**MEMORANDUM**

**To:**          **Chief Academic Officers**

**From:**        **Tod A. Laursen, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor**

**Subject:**      **Updated Guidance Regarding Pass/Fail Grading for Spring 2020: Transfer Considerations**

In light of recent conversations regarding grading during the transition to online or remote instruction, we want to share some information regarding pass/fall options, including updated guidance addressing the evaluation of transfer credit for Pass/Fail courses (which may include similar grading structures such as 'Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory' or 'S/D/F') for students choosing this option during the Spring 2020 term.

- Campuses have the flexibility to extend their policies so that students may opt —with appropriate advisement—to have spring 2020 courses graded Pass/Fail. There is no SUNY, NYSED, or Middle States approval needed to enact such flexibilities on an ad hoc basis according to programmatic needs; instead, this is a campus-based decision.
- Note, however, that if you consider shifting *all* spring 2020 course grading to Pass/Fail, you must first consult Middle States and all applicable programmatic accreditors, as well as review all licensing/certification requirements for licensure/certification-qualifying programs.
- Further, please note that we advise against adopting an across-the-board Pass/Fail grading scheme unless absolutely necessary, because there are multiple considerations that could render such a process problematic, including the following:
  - A student may need GPA-impacting course grades in order to meet the institutional GPA requirement for graduation;
  - A student may need GPA-impacting course grades in order to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress;
  - A student may want GPA-impacting course grades in order to be competitive for graduate school admissions (and other purposes external to the program);
  - Programmatic accreditors may have requirements regarding the maximum percentage of courses that may be graded Pass/Fail and/or the particular kinds of courses that may be graded Pass/Fail;
  - Licensure/certification-qualifying programs may be impacted by licensing/certification requirements; and

***Updated Guidance on Transfer Considerations***
- Students need to be advised of the impact of Pass/Fail grades on both intra-SUNY transfer and transfer to non-SUNY institutions.
  - Within SUNY, campuses should consider the following when evaluating Pass/Fail grades for course transfer credit:
    - A guiding principle cited in SUNY's transfer policies is equity between native and transfer students, such that SUNY transfer students and native students are treated the same for academic purposes (see MTP Vol. 11., No. 1, Salient Provisions I.1.).

- Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding SUNY's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, when evaluating general education course credit earned during the Spring 2020 term by incoming transfer students, transfer of credit is guaranteed at all SUNY campuses if a SUNY general education course is successfully completed with any passing grade, including a 'P' in a Pass/Fail grading system.
- Consistent with prior policy, a passing grade counts as successful completion for the SUNY-GER area at any campus. Each campus has discretion about whether a particular course grade satisfies graduation requirements outside SUNY-GER, provided that the campus treats native and transfer students the same (see MTP Vol. 13., No. 3, III.B.i).
- For all other courses outside of the general education requirement, campuses must apply the same flexibilities in their local grading policies to transfer students as they do for native students for the same period of time.  For example, if native students are allowed Pass/Fail grading in certain courses for the Spring 2020 term, transfer students should also be granted credit for Pass/Fail grades earned in equivalent courses for the Spring 2020 term.
- Campuses may consider providing additional flexibility in terms of the timing of Pass/Fail grading and withdrawal date decisions, to allow time to consider carefully—in consultation with academic and financial aid advisors, as needed— the potential impact of these decisions.  If withdrawal dates are moved to later in the semester, this could have financial aid implications, so students should be encouraged to first consult with their financial aid advisor before pursuing this option.
- Consistent with accreditation requirements, campuses must publish and communicate broadly any updates to their grading policies for the Spring 2020 term as soon as possible, and include specific provisions for both native and transfer students to inform timely advising decisions for currently enrolled and prospective students.  As a best practice, campuses should document all decisions related to academic policies, both in general and in specific ad hoc cases.

o For transfer to non-SUNY institutions, students should be advised to consult their intended receiving campus to understand how Pass/Fail courses would be received in transfer.  SUNY policies do not apply to non-SUNY institutions, and therefore academic advising in consultation with the receiving campus should inform the decision to pursue Pass/Fail options.

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