

## FACULTY SENATE POSITION STATEMENT ON ENHANCING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Concerns over student attendance in lower level classes at UA have been much discussed across campus in recent months. Last year a limited survey of selected classes suggested that poor attendance was a growing problem. A number of explanations have been mentioned including poor instruction, low academic standards, and a belief that attendance is optional. Regardless of any survey or its interpretation, the faculty recognizes that a high level of student attendance is desirable. We also recognize the importance of individual faculty members' academic freedom in conducting classes in a manner consistent with their professional expertise and conscience. Toward these ends we make the following statements:

- (1) Faculty have the right to require attendance.
- (2) Faculty should stress the importance of attendance in all classes; especially in lower level classes where beginning students may establish a pattern of attendance that carries over to subsequent years, and in large lecture sections where preliminary data has suggested that attendance problems may be particularly acute.
- (3) We reaffirm the existing policy on attendance from the Faculty Handbook and Undergraduate Catalog:
  - a. "Students are expected to attend classes as scheduled. Attendance policies must be provided to each student at the beginning of the semester. These policies must allow for the possibility that students may experience difficulties beyond their control which result in failure to attend class or failure to complete an assignment on time." (Faculty Handbook, Chapter 5, section III).
  - b. "Students are expected to attend all classes for which they are registered." (Undergraduate Catalog, p. 23).
- (4) Faculty are cautioned to avoid making statements such as "all you have to do is to pass the exams" without also pointing out that (a) attendance is a crucial element in being able to pass the exams, and (b) studies have shown a clear and direct correlation of attendance with grades.
- (5) Faculty are encouraged to develop teaching skills that would naturally increase students' desire to attend class.
- (6) We commend the administration for organizing the recent workshop on "Best Practices in Large Lecture Classes" and encourage more activities of this nature to provide ongoing opportunities for faculty to share with their colleagues techniques and approaches that improve instruction and result in better

attendance. We further recommend that deans and department heads collect and maintain a catalog of useful attendance enhancement strategies and techniques.

- (7) Faculty are also encouraged to consider:
  - a. adjusting class content and standards such that habitual attendance will result in commensurately higher grades.
  - b. adopting attendance policies that contain penalties for absences or rewards for attendance.
  - c. keeping attendance records that would help quantify the magnitude of the problem and identify potential causes and solutions to the problem.
  
- (8) At present collecting attendance data can be burdensome to faculty or even impossible in large classes. We therefore encourage the administration to support the faculty's use of innovative approaches for facilitating the recording of attendance data, e.g. response meters, card swipe machines, etc. We would encourage implementation as soon as possible.