May 1, 2014

Memorandum

To: David Erickson, Chair
Mānoa Senate Executive Committee

From: Maya Saffery
Chair, Committee on Academic Policy and Planning
Mānoa Faculty Senate

Re: CAPP Issue #11/14 Classroom Attendance Policy

Upon receipt of the above referenced Memo, I contacted the VCAA on October 9th asking his office to provide information on comparative attendance policies at our peer and benchmark institutions. He responded soon after (10/10/13) saying that his office will be gathering the data for us and will forward it to us as soon as it is ready.

Initially CAPP had decided to wait for the data before proceeding. To date, we have not received the data and at our April 9th meeting members of CAPP decided to respond to VCAA Dasenbrook’s September 23, 2013 memo concerning “Class Attendance.”

The CAPP agrees that class attendance is a very important matter for all students. As CAPP considered this issue we noted that there is wide variation in the formatting of courses across the campus. In addition to face-to-face classes, Manoa supports asynchronous online learning, independent study, hybrid, clinical, lab and fieldwork based courses. Punctuality, attendance and class participation requirements vary for each of these course types. For instance, some asynchronous online or independent study courses do not have specific attendance expectations, and instead focus on the student deliverables. Conversely, for courses that include laboratory, clinical or fieldwork instruction, attendance is usually mandatory and even two absences may result in failure of a course (regardless of the reason or excuse).

Therefore, we feel that it would be inappropriate to mandate an across the board specific class attendance policy for all schools or units to follow. CAPP does not see the need to add to, or alter the catalog statement.

Enclosure: VCAA Reed Dasenbrook’s Memo Dated September 23, 2013: Class Attendance
MEMORANDUM

TO: David Ericson
   Chair, Manoa Faculty Senate

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock
      Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Class Attendance

The Mānoa catalogue has a very brief section under policies that reads in full:

Class Attendance

Regular attendance at class and laboratory sessions is expected for all courses in which a student enrolls. Unavoidable absences should be explained to the instructor.

This is the only reference I have been able to find in any policy document to class attendance, aside from the more detailed paragraph that follows concerning “Excused Student Absences for Official University-Sponsored Events.” I would like to ask the Faculty Senate to consider whether this is an adequate policy. It is certainly well established that class attendance is well correlated with better grades, with greater learning gains, and with higher rates of retention and graduation.

One of the odd things about this ‘policy’ is that it only mentions the role of the instructor in terms of absences being explained to him or her. If we believe that being in class is important, should we construct a policy or develop practices that move more firmly in that direction? We could, for example, state that it is Mānoa policy that attendance be taken in class. Or to move further that attendance be taken and that it be a factor in the grade. We could also make it easier for attendance to be taken in larger classes: the clicker technology that you use in Senate meetings is one possibility though Kristen tells me that there are new apps that can do the same thing on smartphones and iPads so that no technological investment may be necessary.

If you agree that we should consider possibilities along these lines, I would appreciate it if you could refer this issue to the relevant MFS committee.