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Recommendation

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## 2021-0021: Holiday Accommodation Policy Recommendation

Sponsored by: Max Powers

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Ithaca College, Jewish Student Union

Whereas: Ithaca College campus-wide events have regularly been scheduled on the dates of significant holidays.

Recognizing: During Jewish holidays, Jews are not permitted to involve themselves in what is defined by the *Torah* as “work.” In the modern-day context, this “work” includes, but is not limited to, the use of technology, writing, driving, creating, and listening to music. Oftentimes, these extra-curricular or campus-wide events include such “work” and are a huge hindrance in allowing Jewish students to participate.

Recognizing: That there are no work restricted holidays within the Christian faith by tenet. But in the United States, Easter and Christmas are considered to be non-work days. Even with them not being in tenet we should still follow the good faith effort in doing the same across the nation.

Recognizing: That the Islamic faith has similar restrictions in regard to working and fasting the Jewish people have. Several days such as Ramadan, Eid ul-Fitr, and Eid ul-Adha all are holidays that have strict fasting requirements and other colleges have asked that no such important events, assignments, or meetings be scheduled during such a time.

Recognizing: That other faiths such as pagans, even if they do not have any holidays that give work restrictions, should still be given the rights as people who follow Christianity, Judaism, or any other religion.

Following Aspects Of: The policy of NYU states “whereas, given the various religious faiths represented on campus and acknowledging the nonsectarian nature of the University, present calendar policy is intended to apply equitably to all religious groups and to provide opportunities to all to meet their religious obligations.”

<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html>

*Following Aspects Of:* The policy of Syracuse states “Syracuse University recognizes the diverse faith traditions represented among its campus community and supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe according to these traditions. All University offices are asked to be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff, and students who are observing a religious holiday when scheduling meetings and events. Deans, department chairs, and program directors are asked to make every effort to avoid scheduling meetings or events at times that would exclude faculty who are observing a religious holiday from participation.

<https://policies.syr.edu/policies/university-governance-ethics-integrity-and-legal-compliance/religious-observances-policy/>

*Following Aspects Of:* The policy of the University of Louisville “Calendar: The calendar that follows was developed to broaden the University community’s recognition of its diverse religious perspectives. The listing is not exhaustive of all major holy days in every religious tradition and some variances of dates will exist due to regional differences. It was developed based on the calendar posted by the National Conference for Community and Justice as well as other calendars or information posted on the web by the various religions.” This calendar is used when planning events at the University of Louisville.

<https://louisville.edu/calendars/work-restricted-religious-holy-days>

*Following Aspects Of:* The policy put in place at the University of Richmond Registrar's office, which sets the precedent for the accommodation policy that can easily be put into place at Ithaca College. Their ruling on religious accommodations is as follows:

<https://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/religious-observances.html>

Recognizing: Other religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam also have days where they should have a day or rest or prayer. While planning an event, the practices of all of these traditions should be considered.

Understanding: At Ithaca College, there is a conflict between participating in campus events and engaging in multiple religious observances. During Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim holidays, students have to make a difficult choice to either take part in campus activities and student programming, for which there is no alternative date for participation or participation in their religious commitments. This has resulted in excluding a significant number of religious minority students from participating in important activities on campus such as graduation or attending campus-wide gatherings.

Drawing Attention To: Examples of previous conflicts have been the campus-wide Student Informational call on December 10th 2020 during Hanukkah, Commencement scheduled on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, and having an all-campus gathering scheduled on Simchat Torah. Such conflicts have caused Jewish students to feel that Ithaca College is not responsive to the religious diversity of the student body.

Emphasizing: The commitment of the college to diversity and inclusion. “We know that honest dialogue around **diversity**, equity, **inclusion**, and accessibility can be challenging and uncomfortable, but we hold that it is necessary in preparing our students for success in an ever-evolving global society.” (Quoted from <https://www.ithaca.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-statement#:~:text=Ithaca%20College%20does%20not%20condone,an%20ever%20Devolving%20global%20society.>)

*Emphasizing:* Ithaca Colleges commitment to allow students to practice religious observances, “At Ithaca College, we uphold the diverse religious and spiritual traditions - each with their own set of beliefs, practices, and observances that are part of our community. To this end, we make a reasonable effort to support students seeking an accommodation for religious observance.” (Quoted from <https://www.ithaca.edu/religious-and-spiritual-life/religious-observance>)

*It Is Resolved That:* There will not be any campus-wide events scheduled on the dates of significant interfaith holidays. A campus-wide policy that stresses the importance of cross-referencing these interfaith holiday dates before scheduling any campus-wide events must be implemented. This includes not scheduling significant Student Activities/Campus Life events such as Orientation, All-Student Gatherings, Commencement, and other special events on the major interfaith holidays.

*It is Resolved That:* The college will not schedule any campus-wide events scheduled on the significant dates of various faith traditions. A campus-wide policy that stresses the importance of cross-referencing these interfaith holiday dates before scheduling any campus-wide events must be implemented. This includes not scheduling significant Student Activities/Campus Life events such as Orientation, All-Student Gatherings, Commencement, and other special events on the major faith-based traditions.

*It is Resolved That:* The college should amend their policy around campus events not being scheduled on religious holidays that could hinder populations of students not being able to attend. The policy should coincide with other institutions such as NYU and Syracuse.

**Section 1.** A policy to be created and implemented.

1. The purpose of implementing this campus-wide policy will be to create and uphold a process in which holiday dates are cross-referenced before scheduling any major campus-wide events. This will be in an effort to prevent any department, or school from having an event held on such a date.

a. This policy should include Orientations, All Student Gatherings, Commencement, and all other special campus-wide events scheduled by Ithaca College.

2. To prevent an overlap of school events and religious holidays, the Interfaith calendar will be reviewed before scheduling significant Student Activities or Campus Life events including Orientation, All Student Gatherings, Commencement, and other special events. Should a planned campus-wide event overlap with a significant holiday of any faith, the event should be rescheduled or create alternatives in order for equity to be achieved.

a. In the case of an event such as Orientations, All Student Gatherings, Commencement, can only be scheduled for a date that falls on the Interfaith calendar that the College allows reasonable access for people in the religious community to participate.

3. In order to ensure that members of the interfaith and religious communities are included in all events, a proposed alternative event will be offered in addition to any event that takes place on the following holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first two days of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah, the first two days of

Passover, and Shavuot. Buddhist: Buddha's Enlightenment Day (Called Rohatsu or Bodhi Day), and Buddha's Birthday. Christian: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Hindu: Diwali and Holi. Islam: Eid al-Fir, Eid al-Adha, and Ashura.

4. When making plans for campus events the college should take into account religious days outlined in the following interfaith calendar.

4.a. Interfaith Calendar Link: <https://www.interfaith-calendar.org/>