

# USU ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

## RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT BETWEEN COURSE CONTENT AND SINCERELY-HELD CORE BELIEFS

It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. Though the University provides, through this policy, a process by which a student may make such a request, the policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing, and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs.

The instructor must respond to any request for conflict resolution within two school days of receiving it. The response must be made in writing and a copy must be delivered to the office of the department head or, in the case of a single-department college, to the office of the dean. In the event that the class does not meet on the day by which the instructor must respond, the student must make arrangements to receive the response in a timely manner. *Instructors are not required to provide an alternative requirement, as long as the subject course requirement has a reasonable relationship to a legitimate pedagogical goal*, but they may do so, only if a reasonable alternative means of satisfying the curricular requirement is available and only if that alternative is fully appropriate for meeting the academic objectives of the course, after considering (i) the difficulty of administering an the alternative requirement; (ii) the burden on the student's sincerely-held core belief; (iii) the importance of the particular requirement to the course.

In considering whether or not to provide an alternative requirement, the instructor may evaluate the sincerity but not the validity of the student's belief. If an instructor in a course provides an alternative requirement, the instructor must similarly consider requests made during the same semester for the same course for resolution of conflicts with sincerely-held core beliefs. Requests will be individually evaluated in relation to the above considerations; the granting of one such request will not guarantee that all requests will be granted. Because the criteria and requirements discussed above will apply differently to each instructor and to each course, decisions made by an instructor in one course will not affect decisions by the same instructor in other courses or by other instructors in the same or other courses.

If an instructor does not grant a conflict resolution request, the student may appeal that denial in writing to the dean of the college. If the dean is the instructor of the course, the student may appeal the denial to the cognizant vice provost. The dean (or designee) will, in consultation with the faculty member and the department head (or designee), act within two school days. The dean (or designee) will uphold the denial unless she or he finds that the denial was arbitrary and capricious or illegal. The dean's determination shall be final

as it pertains to the specific accommodation request. Faculty challenges to the appropriateness of this decision should follow established grievance procedures. The student may but is not required to participate in these further reviews.

If a student in good standing determines, after the last day to drop courses without penalty, that course requirements may conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs, and the instructor has denied the student's written accommodation request, the student may seek permission in writing from the dean to withdraw without receiving a W on his/her transcript and to receive a refund of tuition for that class. In making this request the student must demonstrate that he or she could not have made this determination prior to the last day to drop courses without penalty, or that the request was made prior to the last day to drop a course and a decision was made after the drop date. The dean's determination shall be final.

Decisions on requests for alternative requirements shall not be considered adversely to a faculty member in faculty code, retention, promotion and tenure, or other proceedings as long as those decisions are made in good faith. Faculty shall not take adverse academic action against students requesting alternative requirements. The dean or department head shall not take any adverse action against an instructor based on his/her decision to provide or not to provide an alternative requirement for a student.