

# COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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## SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES GENERAL STUDIES STUDENT COUNCIL

April 20, 2004

Dear Provost Brinkley,

We, the representatives of the General Studies Student Body, would like to urge you to reiterate the way Columbia University deals with holiday observance.

According to FACETS<sup>1</sup>, “It is the policy of the University to respect its members’ religious beliefs. In compliance with New York State law, each student who is absent from school because of his or her religious beliefs will be given an equivalent opportunity to register for classes or make up any examination, study, or work requirements that he or she may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. No students will be penalized for absence due to religious beliefs, and alternative means will be sought for satisfying the academic requirements involved.”

As representatives of the student body, we have been receiving complaints from students that some professors are not aware of these policies, and have been ignoring them during the recent Easter and Passover holidays. The policy also suggests that professors should find a suitable arrangement for avoiding conflicts between academic schedule and religious observance. We ask that this too be restated to the faculty.

We encourage professor to work together with students to make sure that religious holidays do not adversely affect their academic performance.

Finally, we hope that officers of administration and of instruction responsible for scheduling of academic activities or essential services will continue to uphold the policy of avoiding conflicts with religious holidays. We hope that when planning the long-term academic calendar, the religious observance of all the University’s community will be taken into account. and hope the University can find a way to maximize the number of classes its students can attend.

Thank you,

The General Studies Student Council

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/facets/appendix.pdf>