

To: Tommy Thompson, President, UW System
From: Andrew Leavitt, Chancellor
Date: June 14, 2021
Re: Response to June 1, 2021 Scheduling Conflicts Memo

Dear President Thompson,

Per your recent request, I am providing you with University of Wisconsin Oshkosh communication timelines, actions and mitigating steps to avoid future concerns related to our institution's academic calendar conflicts with major religious holidays.

I am particularly grateful to UWO Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs John Koker. He and his team are working with a sharper focus on faculty and instructional staff, making certain our employees know that we provide students and families the space they deserve to observe religious holidays without worry and feelings of undue pressure or disadvantage related to class schedules and school work.

As you will see, we have efforts already underway and a thorough communication timeline scheduled to help keep the university community informed as students, families, faculty and staff members and other stakeholders progress toward the fall 2021 semester.

Communications

A specific review of the Jewish holidays and the posted Academic Calendar reveal that a conflict of this significance will not happen for many years to come. However, there are other religious holidays which will fall on days during the academic year.

Our focus is to advise effectively while educating and demonstrating that our inclusive values cover all members of this academic community, and all will have the freedom to practice their religious beliefs without any ill effects or negative consequences.

Our plans to communicate religious accommodation is multilayered and designed for several audiences and on target dates that we believe are optimal for attention:

- For incoming freshmen, the guidance on religious accommodation will be provided 9/1, 11/1, 2/1 and 5/1. Current UWO students receive reminders about access to accommodations through similarly timed emails. We intend to reinforce and expand our

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messaging regarding religious accommodations to consider clear statements in the UWO Student handbook, flyers and additional UWO web presences.

- Faculty and staff members will receive this year's Religious Observance & Accommodation Notice (attached) in the beginning of August. Since the conflict with Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first day of classes in the fall semester of 2021, the information about obtaining accommodations will be appropriately available before then.
- UWO's Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Damira Grady, will collaborate with Director of Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action, Sean Fey, and the Dean of Students Office to revise respective websites to ensure easy access to religious accommodations requests.

Existing Policy

Our anti-discrimination policy, reflective of the state Administrative Code, the Board of Regents rules and UW System guidelines, locally assures all members of the community are protected from discrimination and retaliation:

- <https://uwosh.edu/registrar/academic-policies/>
- <https://www.uwosh.edu/provost/Main%20Highlight/handbooks/online-faculty-staff-handbook/general-personnel-materials-faculty-and-academic-staff/gen-4-instructional-policies/part-b-classroom-teaching-policies/gen-4-b-16-religious-accommodation>
- <https://www.wisconsin.edu/regents/policies/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation/>
- https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/22

UWO leadership is making a commitment to continuous improvement in our religious accommodation messaging and scheduling as we examine calendars, printed, websites and other resources. We thank UW System Administration for its guidance and support as we assure students, families, faculty and staff members, alumni and other stakeholders that inclusivity means action at UWO. We will continue to demonstrate support and model flexibility for the university community out of our deep respect for students' and colleagues' diverse religious traditions, observances and practices.

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