

Is Class Attendance Necessary?

Contributed by Jay Christie -- Black College Wire
Wednesday, 03 September 2008

Some students say it doesn't matter

It is common knowledge that in order to teach an academic course, a professor must have a number of students enrolled. Every semester history seems to repeat itself as teachers deal with tardiness and students who opt not to maintain perfect attendance. Florida A&M University affords its pupils three unexcused absences after which professors have the right to lower students' grades and possibly even fail them.

Most professors feel the punishment is fair, while some students believe the penalty is a bit harsh. Their argument is simple and straight to the point - if they can pass the course without going to the class then why should they be forced to show up? The topic has often been debated and has garnered a variety of mixed answers.

Trevor Owens, 20, said the attendance policy should be mandatory. He said it should be beneficial in the long run.

"I feel that class attendance should definitely be enforced," said Owens, an education major from Tallahassee. "If a student can't come to class then they are setting bad habits. If a student is late to class then they will most likely be late to a job. I believe attendance is important in every aspect of life especially education."

Larin Eddings, an economic student, shares Owen's philosophy. "I do believe attendance is important," said Eddings, 21, a resident of Ohio. "If you don't come to class then you can't learn. There are some things that you can't just get out of a book."

While Owens and Eddings are of the same opinion, other students beg to differ. Orlando native Ebony McDaniel, 22, is one such student. She said attendance should never be obligatory nor should it be worth a grade.

"If you can get an A by not going to class then I don't think a student should be forced to go," said McDaniel, a fourth-year political science student. "Students are paying their teachers to be in class. That is their job. If we don't show up, they still get paid. Attendance should not be forced. Some students don't need teachers to help them. They do fine just on their own. Who is to say that student doesn't deserve the A they worked for?"

McDaniel's reasoning is an argument that some professors have heard before. Margie Rauls, a professor in the department of English, said attendance should never be a choice.

"A lot of students are too immature to make the decision of whether it should be mandatory or not and therefore they will follow the crowd, especially the freshman and sophomore students, and before they know it they are failing," said Rauls, who has been teaching the university since 1988. "If attendance is mandatory then they have something to buffer them and hopefully make them more successful just by their being there."

When it comes to this issue, mixed opinions are a given. However one thing is certain: Attendance will continue to be a quarrel for students and professors for many years to come.

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Jay Christie writes for The Famuan, the Florida A&M University student newspaper, which originally published this article.