Guidelines for Excused Absences for Course Field Trips, Scheduled Athletic Events and Registered Student Organization (RSO) Travel

Introduction: Balancing Multiple Educational Objectives

The College expects students to attend classes on a regular basis but does not, except for the policies stated below, have official guidelines on class attendance.

Field trips, either as part of an academic course or an activity of a registered student organization (RSO), and athletic events provide a rich and valuable educational experience to our students. While these experiences are encouraged and supported by college resources, they must be balanced by a consideration of the impact on the student’s entire education, especially the absence from normally scheduled classes that some activities require. For this reason, the following policy has been developed to guide faculty, students and administrators as they balance these competing pressures.

The general principle of these guidelines is that if a scheduled athletic competition conflicts with a class meeting or event, students should be excused from a class, provided that they adhere to the responsibilities listed below. *Excused athletic absences from classes apply only to athletic competitions and not practices.* For course field trips and RSO travel, faculty planning the excursion should not expect that an excused absence is automatic from the teaching faculty. The guidelines in this policy should be followed. *RSO committee meetings or regularly scheduled student organizations meetings do not meet eligibility requirements for excused absences.*

Coaches, RSO advisors, and professors should strive to understand the demands on the student’s time and resources by practicing open communication and dialog in individual cases. Students should never be placed in a conflict among faculty, RSO advisors and coaches. All parties must seek out the counsel of the Athletic Director, Department Chairpersons and Academic Dean if a mutual adjustment cannot be obtained.

The policy outlined below should not be interpreted to mean that only faculty members are to excuse students from classes. Coaches should also be expected to excuse students from athletic events or practices when there are unique academic programs that are offered at times that conflict with athletic events or practices. The college schedules experience events, seminars and professional gathering at times that might conflict with athletic activities. Under certain circumstances, such programs may take precedence over athletic events.

Student Responsibilities: Professional Behavior

Students have the following responsibilities in regard to an excused absence from class or required event for a scheduled athletic competition, required course field trips and RSO travel:

- **Notify the Professor.** The student must personally notify his/her instructor at least one week in advance and in the class just prior to the absence.
**Obtain Missed Material.** The student is responsible for obtaining all information and materials presented or distributed in the missed classes. All academic assignments and course requirements must be made up from the missed class in a timely manner.

**Accept Responsibility.** Students should be aware that some in-class work simply cannot be made up. Such activities include, but are not limited to, presentations, class participation, drama performances, and foreign language practice. Students are encouraged to discuss the class activities with the professor before making the decision to miss class.

**Submit Assignments on Time.** The student is responsible for submitting all assignments on time that were assigned prior to the day that the class was missed. *A field trip, travel or athletic competition can not be used as an excuse for late submissions.* Assignments distributed on the day of the missed class, even if due in the next class period, must be completed on time.

**Register Intelligently.** Students should schedule their courses each semester to minimize the need to miss classes. Review published athletic schedules before course registration periods. Consult with your academic advisor and coach.

**Faculty Responsibilities for Field Trips: Responsible Implementation**
Professors who planned field trips have the following responsibilities:

**Request Funding Early.** If a class field trip requires the expenditure of college funds, permission from the department chair or the academic dean must be obtained prior to planning and announcing the field trip to the students.

**Plan Weekend Trips.** The faculty member is expected to schedule field trips over the weekend so as not to interfere with students’ other courses and commitments. In cases where this is not possible, permission from the Academic Dean is required. If permission is granted, then faculty member is limited to one weekday field trip per semester for all her/his classes. This latter rule is designed to prevent an individual faculty member from scheduling multiple weekday trips that continually disrupt class schedules. Additional weekend trips are still permitted.

**Submit Notification to Dean.** The faculty member is to submit a field trip notification to the Dean by completing the relevant forms, which can be obtained through the Academic Affairs Office. The notification should be presented to the dean’s office three weeks before the trip, except in cases where college funding is requested (see above - Request Early Funding).

**Include on Course Syllabus.** The field trip description must be included on the course syllabus including date, required fees, and an alternative assignment if other commitments make attendance on the field trip impossible for the student.
Notify the Faculty. No later than two weeks prior to the trip an email is to be sent to faculty@alb.edu that describes the academic importance of the field trip, the date and time of the trip, the names of the students participating, and a request that the students be excused from courses during the specified date and times.

Faculty Responsibilities in Excused Absences: Transparency in Requirements and Open Communication

Faculty members have the following responsibilities with regard to excused absences from class for athletic events, course field trips and RSO travel:

Provide Clear Written Policies. The course syllabus should clearly explain the professor’s policies with regard to attendance and make up work. These policies should be presented and discussed with the class at the beginning of each semester. There should be a clearly articulated policy on make up testing and the requirements for attendance at programs not offered during regularly scheduled class hours.

Use Transparent Process. The professor must provide a reasonable and clearly understood mechanism for make up work for excused absences. Such transparency is especially important for testing. The college administration encourages professors to aid the students in completing the material from the missed class. However, school policy does not require that professors provide additional assignments or work for the missed class.

Articulate Late Assignment Policy. The course syllabus should include a clear procedure on the submission of assignments by students with excused absence on the date the assignment is due. Assignments should not be due significantly earlier than the class time or in a way which might penalize the student for early submission.

Notify Parties. When the professor concludes that the student has been absent from an inordinate number of classes due to scheduled athletic events, travel or field trips, the professor should notify both the student and the Athletic Director (AD) or Academic Dean in a timely manner. The professor is strongly urged to notify the Assistant Academic Dean, who is responsible for academic support services, if continued absences will be likely to affect adversely the student’s performance and grade. Faculty members should exercise diligence to insure that the impact of early morning or late evening training activities does not adversely impinge on the student's ability to attend classes. Concerns should be brought to the attention of the AD.