

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

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.

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Thank you.

JS/jh

Attachment

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY
FOR ACADEMIC
GOVERNANCE
Michigan State University
308 Olds Hall
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1047
517/355-2337
FAX: 517/355-1784

**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 _____

