Student Senate Resolution 2016-107

TITLE: Student Body Resolution Encouraging University Administration to Maintain Non-Discrimination Regulations on Religious Observances

AUTHOR(S): Max Klein, Senator Avery Smith, Senator Sara Wedemeyer

SPONSOR(S): Information & Communications Chairwoman Jackie Phillips, Minority Party Leader Preston Jones, Daniella Saetta, Senator Wilson Trawick, Senator Dakota Stanford, Ty Robare, Gator Freethought President Amanda Guzman

WHEREAS, the United States of America is a secular nation, and is thereby prohibited from promoting or inhibiting the practice of any particular religion; and,

WHEREAS, the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment\(^1\) to the United States Constitution protect the right of citizens to worship or not worship as they please; and,

WHEREAS, the Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6.0115 on Religious Observances\(^2\), authorized by the Constitution of the State of Florida, requires all public universities to maintain a regulation which “reasonably accommodates the religious observance, practice, and belief of individual students;” and,

WHEREAS, the same regulation requires all public universities to maintain policies which guarantee “students shall not be penalized due to absence from class because of a religious observance” and to make these policies known “to faculty and students annually” in institution handbooks like the University of Florida Undergraduate Catalog\(^3\) and Faculty Handbook\(^4\); and,

WHEREAS, University of Florida Provost Joseph Glover restated in an October 2015 memo emailed to UF faculty that students cannot be penalized for absences due to religious observances\(^5\); and,

WHEREAS, policies have recently been advocated for that encourage the University Administration to pass new restrictions on exams scheduled during the holidays of an incomplete list of religions, thereby explicitly favoring those religions listed; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate reaffirms its goal to defend religious freedom at the University of Florida so that all students may freely worship or choose to abstain from worship; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate supports the University Administration’s current policy that requires faculty to excuse individual students; and,
THEREFORE, LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate encourages University of Florida administrators to review faculty awareness of the multitude of holidays students observe and expand awareness of University Non-Discrimination policies with regards to religious observances.


Jenny Clements
Senate President

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