

## **STUDENT SENATE BILL 2023-1160**

**TITLE: Resolution Calling for the University of Florida to Inform Students of University Policies Which Allow Them to Observe Religious Holidays Without Fear of Academic Consequences**

**AUTHOR(S):** Senator Julia Seifer, Senator Matthew Reich

**SPONSORS:** Judiciary Chair Jonathan C. Stephens, Judiciary Vice-Chair Joaquin R.C. Marcelino, Senator Samantha Kinggard, Minority Party Leader Bronson Allemand, Senator Owen Lekebusch, Senator Laurie Wang, Member at Large Isabel Ponce, Senator Monish Vijayaraghavan, Senator Ayesha Khuddus, Senator Paige Kleppe, Senator Saketh Damara

**WHEREAS**, this resolution was inspired in part by the advocacy of individuals including but not limited to Ms. Maya Idiculla; and,

**WHEREAS**, the University of Florida is an institution that strives for diversity and takes active efforts to achieve it; and,

**WHEREAS**, religious diversity is an integral part of the University of Florida's diversity and inclusion initiative. As a part of respecting diversity, it is essential to respect and accommodate for religious observances so that students, faculty, and staff feel safe, supported, and seen by the university community; and,

**WHEREAS**, the University of Florida recognizes the integral role that inclusivity of all religions plays in mental health. For example, the collaboration between the Campus Multi-Faith Cooperative and U Matter We Care provides resources "for students who may struggle with the rigors of college life" in order to enhance "the academic, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of UF students" [1]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Student Senate recognizes that some students may be unaware of the existing University policies that allow them to observe their religious holidays without fear of academic consequences, requiring them to "inform the faculty member of the religious observances of his or her faith that will conflict with class attendance, with tests or examinations, or with other class activities prior to the class or occurrence of that test or activity" [2]; and,

**WHEREAS**, while religious accommodations are listed on the Religious Holidays section of the Attendance Policy category of the Undergraduate Catalog [3], the lack of open conversation about religious tolerance in the classroom may leave many students grappling with the struggle

between missing class and potentially jeopardizing grades to observe their religious holiday, or staying caught up on school work at the cost of missing an important religious observance; and,

**WHEREAS**, making students aware of the equal opportunity to observe religious holidays without academic consequences can resolve this conflict, standing in accordance with the University of Florida's mission for diversity and benefiting students' mental well-being; and,

**WHEREAS**, all students deserve to be made aware of the equal opportunity to observe religious holidays without academic consequences; then,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED** that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the need for the University of Florida to urgently inform students of University policies which allow them to observe religious holidays without fear of academic consequences.

**THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED** that potential ways to address this issue are to stress the importance of this information in diversity discussion as well as discussion surrounding attendance policy during UF Preview, encourage open communication between professor and students regarding religious holiday policy from the very first day, incorporate the names and dates of widely observed holidays from various religions on UF's general calendar so all faculty and students are aware and can avoid scheduling exams on these dates.

**THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED** that the University of Florida Student Senate encourages collaboration between faculty members, departments, and student organizations to find more innovative solutions.

*Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to University of Florida President Ben Sasse, Interim Provost J. Scott Angle, Chief Diversity Officer Marsha McGriff, the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, the Campus Multi-Faith Cooperative, the Center for Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement, and Director of Interfaith Cabinet Affairs Eric Davies.*

[1] <https://multicultural.ufl.edu/resources/cmc/>

[2] <https://administrativememo.ufl.edu/2018/10/uf-religious-observances-policy-3/>

[3] <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#religiousholidaystext>