

To: Shared Governance Council

From: Dr. John B. Cook, President

Action: **Approval - Addition of Bereavement to existing Student Policies/Procedures (Operational)**

Date: January 15, 2026

Next Steps: To be shared with STCC Board of Trustees on January 26, 2026

In accordance with the formal enabling vote by the STCC Board of Trustees (June 27, 2022) regarding shared governance, including clarification of a process by which “high-level” recommendations regarding institutional policy and operations are reviewed, the Shared Governance Council (SGC) has reached consensus regarding the addition of bereavement to existing policies. Given the codification of responsibilities by the Board of Trustees for the STCC President, combined with framing by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) regarding governance, the formalization of this addition to existing operational policies and procedures is approved. No action is needed by Trustees, and implementation will occur prior to Spring Semester 2026.

Together, the STCC Student Handbook and STCC Academic Catalog serve as a collective for policies and procedures specific to students. Where and as applicable across these resources, the following statement will be added:

Student Bereavement

Springfield Technical Community College acknowledges the profound emotional and academic impact that the loss of a loved one can have on a student. We are committed to supporting students during these difficult times with compassion and flexibility. The college provides a process for students to notify the college of a bereavement, and to seek support, via the Student Absence Notification Request protocol.

Background:

With appreciation for committee work and diligence conducted by the All-Unit Congress, which included review by the Student Support Committee, a dedicated effort was made to address student bereavement. The recommendation was formally considered by the Shared Governance Council in October 2025; final consideration and consensus from the SGC occurred in December 2025.

As part of the discussion and consideration, it was made clear by AUC representatives to the Shared Governance Council that the intent was to demonstrate understanding and deep empathy for student bereavement, with a goal to also model for students how to manage very difficult situations and utilize college-available resources. It does not appear that other Massachusetts

community colleges have a specific student bereavement policy. The initial proposal included the recommendation that a specific number of non-consecutive days of class could be missed by a given student, but consensus could not be obtained for that element in light of current collective bargaining agreements, as well as implications for enforcement via the Student Code of Conduct.

Specific to implementation of this addition to existing policies and procedures: currently the Division of Student Affairs has a process by which students can, but are not obligated to, notify the college of an absence. This “Student Absence Notification Request” is available on the STCC website. In addition to indicated “medical” and “personal” reasons, this mechanism has been revised to now include “bereavement.” Once submitted, faculty in all courses, as well as the assigned advisor, are notified of the absence request via STCC email. The student is also copied via their STCC email, to help facilitate communication. Applicable resources will also be shared with the student in accordance with existing protocol, noting that the nature and context of a given request can and does vary.