

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 41-20 (Voting Units: Academic)

“Emergency Proposal: Pass/Fail Option for Spring Semester 2020 Classes”

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Date: 03/23/2020

I. Introduction

With the prevalence of COVID-19 and the sudden subsequent switch to online education across the country, dozens of universities (e.g., Duke, MIT, Carnegie Mellon, Northern Michigan) are adopting a change to their grading structure for this current semester. These changes are being adopted in recognition of the specific challenges that students are facing due to the disruptions created by the sudden movement to remote education, including technology and access, decreased contact hours with instructors, travel, familial issues, and the general anxiety and stress surrounding these uncertain times. A pass/fail option would provide students who have been disproportionately impacted by one or more of these challenges an opportunity to mitigate the impact of said challenges.

II. Rationale

Currently, there is a student led petition at Michigan Tech proposing moving to a Pass/Fail grading system for Spring 2020 grades. Recognizing that implementation of a blanket pass/fail grading scheme could adversely affect students in a number of potential ways, including GPA, student financial aid, scholarships, transfer credits, and academic standing; this proposal outlines a procedure to give undergraduate students the option to change their course grading method at their discretion on a course-by-course basis. Introducing such a grading scheme will give students the flexibility to evaluate what best meets their needs under these unprecedented circumstances.

III. Proposal

It is proposed that faculty members will assign grades using the existing grading scheme for the course. Students will then have seven days after grades are posted to decide if they would like to switch any classes to pass/fail grading. Once a student elects the Pass/Fail option for a course and the final grade is changed, the decision is final and may not be reversed. Specific information on how students would communicate their choice will be provided before the end of the semester.

Policies regarding pass/fail are suspended for the spring 2020 semester to allow classes in any category of degree requirements to be taken pass/fail, even if not typically allowed under normal circumstances.

By providing this choice, it is important that the University provides students with the information they need to understand the short and long-term impacts of switching a course to pass/fail. This information may include, but is not limited to: GPA, course credit, academic standing, degree requirements, financial aid, transfer credit, and accreditation. It is expected that the administration will contact those individuals/groups on campus who can best provide this information (e.g., registrar's, financial aid, advisors, etc).