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Edwardsville Bulletin

To the Faculty and Staff of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Vol. 10, No. 28
January 30, 1978

MEMO TO: The University Community

FROM: Kenneth A. Shaw *K. Shaw*

SUBJECT: Statement on Snow Policy

Everyone by now realizes that this region is being subjected to a highly inclement and inconvenient winter. Judging from the calls we have received on the subject, there is a broad spectrum of opinion on any given day as to whether or not classes should be cancelled, offices should be closed, or both. Regardless of what decision is made, there are bound to be significant segments of the University community who feel that their interests are not being served, to put it as mildly as possible.

There are two major variables which effectively control whatever decision is made. First, of course, there is the state of the weather itself. On Wednesday, January 25, we encountered a snowfall which was reported as varying from one inch to one foot throughout the area. Although this is unusual, there are very rare circumstances in which weather conditions for the entire region make for a decision to stay open or closed on which everyone can agree. Thus, we have a judgment call to make.

Secondly, ours is a commuter campus; we have people coming from all over, many driving as many as fifty miles or more. In this region, we have tremendous variance in road conditions, availability of clearing equipment, and other factors which cause many to sense a genuine risk in attempting to get to class or to work.

In the past, we have made every effort to remain open. In doing so, we have recognized that as an educational institution our basic priority must be to provide instruction if at all possible. The overriding instructional purposes of the University will continue to militate for keeping the University open under all but the worst circumstances; but there are situations which warrant our careful consideration.

When classes do meet in inclement weather, there are times when few students show up, requiring special make-up arrangements. In such circumstances, the students who did make it may feel unfairly put upon. Further, there are occasions when students get to class only to find the professor not there. This causes problems, too.

If the determination is further made to cancel classes but to remain open, some employees may feel unfairly treated because they are charged with a day of vacation or leave without pay if they are unable to make it in.

For the information of all concerned, I would like to set down a set of principles which will govern our present and any future policy in regard to cancellation of classes or closing of offices because of the weather. They are as follows:

1. Keeping in mind the educational essence of our mission, in the event that classes must be cancelled, we must make every attempt to provide the full measure of education our students have a right to expect of us. It is believed that one lost day can be effectively absorbed in more intensive work throughout the rest of the quarter. However, beyond this point it becomes necessary to engage in re-scheduling and re-adjusting of our calendar by making use of University Holidays, by extending classes into the examination period, and perhaps even into the vacation period between quarters to insure that all requirements are fulfilled. We are here to provide quality education and this must take precedence over all other considerations. Vice-President Lazerson will make necessary arrangements and notify the University community whenever such arrangements become necessary.
2. Whether classes are cancelled or not, we should make every effort to keep the University open. Even though at times this may not be possible, we must not forget that we provide many crucial services, both to the University and to the region--services which are needed regardless of whether or not classes are held. Thus, whenever possible our day-to-day work should continue, even though classes might not be in session.
3. No employee or student should be forced to come to class or to work when that person senses risk to life and limb.
4. Fairness and equity should be the guiding principles in the disposition of these matters. Even though we cannot control the forces of nature, we can deal with these situations so as to prevent any group from feeling unfairly penalized. Nor should feelings arise that any group is being unduly benefited. Thus, we must require that when an excessive number of classes are cancelled, students and faculty are expected to make up for the loss. Correspondingly, when

Civil Service and administrative workers are unable to come in when the University is open, the loss will be made up by a day of vacation or leave without pay. In such circumstances, reasonable arrangements in accordance with working policies currently in effect should be made with supervisors or teachers, with proper understanding guiding the actions taken by those in authority. Instructors are urged to provide students with every chance to make up work missed, even if this results in minor inconveniences.

5. Decisions in regard to general work schedule adjustments will be communicated by appropriate Vice-Presidents. When controversies arise, they are to be resolved by appropriate Vice-Presidents.

No system is infallible, but I believe these guidelines are fair and consonant with the understandings that govern employment practices here and elsewhere. Given the fact that we have already lost three days of class this quarter, I am directing that the following practical steps be taken:

- a. Classes will be made up as far as is practicable by the redesignation of February 20 as a regular work and class day for the University. This date now appears in our schedule as a University holiday. Secondly, March 13 will be designated as a class day. If any further adjustments become necessary, notification will be given by Mr. Lazerson. He will also be informing the University as to how the specifics of this quarter's make-up plan will be implemented.
- b. Friday, March 24, will be considered a holiday for the University. This will provide employees with a three-day weekend holiday to replace the one lost by the redesignation of February 20 as a regular work-day. Any necessary re-arrangements will be made by Dr. Ria Frijters, who will communicate to the University community all particulars as to how this holiday will function. She will continue to serve as the University's decision maker and contact point with regard to class cancellations and school closings.

Balancing these principles with day-to-day practice will not always be simple or easy. As a further step, I have asked Dr. Frijters and Mr. Lazerson to engage in a series of meetings with all interested constituency heads to develop a policy in this regard that will serve us well on a permanent basis. Should you have questions or suggestions I ask that you channel them through the appropriate constituency head.