Meeting Synopsis:

1. Call to order
2. Review of the minutes from March 2, 2021
3. Class B medical excuse notes – review & vote
4. Class C resolution on policing - Gautham Reddy
5. Fossil Fuel Divestment Proposal - Update & Request
6. HUB and RSO activity – Adam Serafin & Justin Camputaro
7. Kristina Pogosian – UW Student Regent
8. Good of the order
9. Adjourn

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m.

2. Review of the minutes from March 2, 2021

The minutes from March 2, 2021 were approved as written.

3. Class B medical excuse notes – review & vote

Chair Culligan shared the draft Class B legislation regarding medical excuse notes (Exhibit 1) and additional information for syllabus guidelines (Exhibit 2).

The council voted to approve the revised legislation.

4. Class C resolution on policing - Gautham Reddy

Gautham Reddy (FCMA chair) joined the council to discuss a draft Class C resolution on policing (Exhibit 3).
Members shared their suggestions and were asked to send additional comments via email.

5. Fossil Fuel Divestment Proposal - Update & Request

This item will be reviewed at a future meeting.
6. **HUB and RSO activity – Adam Serafin & Justin Camputaro**

This item will be reviewed at a future meeting.

7. **Kristina Pogosian – UW Student Regent**

Kristina Pogosian joined the council to discuss what new practices the UW community would like to continue post-COVID-19. Members provided personal feedback on methods of instruction and student mentorship utilized during COVID.

8. **Good of the order**

Nothing was stated.

9. **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

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*Minutes by Alexandra Portillo, faculty council analyst, xanport@uw.edu*

**Present:**

- **Faculty Code Section 21-61 A:** Christopher Campbell, Andrea Carroll, Ann Culligan (chair), Dean Heerwagen, Clark Musselman, Selma Powell, Caley Cook
- **Faculty Code Section 21-61 B:** Clara Coyote, Christine Shoemaker, Jonathan Franklin
- **President’s designee:** Lincoln Johnson
- **Guests:** Gautham Reddy, Kristina Pogosian, Justin Camputaro, Adam Serafin

**Absent:**

- **Faculty Code Section 21-61 A:** Kivanc Dincer, Gail Joseph
- **Faculty Code Section 21-61 B:** Kat Eli

**Exhibits**

- Exhibit 1 – Medical Note Legislation (3)
- Exhibit 2 – Medical Notes syllabus guidelines (1)
- Exhibit 3 – Draft 3 Class C Resolution on Police Oversight Body
Class B Legislation
Student Governance and Policies
Scholastic Regulations
Chapter 112; Section 1 (General Requirements)

Background and Rationale

In practice, many UW instructors may currently require that students provide “medical excuse notes” following a short-term absence. These are documents from a medical provider attesting to the severity of the illness and the necessity that the student be absent from class. These notes are required with good intentions: to discourage students from missing class for frivolous reasons and to protect against fraudulent claims of illness. However, this strategy of routinely requiring students to obtain medical excuse notes does little to meet these goals and has unintended, adverse consequences for the student, the medical providers, and the University.

Faculty Senate and ASUW leadership (Board Bill 5.03), in conjunction with colleagues at Hall Health, have identified several key areas of concern:

• Student Safety and Autonomy — Requiring a medical excuse note removes students’ autonomy to responsibly assess and practice self-care for minor ailments and health concerns. Students who see a provider to get a note have a specific objective: to get the note. There is pressure to make sure that the symptoms are presented in such a way that the provider will generate a note. This may result in students not taking care of their symptoms in a timely manner at home or they may exaggerate their symptoms, leading to testing or treatments that incur risk. In either case, and patients may be harmed—physically or financially—as a result. The risk/benefit ratio in these cases is significant. Hall Health promotes responsible self-care and self-reliance among students, including making one’s own determination about when to see a doctor and when to practice self-care for minor ailments and health concerns.

• Financial Burdens and Inequities – Students who are uninsured/underinsured, including low income students, DACA students, and minority students are at a financial disadvantage when seeking medical care. Policies that require a student to seek care for an administrative reason place a financial burden on these students and affect students in unequal ways. Further, there are many online sources to purchase a fraudulent medical note - resulting in dishonest behavior by students who can afford this route, which also highlights financial inequities among students.

• Respecting the identities and safety needs of students — Requiring students to provide a doctor’s note implicitly or explicitly asks students to engage with Western medicine. For students who utilize healthcare traditions that align with other cultural backgrounds, this setting may not be supportive of their identities and practices. Further, Western medical settings in the U.S. have not always been safe spaces for BIPOC, trans, fat, and disabled people, and this precedent continues in many modern medical settings. Requiring students to see a doctor is a gatekeeping mechanism that forces students into a space that may be emotionally perilous and potentially threatening. Removing this requirement eliminates the need for students to enter into a system that may feel unsafe for them.

• Protecting the provider-patient relationship — Lacking omniscience, a provider must rely on the patient’s description of the symptoms. Sometimes this is after the illness has already resolved and the student is only
seeking a note. Providers are trained to be advocates for their patients and so a note will be provided almost 100 percent of the time. Thus, a medical excuse note provides no actual confirmation of the veracity, intensity, or duration of a student’s illness, and thus is of no value as a check on student behavior.

- Hall Health Access and Resources — Hall Health is often filled to capacity. Students who don’t really need to be a patient limit access for those who do have a medical need for care. The generation of excuse notes is a wasteful use of expensive and limited health care staff time and resources. Estimates from Hall Health suggest as much as $250,000 annually is spent attending to some 2,500 note requests, and that visits for such requests represent approximately 5 percent of total student visits.

- Education and personal responsibility — The relationship between instructors and students should be focused on classroom behavior and academic performance. Medical information is private, and is no more a part of this relationship than it would be in any other professional context. As students develop intellectually and prepare for their careers beyond college, they should experience an environment that requires personal responsibility and accountability, reflecting the professional realities that they will experience after graduation. An important educational component of college life is developing personal responsibility, self-reliance, and resilience, in addition to professional conduct and communication skills.

Given these serious concerns, the Faculty Senate and ASUW leadership propose the following change to prohibit requests for medical excuse notes by instructors. Of note: limiting routine medical excuse notes would not have any bearing on documentation needed for disability, hardship, or other significant circumstances (including medical conditions) requiring longer term absences from the University; nor would such limitations prevent instructors from requiring students to justify the unavoidable nature of an absence, or require that instructors develop new accommodations. This change is intended to protect students from having to disclose private information to faculty, engage in potentially risky behaviors, or face undue financial and emotional burdens, to conserve resources at Hall Health, and encourage personal responsibility and professional conduct among students.

Nevertheless, changing faculty use of medical excuse notes will have meaningful impacts on many courses across all three campuses. This change will encourage consideration of the rationale behind using medical excuse notes and how to replicate or improve upon the pedagogical role of such documentation. Ideally, this may lead to collegial and department-level conversations on classroom management strategies that will benefit faculty and students. Eliminating medical excuse notes will also change student-faculty communication and facilitate development of more realistic expectations and conduct necessary in the professional, post-college world.

Many faculty members have already abandoned the practice of requiring medical excuse notes for short-term absence. Drawing on their experience, as well as the expertise of the Center for Teaching and Learning and the University of Washington Office of the University Registrar, a set of best practice guidelines that protect students, support evidence-based pedagogy, and maintain instructors’ rights and authority have been developed. These guidelines offer templates for syllabus language and student requests for adjustments, organizational and pedagogical strategies, and an FAQ section addressing concerns about this change. This supportive framework, along with more information about this new policy, related scholastic regulations, examples of unavoidable absences, references to provisions for dropping classes, changing grade status to S/NS, the leave of absence provision for long-term illness, and a complaint procedure for students who may be denied a request for a reasonable adjustment, is available to students, as well as current and future instructors on the University of Washington Office of the University Registrar’s website.
Student Governance and Policies
Scholastic Regulations
Chapter 112

1. General Requirements

B. A student absent from any examination or class activity through sickness or other cause judged by the instructor to be unavoidable shall be given an opportunity to take a rescheduled examination or perform work judged by the instructor to be the equivalent. If the instructor determines that neither alternative is feasible during the current quarter, the instructor may exempt the student from the requirement. Examples of unavoidable cause include death or serious illness in the immediate family, illness of the student, and provided previous notification is given, observance of regularly scheduled religious obligations and might possibly include attendance at academic conferences or field trips, or participation in University-sponsored activities such as debating contests or athletic competition. Instructors may require written communication from students in making these determinations, but are prohibited from requiring students to provide medical documentation as proof of short-term illness to justify an absence. The regulations for Incompletes in Scholastic Regulations, Chapter 110, Subsection 1.A.3 shall apply.

Medical Excuse Notes

Campus Unit: Faculty Senate

Optional Syllabus Language: No Medical Excuse Notes Required

Students are expected to attend class and to participate in all graded activities, including midterms and final examinations. To protect student privacy and the integrity of the academic experience, students will not be required to provide a medical excuse note to justify an absence from class due to illness. A student absent from any graded class activity or examination due to illness must request, in writing, to take a rescheduled examination or perform work judged by the instructor to be the equivalent. Students are responsible for taking any number of examinations for which they are scheduled on a given day and may not request an adjustment for this reason alone.

Optional Syllabus Language: Excused Absence from Class

Students are expected to attend class and to participate in all graded activities, including midterms and final examinations. A student who is anticipating being absent from class due to a Religious Accommodation activity needs to complete the Religious Accommodations request process by the second Friday of the quarter. Students who anticipate missing class due to attendance at academic conferences or field trips, or participation in university sponsored activities should provide a written notice to the instructor ahead of the absence. The instructor will determine if the graded activity or exam can be rescheduled or if there is equivalent work that can be done as an equivalent, as determined by the instructor.

For Faculty:

Faculty are encouraged to dispense with the requirement that students provide medical excuse notes in order to be eligible to make up exams or work missed due to an absence. Requiring a medical excuse note creates an inequitable burden on certain students, strains the limited resources of Hall Health, and provides no actual confirmation of the veracity, intensity, or duration of a student’s illness, and thus is not a reliable check on student behavior.

This will not change the documentation needed for disability, hardship, or other significant circumstances (including medical conditions) requiring longer term absences from the University; nor does it prevent instructors from requiring students to justify the unavoidable nature of an absence, or require that instructors develop new accommodations. This change is intended to protect students from having to disclose private information to faculty, engage in
potentially risky behaviors, or face undue financial and emotional burdens, to conserve resources at Hall Health, and encourage personal responsibility and professional conduct among students.

The provided language is a starting point to shift away from requiring medical notes. Given the reality that some students will miss some work during a quarter, it will be most useful to plan ahead with course policies that reflect the dynamics of your own course and will streamline your response. You may wish to provide a template for students to use when contacting you with a request for adjustments or you may consider providing a link to an automated form that students may use (e.g., Google Forms) to make such a request. More ideas are provided in the FAQ linked below. You may also consult with the Center for Teaching and Learning and your departmental leadership regarding planning ahead for student absences.

**Exam Guidelines**
**Preparing to Teach**
**Provisions for changing enrollment status in a class**
**Leave of absence policy**

**FAQs**

**Does this mean I need to change how I respond to student absences and missed work?**

No. Other than no longer requesting a medical excuse note, there is no obligation that faculty change how they manage and respond to missed work from students.

**Can I ask students for written communication about their absence?**

Yes. Faculty are encouraged to establish an expectation of timely, relevant communication about student absences to the extent that this fits into their own course management and approach to missed work. This may include utilizing a pre-established template or form, or may be a request for emails sent to a specific address within a timeframe relative to the missed work. Of note: communication should comply with HIPAA regulations, avoiding information about personal medical details.

**Is there a template I can use to help students communicate their need for an adjustment?**

Suggested template for student attestation:

Name: __________
Dates of absence: __________
Assignment/exam missed: __________
Reason for absence (optional): __________
I, [student name], attest that this absence was unavoidable, and I understand that makeup work will only be granted at the discretion of my instructor.
Student signature __________, date _____.

This may be used as a template for emails or a Google form (or other), depending on the specific needs of the course and instructor.

**Without a doctor's note, how do I know if a student was really sick?**

Unfortunately, even with a doctor's note, you have no way of knowing if the student was really sick, when, and for how long. If a medical note is required, one of three situations is likely:

- The student may see the doctor while they are sick, receive necessary treatment, and procure the required note.
- Requiring a note, a student may see a doctor and exaggerate their (nonexistent or now-recovered) symptoms. Healthcare providers are patient advocates, above all else, and will almost always provide the note that the student is requesting.
- Requiring a note, students with the means to do so may purchase a fraudulent doctor’s note online.

Thus, professors who require notes are generally receiving a mix of these, but trusting all of them. Medical notes do not provide a reliable check on student behavior.

**If medical notes aren’t an option, how will I distinguish who deserves an adjustment, and who does not?**

- This has always been, and will continue to be, part of the academic freedom afforded to faculty. Each instructor has the responsibility and latitude to determine how they will handle missed work and requests for adjustments.
- During course planning, it is important to consider how to equitably address missed work, in light of one’s pedagogical goals and course structure. Below are some suggestions from faculty who have addressed this:
  - Faculty may opt out of the judgement role by establishing course policies that treat all students’ missed work the same way and provide a pre-established option for completing the work (e.g., dropping the lowest grade, turning in late work with a penalty, taking a makeup exam, doing an alternate assignment, or other course-appropriate option). By rendering dishonesty moot, these policies disincentivize fraud, save faculty members from the unseemly activity of trying to discern if a student is lying, and put the responsibility for students’ choices on the students.
  - Faculty who want to encourage student communication about missed work may utilize a form or template for students to submit a standard attestation about their absence. This will not guarantee honesty, but may streamline the process and teach professional communication skills.
I don’t have time to create new exams or assignments for students who miss the scheduled assessment. What do I do?

- You don’t need to create alternative assessments for each student. Instead, as you plan a course for the quarter, it may be most useful to do so with the assumption that some students will miss some work, and plan ahead for a streamlined response to that reality. In doing so, consider what purpose each assignment, lab, and test will serve. Are they formative - do they provide feedback that prepares students for future assignments? Or are they summative - do they provide a final assessment of a student’s understanding of a course topic?

- In the case of most formative assessments, comprehension of the topic will likely be assessed again in subsequent measures (such as a final project or cumulative exam). If so, you might:
  - Drop the lowest of assignment or exam grade.
  - Utilize progressively cumulative exams - each exam is longer than the previous, and incorporates questions reviewing material from the previous exam(s)

- In the case of most summative assessments, there is a necessity that students complete the work.
  - If midterm exams serve as summative assessments, one solution for students missing a midterm is to offer an optional cumulative exam that replaces a missed exam.
  - If the course includes a series of assignments, create one standard makeup assignment that would include the material covered in all of these assignments.
    - Importantly: Include a time-sensitive component that precludes students from submitting the same assignment done by a previous student. This might include requiring use of articles published in a timeframe since the last iteration of the course.

- In some cases, allowing students to submit late work may be a reasonable strategy. If it will not change the progress of the class, increase opportunities for cheating, or impede a student’s own progress (by trying to work “backward” and “forward” at the same time), this provides a streamlined option that does not require more work on the part of the teaching staff.
  - Penalties for late work can be set up in the Canvas gradebook, such that a percentage of the assignment grade is deducted for each day late.

I can’t keep track of students who need make-ups and extensions. What can I do?

- The need for a strategy to handle missed work will not materially change with the absence of medical excuse notes. In most cases, faculty can use the same management strategies that were used in the presence of medical excuse notes.
- Some suggestions::
○ Use an automated form (e.g., Google forms) - at the individual class level, or at the departmental level - to manage needs and workflow.
○ When possible, assign a TA to manage adjustment requests.

I’m concerned that students are disengaged from class and will further disengage if they are not asked to produce medical excuses for absences.

● As noted above, medical excuses do not provide a valid check on student behavior, nor do they improve student engagement.
● In addition, research by Learning Technologies & UW-IT has found that student engagement in classes does not appear to be significantly affected by opportunities to miss class. When lecture capture technology became available, Learning Technologies & UW-IT collected data in response to faculty concern that students would stop coming to class if faculty recorded their lectures and posted them. This data indicated that there was no change in the number of students who attended lectures in person when lecture recordings were also available.

Are there any implications for international students who may have attendance requirements as part of their student visas?

● No - U.S. institutions are not required to check class attendance or report on student participation in classes so as long as they are registered and continue to earn credits each quarter, there is no class attendance requirement for international students.

I am worried that students will cheat the system. How can I prevent that?

● This is a perennial concern among faculty, and there is no solution that will prevent all dishonesty. As noted, medical notes do not guarantee honesty. Conversely, omitting medical excuse notes is unlikely to prompt a significant increase in dishonesty.
● The Center for Teaching and Learning offers excellent resources for developing courses that foster student engagement and decrease academic dishonesty.
● By and large, students do want to succeed, and a student who seeks an opportunity to do the work is not looking for a free pass. They are looking to demonstrate their learning and succeed by their own efforts. Adopting an attitude that students are motivated and willing, yet sometimes hindered by the same realities that everyone occasionally faces, may reduce the tension that faculty experience if they feel compelled to judge the worthiness of students’ reasons for missing work.
Class C resolution regarding an oversight body for UW safety and policing

WHEREAS, the recent and past police killings of Black people, Native and Indigenous people, and other people of color in the United States have created an environment of anxiety, mistrust, and outrage for people of color as well as for their allies; and
WHEREAS, with the frequency of these incidents, UW communities of color have reported feelings of fear, despair, and vulnerability that come with experiencing continuous, historical racialized trauma; and
WHEREAS, the national Movement for Black Lives has given the UW community an invitation to uphold our values of justice, equity, and anti-racism; and
WHEREAS, there are existing racial inequities that persist within every level of UW’s three campus learning environments and these racial inequities are an academic issue interfering with the mission of the University and its ability to transmit knowledge; and
WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee passed a Class C Resolution in 2020 calling on the university to divest from local law enforcement agencies and to reimagine a safe campus; and
WHEREAS, the Faculty Council on Multicultural Affairs hosted a summer 2020 virtual conversation to create space for all faculty to come together to discuss how to lead on the topic of dismantling the features of the University system that perpetuate racial inequity, beginning first with the question of how faculty might lead on the essential task of eliminating the role of law enforcement officers in the day-to-day experiences of students, faculty, and staff; and
WHEREAS, the Faculty Council on Multicultural Affairs and the Faculty Council on Student Affairs jointly organized a spring 2021 virtual conversation to explore the UW’s progress in divestment from local law enforcement agencies and reimagining a safe campus and to consider next steps; therefore
BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate calls on the University to create a campus safety and policing oversight body composed of faculty, students, staff, and members of the community at large. The oversight body shall prioritize the health and wellness of the university community and its neighbors, and its responsibilities shall include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Developing systems and processes for ensuring the accountability of the UWPD and security organizations, including the review of actions taken in cases of alleged misconduct and the oversight of cooperation or coordination with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies.
2. Providing meaningful input on behalf of the UW community into the regularly scheduled union contract negotiation process.
3. Contributing significant input into hiring decisions of UW police and safety leadership.
4. Advocating for the reduction of armed UW police and redirection of funds to health and wellness.
5. Fostering the increased responsibility of SafeCampus for wellness checks and other aspects of campus safety.
6. Promoting transparency and streamlined communication with all stakeholders and ensuring timely release of information requested by members of the public.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate will continue to address issues of racial injustice during the 2021-2022 academic year.