

PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE: MLK DAY

Submitted to the College Council by Dr. Leonard F. Favara (June 24, 2022)

It is my firm belief that Central Christian College of Kansas, in light of its mission, legacy, and purpose should rightfully consider Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a “Day On”, not a “Day Off”. Based on the College Council’s response to my request to consider modifying the day off, moving it to February so that we could be more intentional in our celebration of MLK Day, I remain unconvinced that the decision of the College Council is in the best interest of our campus community.

In proposing that we maintain MLK Day as active on the Academic Calendar, I considered the following:

- The intent and purpose of MLK Day;
- Respect for our Black (and minority) student population, recognizing that by *doing nothing* (assuming personal responsibility), devalued the intent of a day held cherished by this population.
- Education for the entire campus community, recognizing that regardless of race, this day should be cherished and revered by all due to the influence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. IN other words, MLK is not a Black holiday.
- Faculty, Staff, and Students just recently returned from an extended break over the winter holidays, which commonly spans from Christmas Eve through the New Year. So, the need for a break was not imperative.
- There are no current “days off” in the month of February. Therefore, moving the day off from January to February would provide the campus community with a break a bit further out from winter break, where it might be most beneficial.

I offer the following as an amplification of some of these considerations.

Unlike any other national (federal) holiday, MLK Day is specifically identified as a national day of service. This unique designation compels us to consider an alternative approach to how we engage this day. As Martin Luther King Jr. observed, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

It is my assertion that the majority perspective of the population at Central Christian College of Kansas may unintentionally be placing a greater emphasis on the “right” to time-off over the “responsibility” for civic action – “doing for others”.

This is understandable, not just because of our racial profile as college, but also because of the quandary caused by the interplay of serving as custodial overseers of student development, while also recognizing the employment obligations of those who serve at CCKC.

As a *corporation* I believe that we can recognize the value of rewarding employees with breaks. Nothing in my request was meant to alter that priority, which is why the proposed modification sought to *move* the day, not *remove* the day. Alternatively, as a liberal arts institution (with an abiding Wesleyan perspective), we also have an obligation to leverage opportunities to amplify the civic dimensions of our educational experience – as a force for the public good.

For arguments sake, why is it that we, in this one case, assume that the campus community will deliberately engage the purpose of this day when we do not assume this is any other aspect of our experiences? If we truly believe that students (and other members of the campus community) bear a bent

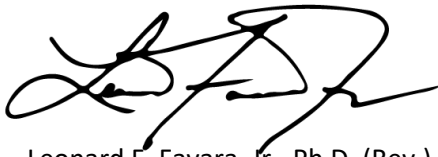
to intentionally engage such opportunities then why do we require things like chapel participation or class attendance? If we can assumedly rely on individuals to truly embrace the intent of MLK, then perhaps we should presume this is true for all activities and functions that are designed to declare Christ, improve character, and challenge toward civic engagement.

In conclusion, I would ask that the College Council and Faculty Senate reconsider its position on MLK Day. I do recognize that in its ruling, the College Council did offer possible ways that MLK Day could be observed. However, the lack of clarity or finality to those suggestions did little to assuage my concerns. I remain troubled that we have no intentional plan to engage the campus community.

It would also be worthwhile to note that I am not adamant in my position about the singular issue of “Day On” or “Day Off”. While I am insistent that we, as a college community, seek to define intentional programmed opportunities to engage the intent of MLK Day, how that is done (and when) is negotiable. Whether we chose that day, a day, the week, or in some other form or forum appropriate to the holiday, the essential concern is that we engage.

I look forward to entertaining ideas.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Favara, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leonard F. Favara, Jr., Ph.D. (Rev.)
President
Central Christian College of Kansas