



TO: Higher Education Community

FROM: Dr. Angie Paccione, Executive Director

DATE: March 27, 2020

SUBJECT: Guidance on Academic & Student Affairs

First, thank you for all you are doing in the midst of unprecedented challenges! We know this is a very trying time and we are inspired by your consistent emphasis to ensure students are at the front of all of your planning and process development.

During this uncertain time, we feel it's important to provide guidance on various academic affairs matters that have surfaced over the last few weeks so there is consistency across the higher education ecosystem, and that institutional practice is aligned with state policy. We expect that our individual and collective approach will evolve over time and encourage you to reach out to members of the Department's Student Success & Academic Affairs team if you have questions or need additional clarification.

Pass/Fail Grading

Many institutions—not just in Colorado but nationally—are modifying their pass/fail grading policies so students can utilize this option for an expanded number of courses in their academic program. This is a sensible thing to do, given that many students are uncertain as to how they will perform academically using a very different learning modality. Some institutions are allowing students to select the pass/fail option for all of their spring semester courses and are extending the date by which students must opt for pass/fail (including through the last day of the semester, or even beyond).

The Department encourages institutions to enact pass/fail grading policy changes that recognize the unique circumstances we currently face and do not unintentionally harm or disadvantage students:

- Extend the date by which students must formally choose the P/F option. Many students will need a few weeks or more to understand what is expected of them in a new learning modality and will need the time to develop confidence that they can complete their work in a satisfactory manner. Extending the P/F choice date to later in the semester can benefit students.
- If an institution's P/F policy limits the total number of courses in an academic program that can be taken using the P/F option, any P/F grades awarded for the current academic term should not count toward this limit.



- Some professional licensing entities may not allow students to sit for an exam if a certain number of P/F grades appear on a transcript. Institutions should advise students to consult with the appropriate licensing board, including the Board of Accountancy, and inquire about specific rules.
- Consider a temporary change, as needed, in how P/F grades are calculated into a student's GPA. At some institutions, an "F" grade is incorporated into GPA calculations as a zero, while a "P" grade has no bearing on GPA—even if the grade would have been an "A". Consider a change so that P/F grades are not calculated into GPA, at least for the current semester.
- Advise students of circumstances where it is in their best interest to not choose the P/F option, including cases where a student is near the minimum GPA required to continue enrollment in a program or required for graduation.
- To promote consistency across institutions and to ensure the integrity of statewide transfer frameworks (including GT Pathways and Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements), **any P grade awarded for the spring semester shall represent a grade of "C-" or higher**, including any P grade awarded in dual and concurrent enrollment courses. In turn, institutions shall not deny transfer of any course with a P grade for the spring 2020 semester that would otherwise transfer with a C- or higher as part of GT Pathways or a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement. Institutions that allow a "D" grade to pass under a P/F system should institute a temporary change in policy so that 1) only an equivalent grade of C- or higher is denoted with a "P", or 2) move to a P/D/F system (whereby a P grade represents a C- or higher and Ds and Fs are assigned as appropriate).
- Include a notation on student transcripts—or use an insert/attachment with all transcripts—that explains the institution's temporary policy change, the reasons for the change and any changes in GPA calculation. This is particularly important to ensure that students are not disadvantaged with graduate schools or employers. Institutions might consider writing to major employers of their graduates and popular graduate programs with an explanation and request for understanding.

Note that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) does not have specific rules on pass/fail grading or on the percentage of courses in a program that can use a pass/fail option. Institutions can develop their own policies related to pass/fail grading, and these policies must be publicized to students in a clear, transparent manner and reported to HLC. Other specialty and program-specific accreditors may have different rules and processes.

Note: for the purposes of this guidance and relevant policy, satisfactory/ unsatisfactory (S/U) grading conventions are considered identical to pass/fail grading conventions.

Tenure, Promotion, Student Evaluations and Continuity of Research

Again, many institutions in Colorado and nationally are changing their tenure and promotion policies to reflect challenges in maintaining scholar productivity during the current crisis. Academic conferences are being cancelled and peer review processes will undoubtedly be delayed due to competing priorities. Additionally, faculty and graduate students will face disruption in collecting research data, especially data that requires face-to-face or group interaction. As a result, many institutions are "pausing" the tenure clock by a semester or even a full year.



The Department encourages institutions to enact changes to tenure, promotion and evaluation policies that recognize the difficulties presented by the current situation and that do not disadvantage faculty on a tenure or promotional track:

- Consider “pausing” the tenure clock in recognition of the challenges brought by the current situation to maintaining scholarly productivity. The “pause” might be for a semester or for a full year. Allow faculty to adhere to existing timelines and present for tenure “on schedule” if they choose.
- For faculty on other timelines for promotion or fulfillment of agreements, consider similar “pauses”.
- Consider a broader range of acceptable dissemination options for research findings and scholarly production.
- Given the peculiarities of the student experience this semester, the use of student end-of-course evaluations in decisions regarding tenure, promotion, merit pay and contract renewals is strongly discouraged.
- Many institutions have made great strides in recent years to reduce structural inequities for women faculty in the tenure process. Institutions should ensure that any policy changes in the current environment do not set back this progress.
- For graduate students unable to complete data collection for theses or dissertations for reasons related to the current situation, consider policy changes that allow for a pause in continuous enrollment or that allow students to register for an additional term without paying tuition.

Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and CLEP Testing Changes

The College Board announced last week that there will be no in-person Advanced Placement (AP) testing in early May as had been scheduled. Instead, testing will move to an online format May 4-15. A second round of date offerings will be available for students who are sick or just need to test later for any reason (dates TBD). Students will take a 45-minute online exam, which can be done on their phone. Educator-led development committees are currently selecting the exam questions that will be administered in each subject area. Additional information is available from the [College Board](#).

For the purpose of complying with Commission on Higher Education policies on Prior Learning Assessment and the award and transfer of credit for scores on AP exams, **institutions shall treat the scores from these exams no differently from scores received on AP exams during previous or future administrations.**

The International Baccalaureate (IB) exams scheduled for this spring have been cancelled. In lieu of test scores, institutions may award students college credit on the basis of the IB curriculum and grades earned in their IB courses (as a form of Prior Learning Assessment), but these credits awarded will not be guaranteed to transfer. All CLEP testing centers have been cancelled until further notice.

Admissions Policy and Practice

With College Board (SAT) and ACT cancelling their spring and summer exams, we know that this creates a potential barrier for students who have not yet taken exams for admissions or were planning to retake exams to improve their scores and become admissible to their top choice institution. We also are acutely aware that [C.R.S. 23-1-113\(1\)\(b\)](#), which requires that, “the standards established for first-time admitted freshmen students shall use a combination of high school academic performance indicators and national assessment test scores for eligibility criteria,” is a challenge as you develop flexible processes in working with students and families. We are working with the governor’s office and



other stakeholders on a viable solution. We will provide updates as soon as they become available. In the meantime, current law allows institutions to admit up to 20 percent of their first-time freshmen utilizing other standards. This will allow institutions to admit up to 20 percent without the use of an SAT/ACT and instead using other proven measures.

For graduate admissions, given the uncertainty of timelines on travel restrictions, prospective students might be hesitant to submit enrollment deposits. Consider extending admissions and deposit deadlines and making all enrollment deposits refundable. Some students may also have difficulty securing official transcripts from their home institutions. Consider accepting an unofficial transcript for admission, along with electronic confirmation that a request for an official transcript has been submitted by the student.

For admission of students who would be required to pass a test of English language proficiency, know that many testing sites around the world have closed. Possible alternatives to consider include:

- Encouraging students to take an online version of TOEFL offered by ETS through Proctor U.
- Accepting English language proficiency demonstrated through platforms such as Duolingo.
- Allowing students to enroll but require that they demonstrate English language proficiency prior to the second academic term.

Additional resources for the COVID19 response are available in the following links. These are regularly updated, free and open to use and share. If you have suggestions or additions, please send them to Kim Poast, Chief Student Success & Academic Affairs Officer at kim.poast@dhe.state.co.us.

- [CDHE COVID Notices and Resources](#)
- [Academic & Student Affairs COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Additional Supports Needed/ FAQ](#)

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration as we navigate this new reality. Our goal is to keep you informed and engaged so you can do what you do best—educate and inspire our future leaders. Please stay safe and healthy and let us know if you have ideas and suggestions for us. We're here to help.

We're in this together.

Sincerely,



Dr. Angie Paccione
Executive Director

