

Discussion of Listing of Religious Holidays on the UD Academic Calendar

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 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 document from this committee is included at the end of this document).

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. In the spring of 2010, the Coordinating Committee discussed the actions of UGS and the resolution and report from the Committee on Diversity and Affirmative Action and did not make a recommendation. The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, in the Fall of 2010, further discussed this issue, as well as the UGS and Coordinating Committees. At this time there appears to be no consensus on a move forward, thus the item is before the University Faculty Senate for further discussion.

03/25/2009 Report from Committee on Diversity and Affirmative Action:

Issue:

Currently, three Jewish holidays, Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and one Christian holiday, Good Friday, are listed on the UD Academic Calendar. It was suggested to list two Islamic holidays, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, on the UD Academic Calendar.

Committee Finding:

In April, 1987, the Senate passed a resolution on listing four major religious holidays on the academic calendar and UD Faculty Handbook, with the following statement:

"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."

Most colleges in USA do not list any religious holidays in their academic calendar. Only a handful colleges list explicitly major religious holidays while very few treat different religious holidays differently.

Committee recommendation:

The four major holidays will be still listed in the academic calendar, but in a separated table at the bottom of the calendar, along with a policy statement and a link to an Internet site for religious holidays,

Interfaith Calendar.

The major religious holidays will no longer be listed in the faculty handbook. A major change on the faculty handbook is that the absence on major religious days is no longer automatically excused, but treated the same as athletic absence and absences due to other religious holidays.

The formal recommendations are

1. Delete the four religious holidays from UD Academic Calendar.
Add a table of the current major holidays at the end of Academic Calendar with a statement.

Major Religious Holidays, 2008-2009

Sept 30-Oct 1	Tue-Wed	Rosh Hashanah
Oct 9	Thu	Yom Kippur
Apr 10	Fri	Good Friday
Apr 15-16	Wed-Thu	Pesach(Passover)

It is the policy of the University of Delaware not to cancel classes on religious holidays. Faculty are encouraged not to schedule examinations or require the submission of special assignments on major religious holidays. See Faculty Handbook on excused absences at religious holidays. For a complete list of religious holidays, please visit the Interfaith Calendar: <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/>

2. Revise the following portion the Faculty Handbook:

Current:

"In addition, faculty are encouraged not to schedule examinations or require the submission of special assignments on the major 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.

Absences 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.

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 which could not have been anticipated earlier in the semester will be recognized as excused absences upon advance notification of the instructor by an appropriate faculty adviser or athletic coach. "

Current with proposed deletions (red with strikethrough) and additions (blue) marked in text:

"In addition, faculty are encouraged not to schedule examinations or require the submission of special

assignments on the major ~~religious holidays listed on the academic calendar~~ ~~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 ~~the major religious holidays~~ ~~these days~~ the University shall include the dates of ~~these~~ ~~the major~~ 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.

~~Absences 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.~~

Absences on ~~the major~~ religious holidays ~~and all other 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 which could not have been anticipated earlier in the semester will be recognized as excused absences upon advance notification of the instructor by an appropriate ~~official appointed by the college~~ ~~faculty adviser or athletic coach.~~ "

Proposed Statement:

"In addition, faculty are encouraged not to schedule examinations or require the submission of special assignments on the major religious holidays listed on the academic calendar. To facilitate planning for the potentially large number of absences on the major religious holidays the University shall include the dates of the major holidays in the academic calendar. Adjacent to the list of these dates the academic calendar will include a reminder to consult the University policy on excused absences.

Absences on the major religious holidays and all other religious holidays, 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 which could not have been anticipated earlier in the semester will be recognized as excused absences upon advance notification of the instructor by an appropriate official appointed by the college."