Procedures for Disability-Related Exception to Attendance Policies

1. In most cases, class attendance is critical to a student’s mastery of the knowledge and/or skills that are taught in a specific course.
2. Students are expected to follow the attendance policy established by the instructor in each class.
3. The college recognizes, however, that there may be times when a qualified student with a disability cannot attend class because of disability-related reasons.
4. If such a student believes it may not be possible to abide by the attendance policy because of issues related to a disability, the student should contact Disability Services (DS) staff prior to the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after the need for an exception arises, to discuss the matter of a possible accommodation. Determination of eligibility for a disability-related exception to the attendance policy is made by DS staff in consultation with the instructor of the course for which the exception is sought and, if necessary, with the department head or other appropriate administrator.
5. Essential Course Requirements: The College will make every effort to reasonably accommodate a student’s disability related academic needs. Please note, however, that neither the college nor an individual faculty member is required to waive an essential or fundamental academic requirement of a course, regardless of the nature of the student’s disability.

The academic department is responsible for identifying and defining the essential or fundamental academic requirements for its courses. The college expects students to attend a minimum of at least 75 percent of their scheduled class meetings to receive credit for the course. Individual department/program/disciplines may have requirements that are more stringent. Attendance requirements for each course are usually stated on the course syllabus.

The following questions will need to be considered when determining the extent to which attendance is an essential requirement of a course and whether an exception to the attendance policy may be appropriate:

a. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
b. Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
c. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on
student participation as an essential method of learning?
d. To what degree does a student’s failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
e. What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance? Each instructor may have different requirements regarding attendance.
f. By what method is the final grade calculated?

6. As with all disability accommodations, exceptions to the attendance policy will be determined on an individual, case-by-case basis depending on:

   a. The extent to which the supporting medical or psychological documentation from a licensed professional qualified to diagnose and treat the disability in question supports the need for an exception to an attendance policy, and

   b. The reasonableness of this accommodation in each requested class as determined by discussions between the DS staff and the course instructor based upon the above criteria. In questionable cases, the academic department head and/or other appropriate academic administrator will be included in these discussions.

7. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy based on disability are required to provide an accommodation plan to each instructor confirming the accommodation.

8. Accommodations need not be made retroactively. All accommodations, including an exception to the attendance policy, become effective when the student delivers accommodation plan from DS to the instructor.
9. An exception to the attendance policy does not mean that unlimited absences will be permitted. The number of additional absences a student may receive as a reasonable accommodation will be determined on a case-by-case basis for each class, depending on the student’s individual disability, the nature of the course and the degree to which class attendance is an essential requirement of the specific course.

10. Exception to the attendance policy does not mean exception to any of the other academic requirements of the course. Students are required to fulfill all course requirements and will be held to the same evaluation standards as specified in the course syllabus.

11. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy are expected to contact instructors in advance of an anticipated absence. This is particularly important if the anticipated absence will result in the student missing a quiz or exam or a deadline for turning in an assignment. For emergencies or unexpected disability-related absences, contact should be made as soon as possible to verify the reason for the absence and to discuss make-up work. The student and instructor should come to a clear agreement about the nature of the make-up work and deadlines for completing it. This agreement should be put into writing and signed by both the student and the instructor. The instructor should forward a copy of the signed agreement to Disability Services.

12. It is the individual student’s responsibility to obtain copies of lecture notes and/or materials from missed classes. Students who are likely to be absent from class should plan responsibly ahead of time to get lecture notes from a classmate or “study buddy.” Phone numbers should be exchanged in advance. Note takers cannot be provided for students who are absent from class.
13. Students should understand that even though an exception to the attendance policy has been made for them, absences are likely to have a negative impact on their academic performance simply because of the content and experiential learning they may have missed by not being in class. For this reason, they should make every attempt to attend class. Students should make special effort to attend class for quizzes and exams and to observe deadlines for submission of assignments.

14. Students should be aware that exception to the attendance policy would not be possible in all courses because class attendance is an essential, integral part of some courses. Some academic programs or majors may not be amenable to exceptions to the attendance policy. Students who know that attendance may be an on-going issue for them should consult with the academic department regarding the feasibility of attendance exceptions in the specific program of their interest.

15. All students who receive an exception to the attendance policy for disability reasons will be given a copy of these procedures by Disability Services staff. Students will be required to sign a statement for their DS file that they have read and understand the procedures and that they agree to abide by them.