April 2, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Here is a summary of the discussions that led to the current policy, unanimous vote by Graduate Council, and the Council of Graduate Students in favor of the policy.

This policy includes all courses. For Nursing and others particularly STEM, there are courses that specifically count toward an aspect of the degree that the colleges/programs wanted a certain level of mastery that is of course higher than the C-. However, as we discussed through this, the programs/leadership didn’t really want to fail students that couldn’t get that B+ as that would be irreparable damage to their cGPAs and careers to have scored so low in critical courses due to COVID. At least with the PA, it will not have this career altering impact. So we talked about how to manage these cases that Pass but by a low score such as a C-. It became clear that the programs already managed these students that don’t get the B+ now. Many times, it is through remediation for these students. A student/program remediation/mentoring plan can get them up to speed over subsequent semesters. The PA/NP system will identify the exact grade for the course the student received prior to converting to the PA or NP so the remediation plan can be specific for that student deficiencies. This is how it is currently handled for these students that don’t make the B+. This was also true for other programs, like Physics.

I was unable to find courses in which an exact grade was needed for by a licensing or accreditation body, however if there is such a course, then the program will notify the student to not take the PA/NP option (bullet 5). Most agencies accredit the programs and then it is up to the program to ensure mastery.

In the end, during these highly stressful times, arguably more so for graduate students, the programs, including STEMs and Nursing and others, agreed that although they would like to hold on to their usual grade standards, that there needed to be accommodation for COVID to relieve stress for the students that are really struggling right now. Leaving bad grades on the transcript for critical courses in their field will become a permanent black mark on their transcript. The student will have to fight uphill to get back to the 3.0 cGPA requirement of Grad School. Some have families, have rent, risk of losing stipends for summer, are unemployed, are living with children as they try to study, etc.

I am happy to discuss this further with all the details we have worked through. We also discovered that the PA/NP option is eligible for an incomplete. So a student that just could not take a test or get an assignment done or the instructors thinks some added work would help the student, then this option is available.

Best Regards,

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