

## Religious Holidays on the Academic Calendar Issue

**Background:** A resolution was brought to the Senate floor (at the November 2008 meeting) that two Islamic holidays (Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha) also be listed on the University Academic Calendar (currently there are four religious holidays listed - Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday – although Passover and Good Friday are not listed on the Spring 2011 calendar at this time).

The University Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity and Affirmative Action issued a report dated (3/25/2009) that had recommendations to remove the listing of ANY religious holidays on the Academic Calendar and instead place them in a separate table at the bottom of the calendar with a link to an interfaith calendar. Wording in the UD Catalog and the Faculty Handbook would also need to be changed so that ANY religious holiday would be treated the same as athletic absences.

The University Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies (UGS) considered the resolution and the report from the Committee on Diversity and Affirmative Action in the spring of 2010 and rejected both. With the reasoning that the Muslim population was very small on the campus, and that following wording in the UD Faculty Handbook and in the UD Catalog, an absence, as a result of worship of these holidays, would be considered excused.

The University Faculty Senate discussed this issue at its December 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### Faculty Senate Action Recommended by the Executive Committee:

- 1) Continue to list the existing religious holidays on the academic calendar (i.e., Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday).
- 2) Provide on the University's published academic calendar the web link to the religious holidays calendar that is maintained by interfaithcalendar.org. (<http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/>)
- 3) Modify the wording on religious holidays in the Faculty Handbook to read:

**NOTE: changes outlined in yellow (strikethrough text to be deleted; underlined text to be added)**

It is the policy of the University of Delaware not to cancel classes on religious holidays. However, students and faculty are encouraged to exercise their own judgment pertaining to their attendance on these days. In addition, faculty are encouraged not to schedule examinations or require the submission of special assignments on the following days: the evening before as well as the first two days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the fall term, Good Friday and the evenings before and the first two days of Passover in the spring semester. To facilitate planning for the potentially large number of absences on these days the University shall include the dates of these holidays in the academic calendar. Adjacent to each of these dates the academic calendar will include a reminder to consult the University policy on excused absences. The academic calendar will also include a link to a web site that maintains interfaith calendars of primary sacred times for world religions. As retrieved on March 21, 2011, the address for this site is: <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/>.

Absences on religious holidays listed in University calendars is are recognized as an excused absences. Nevertheless, students are urged to remind the instructor of their intention to be absent on a particular upcoming holiday.

4) Modify the University Attendance Policies (As retrieved from the 2010-2011 UD Catalog) to read:

**NOTE: changes outlined in yellow (strikethrough text to be deleted; underlined text to be added)**

It is the policy of the University of Delaware not to cancel classes on religious holidays. However, students and faculty are encouraged to exercise their own judgment pertaining to their attendance on these days. In addition, faculty are encouraged not to schedule examinations or require the submission of special assignments on the following days: the evenings before as well as the first two days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the fall term, Good Friday and the evening before and the first two days of Passover in the spring semester. Access to interfaith calendars of primary sacred times for world religions is available at: <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/>.

- a. Absence on religious holidays listed in University calendars is recognized as an excused absence. Nevertheless, students are urged to remind the instructor of their intention to be absent on a particular upcoming holiday.
  
- b. Absences on religious holidays not listed in University calendars, as well as absences due to athletic participation or other extracurricular activities in which students are official representatives of the University, shall be recognized as excused absences when the student informs the instructor in writing during the first two weeks of the semester of these planned absences for the semester. Absences due to similar events that could not have been anticipated earlier in the semester will be recognized as excused absences upon advanced notification of the instructor by an appropriate faculty advisor or athletic coach.