folke Lindhal, and Ralph Putnam met on October 19, 2006 to consider the concerns raised by ASMSU Academic Assembly about the religious observance policy. After examining the current policies and the Academic Assembly bill, we propose the following modified policy, to be incorporated into Academic Programs and the Faculty Handbook:

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty/academic staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not significantly disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons/directors, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

As Michigan State University has become increasingly multicultural, the incidence of conflicts between mandatory academic requirements and religious observances has increased. In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, instructors generally should accept claims of religious conflict at face value. Although some religious observances entail an extended period, instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of requests by any one student.

Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. Such policies should not extend to religious observances, as this would disadvantage those students.

If instructors require make-up examinations, activities, or assignments, they retain the right to determine their content and the conditions of administration or completion, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

April 11, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ralph Putnam, Chairperson
University Committee on Academic Policy

FROM: Jon Sticklen, Chairperson 
Executive Committee of Academic Council

SUBJECT: AA Bill #14-41 re: Change the Religious Observance Policy
to Accommodate Individual Religious Practices

As a follow up to the April 4, 2006 ECAC meeting, I am formally forwarding the above mentioned Academic Assembly Bill to UCAP for review. Please forward your report back to the Secretary for Academic Governance office at your earliest convenience for discussion at a later ECAC meeting.

S

Thank you.

JS/jh

Attachment

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY
FOR ACADEMIC
GOVERNANCE
Michigan State University
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**ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY**

FOURTEENTH SESSION

BILL NO. 14 - 41

INTRODUCED BY: Schare

SECONDED BY: Kaplan

A BILL TO: Change the Religious Observance Policy to accommodate individual religious practices

THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ENACT:

- WHEREAS, Diversity in the faculty, students and staff is a major source of Michigan State University's intellectual vitality and innovative spirit; and
- WHEREAS, The current Religious Observance policy state that "The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from class on these days are not seriously disadvantaged [...] Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without policy. If this is meant to extend to religious observances, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term"; and
- WHEREAS, The current policy does not require faculty to accommodate students for absences due to religious observances; and
- WHEREAS, All students should have a fair and equal opportunity and should not be penalized from earning full credit in a class, regardless of religious belief; and
- WHEREAS, Dropping of examinations should not extend to religious holidays. All students should have the opportunity to drop their lowest grade, where applied, without discrimination and regardless of religious belief; and
- WHEREAS, Faculty should be sent a list of religious holidays to be made aware of the observance and absences of students at the beginning of each semester or year; and
- WHEREAS, Faculty members are expected to reasonably accommodate individual religious practices, in accordance with Federal Law; and
- WHEREAS, A Modified Religious Observance Policy could include the following: "It is the policy of Michigan State University, as it is also Federal Law, that instructors will, without prejudice, provide students with accommodations who provide instructors with proper notification and wish to observe their religious holidays at times when academic requirements conflict with those observations. Students must be allowed an opportunity to make up any examination, in class extra credit, other written test, or class work, have access to any handouts or other material distributed in class and have the opportunity to obtain or to review and duplicated lecture notes or slides presented in class. A makeup examination must be at a time feasible to both instructor and students, cover only the material for which the student is originally responsible, and be given within a reasonable limit that retains currency of the material."; therefore be it

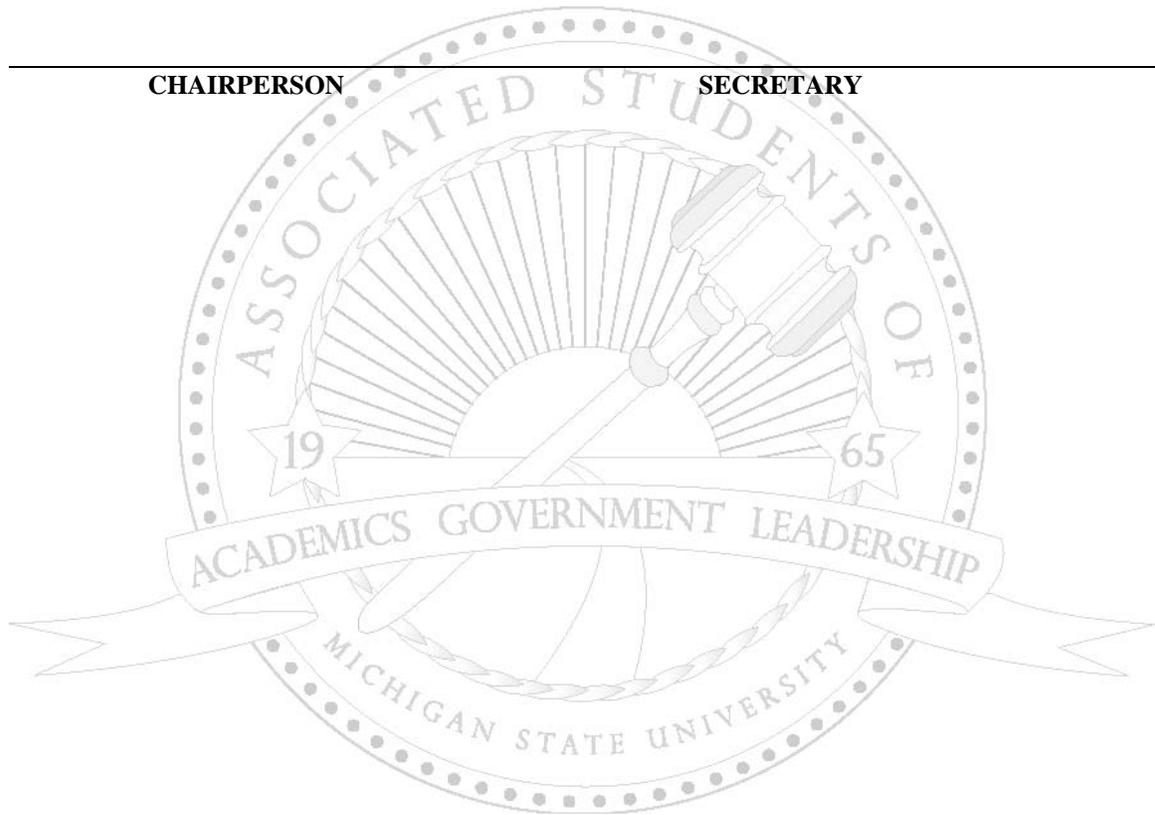
RESOLVED, The Office of the Chair should meet with the appropriate administration and faculty to modify the current policy and should advocate for a specific Religious Observance Policy to accommodate for individual religious practices as stated above.

INTRODUCED ON March 21, 2006

SPECIAL ACTION TAKEN _____ DATE _____

FINAL ACTION TAKEN X 26-0-0 March 21, 2006
PASSED FAILED VOTE DATE

CHAIRPERSON _____ SECRETARY _____



GENERAL INFORMATION, POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

General Procedures and Regulations

0.2 No person shall knowingly possess, display or cause or permit to be displayed any writing, record, document, or identification form used or maintained by Michigan State University knowing the same to be fictitious, altered, forged, counterfeited or made without proper authority.

0.3 No person without proper authority shall knowingly possess, make, or cause to be made, any key, card, or unlocking device, to operate any lock or locking mechanism used or maintained by Michigan State University.

POLICY ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

LIBRARY LENDING POLICIES

Borrowers are responsible for understanding the policies related to any library material they check out.

Items on open shelves are available for use by anyone in the library. In order to check out material, or use Reserves, Reference, or other restricted material, a library card and a picture ID must be presented. Library material must be checked out before leaving the building.

Material may not be checked out for others. A borrower is financially responsible for all material checked out using his/her card. Therefore, theft/loss of an MSU ID or library card must be reported immediately by calling Circulation at (517) 355-2333.

Borrower Responsibilities and Lending Policies

1. Due Dates and Care of Material

Borrowers are responsible for knowing the dates books are due and returning (or renewing) them promptly.

Material must be returned in the same condition that it was in when it was checked out. Borrowers are financially responsible for damage that occurs while material is checked out to them. To protect themselves, borrowers who notice damage before checking out a book should bring it to the attention of Circulation staff, who will note it. Borrowers are also financially responsible for material stolen while checked out to them, so checked out items should never be left unattended.

Checked-out material will be recalled if requested by another user and may be given a new (earlier) due date. These must be promptly returned to avoid recall fines. To prevent recall fines while out of town (breaks between semesters, vacation, sabbatical, university business, etc.), a borrower should return library material before leaving — or make arrangements with someone to watch for recalls, have access to one's checked out material, and return recalled items.

2. Returning Material

Please return laptops, videos, and items from Reserve, Reference, Art, Maps, Music, and Software to the desk where they were checked out. Place other material in any book return, at the Main Library (24 hour drops at both entrances) or a branch — or mail it to: Book Returns, Circulation, MSU, 100 Library, East Lansing, MI 48824-1048; postal insurance of \$50 per volume is suggested. (If overdue fines are involved, the postmark will be considered the date of return.)

For written confirmation of the return of library material, take it to the Main Circulation (instead of placing it in a book return) and ask the Desk Supervisor for a receipt.

3. Renewals

Library material must be renewed to extend the due date; renewals are not automatic. Borrowers may renew online via "Your Account" at: <http://magic.msu.edu> — phone renewals are not possible. All material may be renewed except recalled items and reserves, software, CDs, records, videodiscs, special permission checkouts, and laptops, and some 3-day and 7-day material.

4. Recall of Checked Out Material

The library usually has only one copy of each title to support the information needs of the entire MSU community. Therefore, we will recall any material that is checked-out if it is requested by someone else. Recalled material cannot be renewed. If the check-

out period was more than 14 days, the recall notice may include a new due date (earlier than the original due date).

If a recalled item is not returned by the specified date, the borrower's library privileges will be suspended until it is returned and recall fines of \$1.00 per day will be charged. Fines for items returned after the recall due date are the responsibility of the borrower regardless of being away from campus for breaks between semesters, vacations, exams, illness, car troubles, sabbatical leaves, off-campus university business, unread University-email, late or never-received recall or reminder notices, etc. If a borrower will be away, that person must assure that checked out material will be available to others during the absence. Material should either be returned before leaving or arrangements should be made for someone to watch the absent borrower's mail for recalls, have access to checked out material, and return recalled items.

If you need an item that is checked out, please request a "recall" at the Main Library Circulation Desk, a branch library, or by using library webforms (<http://www.lib.msu.edu/services>). Circulation staff will send the borrower a recall notice, indicating that the material must be returned within fourteen days or be subject to fines of \$1 per day. When returned, it will be held at the Main Library (or a branch) for ten days and you will be notified to pick it up.

5. Library Cards/MSU ID Cards

Material may not be checked out for others. A borrower is financially responsible for all material checked out using his/her card. Therefore, theft/loss of an MSU ID or library card must be reported immediately by calling Circulation at 517/ 355-2333.

MSU IDs (available for students, faculty and staff at the Registrar's Office, 50 Administration) are issued with a library barcode. When an MSU student activates his/her MSU e-mail account, the barcode number is entered automatically into library records. If a student has not activated MSU e-mail, the student (like faculty and staff) may have the barcode added to library records at the Main Library Circulation Desk or a branch library before checking out material.

A photo ID is required to register an MSU ID. If a borrower's library card or MSU ID lacks a picture, an additional photo ID will always be required to check out material.

6. Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities

Disability-related accommodations may be requested by emailing atc@mail.lib.msu.edu or calling 517-432-6123 x196.

7. Responsibilities Regarding Postal and E-Mail Addresses for Library Notices

Library addresses for MSU students are loaded automatically to MAGIC from MSU Registrar records, which require students (except those in University housing) to report local or permanent address changes at <http://www.lib.msu.edu/forms/address> or 150 Administration Building. Even if a student does not move, the MSU Registrar requires reconfirmation of local address at the beginning of each summer and each fall! If a student does not reconfirm, mail will be sent to permanent address, causing delays in vital correspondence from the Libraries (possibly resulting in fines for which the student will be held responsible).

Faculty/staff members must report address changes via departmental secretaries. Community borrowers must report e-mail and postal address changes at the Circulation Desk (1st floor lobby) or via e-mail to circadm@mail.lib.msu.edu

Notices about library material are automatically sent to the MSU e-mail addresses of MSU students, faculty, and staff. It is the borrower's responsibility to read MSU e-mail regularly or set MSU mail to forward to an e-mail account that is read regularly.

8. Overdue Fines

Fines and bills are the responsibility of the borrower regardless of being away from campus for breaks between semesters, vacations, exams, illness, car troubles, sabbatical leaves, unread MSU e-mail, late or never-received reminder notices, etc. Fine amounts are not calculated until after material is returned. Material returned after closing is not considered returned until the next day the library is open.

When a borrower owes \$3 or more, library privileges are suspended without notice until account is paid in full. Payment may be made by mail (see address at end of this document) or at the Main Library Circulation Desk.

The MSU Libraries have a "no fines" policy for most material. Borrower cooperation in returning or renewing material promptly after receiving reminder notices will help retain this policy. Fines are charged for overdue recalled items and reserve material, software, CDs, records, videodiscs, special permission checkouts, and laptops.

- Overdue fines for reserve material are sixty cents (60¢) per item per hour, 24 hours per day, from the time due until the time returned, with no grace period (**\$14.40** per day).

- Overdue fines for recalled items, software, CDs, records, videos, and special permission checkouts are \$1 per day from the due date until the day returned, with no grace period.

- Overdue fines for laptop computers are \$6 per hour, 24 hours per day, from the time due until the time returned, with no grace period (**\$144.00** per day).

- Overdue fines for material from other libraries (ILLiad or MeLCat) are **\$2.00** per day.

9. Bills for Replacement of Long-Overdue Material

When an item is significantly overdue, the borrower is billed for replacement and borrowing privileges are suspended until the account is paid in full or material is returned or replaced by the borrower. Holds are placed on MSU student enrollment, registration, diplomas, and transcripts, which also remain until the account is paid in full.

Minimum replacement charges are \$50 for a book, \$75 for a periodical. Current market value is charged whenever it is higher than the minimum replacement charge.

- Billed material must be brought to the desk and be renewed in person — self-renewal is not allowed.

- When a billed item is returned, the replacement charge is canceled but overdue fines may be charged.

- Unresolved bills may be turned over to a collection agency any time after 30 days.

10. Community Borrowers

Michigan residents at least 18 years old (who are not MSU students, faculty, or staff) are eligible for community library privileges. Community borrowers must present photo ID and proof of Michigan residence to obtain an MSU library card. If the individual has no outstanding fines or bills from a previous MSU library account, a card will be issued. (Community borrowers cannot check out periodicals, software, CDs, records, videodiscs or laptops.)



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Religious Observance

V. INSTRUCTION (*Cont.*)

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty/academic staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

Faculty/academic staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons/directors, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

As Michigan State University has become increasingly multicultural, the incidence of conflicts between mandatory academic requirements and religious observances has increased. In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the

validity of individual claims, the claim of a religious conflict should be accepted at face value. Be aware that some degrees of observance may have a more extensive period of observance. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of requests by any one student. Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. If this is meant to extend to religious observances, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine the content of the exams and the conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

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[from Ombudsman]

Attendance Policy (Religious Observance, University sponsored events)

UCAP should clarify whether students who miss course assignments to observe religious holidays or to participate in university-sponsored events and athletic competition should be allowed to make up those assignments, even if instructors allow students to drop their lowest grade on an assignment or test.

Comment

A thorny issue that demands the same recommendation in each yearly annual report is the multitude of course attendance policies for student absences for religious observances, University sponsored events and participating in athletic events. The Ombudsman consistently recommends that the University Committee on Academic Policy review attendance recommendations attached to the three events cited above to determine if any changes need to take place. In particular, review student concerns about making up course work missed when students are absent in order to participate in university-approved events or to observe religious holidays.

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

August 23, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Directors, Chairpersons
FROM: Kim Wilcox, Provost
RE: University Policy on Religious Observance

As our campus and community becomes increasingly multicultural, faculty may experience an increase in the number of requests for academic accommodations related to absence for the observance of religious holidays. Michigan State University has long had a policy recognizing that many individuals observe religious holidays associated with their particular faiths. The MSU policy on religious observance which follows is stated in the on-line Faculty Handbook at <http://www.hr.msu.edu/HRsite/Documents/Faculty/Handbooks/Faculty/Instruction/v-religiousobservance.htm> and also on page 96 of Academic Programs 2005-07 for reference by faculty and students.



OFFICE OF THE
PROVOST

Michigan State University
Administration Building
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1046

FAX: 517/355-9601

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty/academic staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements **in advance** with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons/directors, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

Faculty are encouraged to announce early in the semester to students that they are responsible for making arrangements in advance of their absence. Faculty should also review their syllabi and semester plans to determine whether or not scheduling is likely to disadvantage students. For example, a one-evening-only review session for a major exam (although optional) scheduled during a religious observance may be impossible to accommodate. Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a

blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. If this is meant to extend to religious observances, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine the content of the exams and the conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment. Resources for planning for religious holidays are available at the following websites, <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org> and/or http://www.indiana.edu/~deanfac/rel_hol_cal.html.

In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, we should accept the claim of a religious conflict at face value. We should also be aware that some degrees of observance may have a more extensive period of observance. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of requests by any one student.

As we begin the new academic year, I should like to emphasize our continuing commitment to this policy. Whether one ascribes to the tenets of a particular faith or to none, each of us should find security in the tradition of religious pluralism which has characterized American society and which underlies the University's policy.

Our practices must conform to our commitments. Thus, I ask all University personnel to be sensitive to religious observance requests by students, faculty and staff. Working together as people of good will, I am confident that we can continue to build an environment that fosters pluralism and inclusion.

JPY:rp8.21rel.doc