

Feedback received from Department Chairs

- (1) Overall, we are seeing a greater drop-off of students in our lower-level general education courses (100 and 200-level) than usual. As faculty, we are accustomed to a student withdrawal here and there. What is more concerning, this semester, is that some of these students are not withdrawing but are intermittently attending and/or turning in work even though in many cases, they will not be able to salvage a passing grade. The students do not seem to understand their actual academic status. We are not sure if these students believe that the pass/fail policy is still in place or if they think that it will be in place and that, therefore, they will have that to fall back on. My faculty are deeply concerned that, unlike last semester, a pass/fail option will not result in a passing grade for these students.

For our majors and minors, they seem to be adapting to these circumstances and, in large part, continue to meet their course requirements. It may be that these students were better prepared for online learning for two reasons: First, unlike first-year students, or even transfer students, they had the benefit of being here last spring. And, second, our department has offered online and hybrid courses for some time. That does not mean that all of our majors have been in those courses, but many of them already had some experience with online or hybrid learning. Those courses may have actually worked to prepare our upper-level students for the shift to online learning.

- (2) Things in our department are going well; we do not need a pass/fail option. Students are doing well in our graduate programs.
- (3) I can say that our department had minimal number of students utilize the P/F option. The reason is due to our accreditation standards. We require a C or better in all prerequisites and in major courses in order to stay in the program and then be able to apply for advanced standing graduate program. We received emails from graduate programs that they would not accept P/F courses. Once we informed the students of the outcome only those failing a course opted for it.
- (4) I have asked my department about this and we are in favor of allowing the temporary P/F policy to cover the Fall 2020 semester. Their observation is that while many students are doing well, others are struggling with the online format, and this may be helpful for retention.
- (5) The faculty of our department have responded to your inquiry, and we overwhelmingly agree that a number of our students are struggling for a variety of reasons associated with the COVID public health and economic crises, and so we support extending the temporary Spring 2020 Pass/Fail Policy to cover the Fall 2020 semester.
- (6) It's been difficult to keep track of majors as none of our upper level courses are on campus this semester (none of our majors opted for the hyflex courses we offered).
 - we have good attendance at our weekly virtual seminars (typically 15-20 students, or about half our declared majors), which is equal to or better than the attendance we would typically have on campus for the same seminar.
 - on the downside, I've had over 50% of students withdraw from my own upper-level course, with students citing difficulty keeping up with work in other classes and/or dealing with online learning. Colleagues note similar difficulties in other classes due to the difficulty of students not being able to interact directly with faculty while working on assignments (even if you have virtual office hours/labs, it is very difficult to share work in progress - no way to "look over a student's shoulder" to help with a task), and similarly students are not able to work in groups to assist each other (again, they can use electronic communication but it is very difficult to share your work in progress to get feedback/help).
 - faculty express frustration with interaction with students in online sections, as it seems many students prefer not to interact with their professors or classmates unless required to do so - perhaps

is more anxiety about speaking up in class when everyone can hear/see what you say/type. Even calling students by name and/or using breakout groups does not always elicit a response/discussion.

- (7) The opinions received from faculty were that no extension is needed, but they could live with it if an extension is given.
- (8) I received this response from a colleague: "My students are doing very well generally. In my intro course, the grades are higher than usual. I attribute that to the change in the types of assignments. In fact, they are doing so well that I am going to revise my assignment structure for next term. So from my perspective, I don't think the option is needed." I would add that in my own case (and I am teaching four courses...), I don't find that the distribution of grades is different than usual, nor is the number of students who submit no or few assignments (i.e., eventual FN or F grades). While the abrupt transition from on ground to online in Spring 2020 brought reasons to offer this option, I am inclined to agree with my colleague; I don't see it as necessary for Fall 2020.
- (9) For nursing - for all 3 of our programs: Undergraduate BSN and RN-BSN and Graduate MSN - we have progression policies that have been submitted to our discipline specific accrediting agency and the Department of Public Health Board of Nurse Examiners - another layer of oversight mandated by the CT Nurse Practice Act statute. So, we will not be changing any of our minimum grade requirements to nursing courses, or any of the related requirements (BMS, CHEM, PSY). Our Department discussed at a meeting, and we have concerns related to students and their overall cumulative GPA - will it be affected impacting their applications to graduate school in future? And - if they do not achieve enough understanding of important course concepts in general education courses and take a P - will that impact them in the future as well?

Impact on our decision on university accreditation

- Would extending the withdrawal deadline for the Fall 2020 semester (currently November 17) have an impact on accreditation? *With respect to NECHE, I don't believe there are any adverse effects if this is approved. It is a policy decision that I think we can explain.*
- Would extending the Incomplete deadline for courses taken in the Fall 2020 semester (currently the 8th week of the Spring 2021 semester) have an impact on accreditation? *With respect to NECHE, I don't believe there are any adverse effects if this is approved. Eventually, students will need to either finish the work or receive a less desirable grade. In either case, it is a policy decision that I think we can explain.*
- Would extending (completely or partially) the Pass/Fail policy to cover the Fall 2020 semester have an impact on accreditation? *With respect to NECHE, I don't believe there are any adverse effects if this is approved and like the two previous changes, I believe we can explain it. However, I think it becomes a little harder to explain, the longer we make this accommodation (for example Spring 2021). Additionally, I should mention that there might be discipline-specific accrediting bodies that may frown upon this continuation – it may be helpful to alert engineering, nursing, business, etc.*

Registrar's Feedback

I am not sure what the opinion of the faculty is on this but my sense is that there is not a universally strong interest in extending the full pass/fail policy and other associated changes from the spring semester to this fall semester. We have had only had a handful of students inquire with our office about an extension but none seemed too concerned when we informed them that the policy changes were for spring 2020 only. Also, I have continued to monitor the national list serv and do not find any other institutions noting that they have approved extensions of

their spring pass/fail policies to this fall. Thankfully our fall semester has largely proceeded as planned and without any significant interruptions like we experienced this past spring.

However, if there is interest in extending the full/pass fail policy from the spring semester to this fall, we could replicate what was in place this past spring with a turnaround time of a week or so. However, the policy would have to function identical to the way it did in the spring semester (P⁺, P^{*}, same minimum grade equivalents, etc.) given the substantial amount of technical testing and configurations that were done last April in order to implement these changes.

If there is interest in making some smaller policy changes for this fall, we could fairly quickly put in place an extension of the withdrawal date without permission from 11/17 to a later date in the semester, as late as the last day of classes on 12/7. We could also very easily extend the undergraduate deadline to resolve INC grades from the midpoint of the spring 2021 semester to the end of the spring 2021 semester.

For your inquiry about policy modifications from this past spring, here is a summary of the pass/fail elections by students:

- 2,730 registrations were updated to pass/fail during the spring 2020 (2,703 UG, 17 GR)
- 1,447 students elected to have at least one course graded on a pass/fail basis (1,435 UG, 12 GR)
- 17.5% of UG and less than 1% of GR students elected to have at least one course graded on a pass/fail basis (Spring census headcount)

In a typical academic semester, an average of a dozen undergraduates might opt into the standard pass/fail grading option. There is not a standard pass/fail grading option for graduate students.

To implement the pass/fail changes this spring, considerable time and effort was put into reprogramming Banner and DegreeWorks to store, validate and properly apply the P⁺ and P^{*} grades. However, the student-opt in, faculty grade collection, grade processing, and degree audit processes all occurred without any major issues. I am also not aware of any difficulties that students have had with transferring credit from the spring 2020 semester to other institutions.

Should there be a need to continue the use of the P⁺ and P^{*} grades in a future term, it could be rolled out with significantly less time and effort than it initially took to create the process this past spring. The other policy modifications, such as the withdrawal date extension and extension of the INC resolution date, were fairly straightforward to implement and could be replicated in future terms without issue.

For your inquiry about fall no-shows and withdrawal, I do not have anything substantive to share at this point. When faculty have raised a "never attended" inquiry through the Early Alert web page, my staff attempts contact with the student to determine their attendance status for the semester. We also worked with our advising centers to do a phone calling campaign prior to the start of the semester for to new incoming students who had not been in regular communication with CCSU to confirm their attendance this fall.

Please let me know if you need any additional information or if there are any additional questions I can respond to.