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 now 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.