

SALISBURY UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE MOTION

Submit this form to the Faculty Senate President

SUBJECT: Policy concerning campus-wide class cancellations and mandated alterations to instruction in emergency and non-emergency situations

SENATOR PROPOSING MOTION: Rich Bowler

SENATOR SECONDING MOTION: Anita Brown

MOTION (this section alone will be recorded in the minutes):

The Academic Policies Committee (APC) shall be charged with investigating, in consultation with the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AFTC), best practices in higher education for significantly altering the time, place, and/or method of instruction, or other pertinent issues, in both emergency and non-emergency situations, including the circumstances under which changing the modality of instruction from face-to-face to hybrid, remote, or online would be justified. Following its investigation, it shall recommend one or more policies to guide Salisbury University in emergency and non-emergency situations. The justification below includes the definition of “emergency conditions” in USM policy.

If requested, the Faculty Senate can discuss and provide broad guidance to these committees on its general expectations regarding potential policies. Deadline for submission to Faculty Senate will be Tuesday, November 10, 2026.

JUSTIFICATION:

Recent directives mandating campus-wide alterations of class attendance and instruction have suggested a need to explore the advisability and impact of such measures. While cancelling classes, “suspending attendance,” and/or requiring classes to be taught virtually may sometimes be necessary or appropriate, such actions disrupt carefully coordinated pedagogical plans and, in some cases, require substantial effort from faculty and students to remediate so that student learning outcomes are met. Furthermore, different modalities in instruction often call for distinct pedagogical approaches whose suitability may not translate readily and effectively across the disciplines.

Serious concerns have also been raised among faculty regarding the implications these directives might have for academic freedom. This matter deserves careful examination in collaboration with AFTC.

Note: The USM “Policy on Emergency Conditions” specifically covering the cancellation of classes and the release of employees defines these conditions as follows:

“Those conditions which are determined by each campus CEO or designee to be serious enough to warrant the cancellation of classes or the release of employees. Such conditions may arise because of inclement weather, fire, power failure, civil disorders or other unusual circumstances which may endanger students and/or employees.” See USM Policies and Procedures VI - 12.00 which can be found using this link: <https://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionVI/VI1200.html>.

ANTICIPATED IMPACT:

Negative: More work for Senate committees.

Positive: Will provide appropriate and useful guidelines for future decision-making in relevant situations.

Is this a recommendation to the Provost? Yes____ No____

Is this a recommendation to someone else? No____ Yes, to ___APC and AFTC___

VOTE: Number of Senators Present:

Motion Passes or Fails: