

### **Four New Options for Supporting Student's Academic Success During COVID-19**

The following guidance relates specifically to the Spring 2020 academic term. The College will be determining at a later date whether these or other options will be used in the Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 Semesters.

#### **PASS/NO CREDIT GRADING OPTION**

**What Is It?** Most classes at Minnesota West Community and Technical College are typically graded with a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. For the Spring 2020 term, we are giving students the option of choosing to be graded using either P for "Pass" or NC for "No Credit."

**How Does It Work?** Faculty in A-F graded courses will continue to grade you on an A-F scale. If a student decides to choose the P/NC option, the student's A-F grade will be converted to a corresponding "Pass" or "No Credit" grade after requesting to make this change. When the student receives a P grade, this means that you have achieved enough of the essential learning outcomes of the course to have passed the course with C or higher. Each student can make these decisions on a course-by-course basis. Each student will have until **June 23** to decide and submit a request for each of their courses. (Note: All students currently being graded on a Pass/Fail scale who are eligible for the P/NC grading method will be converted to a Pass/No Credit scale – any F's will be converted to NC's.)

#### **Potential Benefits**

1. Recognizing the time and effort students have invested in their courses already (*as of April 10, we are over 2/3 of the way through the semester!*), this grading option will provide a low-risk way for them to finish the course and continue to make progress toward their ultimate goal of graduation or transfer.
2. P and NC grades are not included in the calculation of grade point average (GPA). Thus, if challenging personal circumstances or the unexpected learning environment of remote learning make it harder this semester to achieve as high a grade as under normal circumstances, this will protect the student's cumulative GPA.
3. Because P and NC grades don't impact GPA, the P/NC grade method will offer students protection against being suspended as part of the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) process. NC grades typically reduce a student's completion rate (the number of credits you earn vs. Attempt), but the federal government is expanding options for institutions to omit NC grades from the completion rate during terms impacted by COVID-19, at least for some students. We will update this guidance document as we learn more about that option.

#### **Potential Drawbacks**

1. Although a P/NC grade can't hurt your GPA, it also can't help your GPA. If students determine their GPA will increase by sticking with the A-F grading method, they should do so.

2. Under normal circumstances, many transfer institutions and graduate schools do not accept courses that were graded on a P/NC scale. Minnesota State is seeking to get assurances from our College's primary transfer partners that they will make an exception during semesters impacted by COVID-19.
3. Some students may not be eligible for P/NC grading. These may include veterans on GI benefits, some international students, and students in some programs with external licensure. Both the federal government and licensing bodies may change these rules during semesters impacted by COVID-19.

*The good thing is – **Student's don't have to decide right now.** Students will have until June 23, 2020, to decide and submit if they wish to opt for P/NC grading. By this time, they will know how well they performed in the course, and by then we will know more about what the implications are for transfer, graduate schools, veterans, Nursing students, etc.*

## **INCOMPLETE (I) GRADE**

**What Is It?** An Incomplete (I) grade gives students a chance to complete coursework after the semester ends.

**How Does It Work?** The instructor gives students an I grade at the end of the course, and then changes the grade to an A-F or P/NC grade when the work is later completed. There is a time limit for completing the work; if a student does not complete the work by the deadline (eight weeks into the next full semester, October 17, 2020), the I grade is automatically changed to an F on your transcript. Normally, College policy only allows faculty to give students an Incomplete in limited circumstances. The College will be expanding options for faculty to use I grades in cases where a student or an entire class cannot finish the necessary coursework by the end of the semester as a result of COVID-19. We will be developing guidance for faculty on the use of this option and will update this document as soon as we have details.

### **Potential Benefits**

1. Personal circumstances related to COVID-19 could prevent an individual student from completing their work. In semesters impacted by COVID-19, the federal government has expanded options for students to take a leave of absence while maintaining their financial aid. The use of I grades could give an individual more time to complete the course.
2. In some classes, there may be face-to-face activities necessary for students to achieve the course's essential learning outcomes or contact hour requirements but COVID-19 is making such face-to-face activities impossible. The use of I grades could give an entire class more time to complete the course.
3. Some courses – such as internships, field experiences, clinicals and practica – require students to learn at external sites that may no longer be open to or reliably safe for students. The College normally does not allow I grades for these types of courses, but

we have lifted that restriction for terms impacted by COVID-19, to enable students to complete these courses at a later date, if necessary.

### **Potential Drawbacks**

1. Our research shows that historically, the vast majority of students who receive I's end up never completing the late work, and they end up getting an F. Therefore, for most students, the best option will be to continue the course through the end of the semester with a P/NC grade method instead of opting for an Incomplete.

### **EXTENSION OF DEADLINE TO WITHDRAW**

**What Is It?** The Minnesota State system typically sets a deadline for students to withdraw that is set at the point when 80 percent of the term has been completed. The system had extended that point to 90 percent of the term, which means Minnesota West Community and Technical College students in full-term courses will have until May 1 to decide whether to withdraw

**How Does It Work?** Students in full-term courses can withdraw (and get a grade of W) at any point between now and May 1. If you are in a shorter-term course, please contact your advisor to determine what the new withdraw deadline is.

### **Potential Benefits**

1. Compared with the earlier withdrawal deadline, this will give students time to determine whether their new learning environment and personal circumstances provide an environment in which they can academically succeed in the current term.

### **Potential Drawbacks**

1. A Withdrawal (W) grade will have the same impact on GPA, completion rate, and Satisfactory Academic Progress as does a No Credit (NC) grade. But the Withdrawal deadline is earlier than the deadline to make a decision than with the Pass/No Credit grading option, and an NC may be viewed more favorably on a student's transcript than a W.

*The College is continuing to analyze the different impacts of a W and an NC and will update this guidance as soon as more information is known.*

### **"COVID-19" NOTATION ON YOUR TRANSCRIPT**

Spring 2020 Grading modifications: Approved by Shared Governance April 15, 2020

**What Is It?** The Minnesota State system (like many other colleges and universities throughout the country) will be developing a mechanism for making it clear on your transcript which grades were in terms impacted by COVID-19.

**How Does It Work?** We are still figuring out the details of how this will work at Minnesota West Community and Technical College. We will be working to make sure it is in step with and recognizable by other higher education institutions in Minnesota and across the country.

**Potential Benefits**

1. It is expected that transfer institutions and others will make allowances for grades impacted by the unprecedented disruptions of COVID-19 on students and institutions.

**Potential Drawbacks**

1. There are no known drawbacks to this approach at this time.

**We encourage all students to talk to your advisor and carefully consider grading impacts on completion of your education program. Individuals should also consider potential impact on financial aid. We all recognize the challenges we all face due to COVID-19 impacts on your education and strive to provide the best options for completing your courses and reaching the next steps in your education goals. Please connect with our college staff for advice on the best course of action for your individual circumstance.**