

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: University Steering Committee

FROM: Academic Affairs Department, Associated Student of Michigan State University

SUBJECT: Request for faculty to consider options for classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving

DATE: November 1, 2021

On Thursday, October 28, the Associated Students of Michigan State University Academic Committee reviewed several standing policies related to the Academic Calendar. One of which was the cancellation of classes the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving. Due to the Provost Office's recommendations to not have classes cancelled the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving, the committee brainstormed alternatives to the advocacy.

After a discussion with the Academic Committee, they suggested that we bring this issue to the Faculty Senate and vested the Academic Affairs department to pursue it. Hence the Academic Affairs Department recommends the following options for instructors:

- Survey student plans for the Thanksgiving holiday to better understand the future situation on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
- Continue class on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving if there is an examination or vital material that cannot be made up in a future class.
- Consider cancelling classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving if there is no major examination, assignment, or material.
- Consider moving classes to an online modality the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
- Consider moving classes to an asynchronous format the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
- Excuse students from classes if they have travel obligations the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

The Associated Students of Michigan State request that these recommendations be considered by the Faculty Senate at the November 16, 2021 meeting.

In Green and White,



Associated Students of Michigan State University VP for Academic Affairs,

Aaron Iturralde



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Students
of Michigan
State University**

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**ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION**

Bill NO. 56-43

INTRODUCED BY: ABII-TAH

SECONDED BY: RANDRIAMIARINTSOA

A BILL TO: Advocate for the Extension of Excused Absences to Include Travel Obligations on the Wednesday Before Thanksgiving.

WHEREAS, Michigan State University's current Academic Attendance Policy leaves the decision to approve excused and unexcused absences at the jurisdiction of course instructors; and,¹

WHEREAS, This creates inconsistency as some instructors are more considerate with their absences than others, allowing a number of instructors to offer very few or no unexcused absences. As a result, students who miss class for travel purposes on the day before Thanksgiving remain at risk of being penalized; and,

WHEREAS, Students who take classes with generous amounts of unexcused absences are not immune to unforeseen circumstances. As a result, they could still use up all their unexcused absences before Thanksgiving week leaving them with none left to dismiss themselves early on Thanksgiving week; and,

WHEREAS, The burden of the locations of students' homes should not be meted out on their Thanksgiving break. Students should not be expected to shorten their breaks by journeying long distances on thanksgiving day just because they live far away; and,

WHEREAS, The burden of the locations of students' homes should not be meted out on their grades. MSU Students do not deserve to be penalized with poor grades if they miss an evaluation on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving because they had to journey home. Also, they do not deserve to lose points for attendance in case they already used up their unexcused absences simply because they had to travel home; and,

¹ <https://ombud.msu.edu/classroom-policies/index.html>

WHEREAS, Giving students access to excused absences on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving means offering them the access to catch up on material when they return to campus - especially since they were absent through no direct fault of their own; and,

WHEREAS, Encouraging instructors to allow excused absences will encourage students to reach out to them in advance with their travel plans. This, in turn, will offer instructors a more accurate count of class attendance on the said Wednesday, thereby aiding them to adjust their class material for the day accordingly. In essence, they ; therefore be it further,

RESOLVED, The Associated Students of Michigan State University shall advocate for MSU to expand excused absences to encompass Travel obligations on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving; and be it further,

RESOLVED, The aforementioned advocacy item may include, but should not be limited to adding the issue at hand on Michigan State University's Academic Attendance policy, encouraging instructors through the faculty senate to include the policy on their syllabi, as well as educating students on the procedural measures for requesting absences.

INTRODUCED ON _____

REFERRED TO _____ COMMITTEE ON _____

SPECIAL ACTION TAKEN _____ DATE _____

COMMITTEE ACTION _____
PASSED FAILED VOTE DATE

FINAL ACTION TAKEN _____
PASSED FAILED VOTE DATE

PRESIDENT : Mario Kakos VPIA: Nora Teagan