2014 Holiday Celebration Guidelines

The University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) is a community of diverse cultures. We realize that people celebrate a variety of holidays during this time of year, and others choose to celebrate none. Some celebrations are tradition based, cultural, spiritual or religious. In recognition and celebration of our diversity and to promote a civil, respectful and safe holiday season, we encourage all employees to take this opportunity to learn about different cultures and traditions.

UMMS understands that during this time of year, departments may want to celebrate the holiday season and recognize the valuable contributions of their employees. In order to ensure that these celebrations are enjoyable, inclusive, and safe for everyone, as well as adhere to UMMS policies and procedures, the Diversity and Inclusion Office (DIO) has developed the following guidelines:

To Plan an Inclusive Holiday Celebration

- Avoid dates that may conflict with important dates in other cultures and religions.
- Consider the individual needs of participants from culturally diverse groups to ensure their full participation in all aspects of the event.
- Be culturally sensitive when sending out invitations to the celebration. Use these communications as an opportunity to increase cultural competence by providing information on the holiday tradition.
- Keep in mind when planning a menu, that food is an important part of any celebration in all nations of the world, regardless of culture or religion. Be sensitive to any fasting, dietary restrictions or scheduling conflicts due to religious observance, prior to planning.
- Encourage employees to share their celebrations through stories, decorations, and foods.
- Make all holiday activities voluntary. Non-participation should not be viewed negatively.

Holiday Decorations

- For safety reasons, electrical decorations are not permitted.
- In common areas, it is permitted to display seasonal decorations that are inclusive and encourage an appreciation for all traditions. For example, use images of snowflakes or trees decorated with other non-religious symbols and provide note cards with the cultural information for a Menorah or Kwanzaa Candles.
- In individual work spaces, display decorations that are consistent with UMMS’ commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.
- Managers and supervisors should plan to address questions regarding the appropriateness of holiday decorations. Please feel free to contact the Diversity and Inclusion Office or your HR Partner if you have any questions.

The holiday season is a great opportunity to celebrate diversity and inclusion and reward teams for their individual and collective accomplishments. When handled with sensitivity and respect, workplace festivities can promote unity and cultural understanding that lasts beyond the holiday season.

Thank you for your cooperation and enjoy the holiday season!