

**University Senate of Michigan Technological University**  
**Proposal 53 - 21**  
**Proposal: Covid Policies for Spring 2021**  
**(Voting Units: Academic)**

Submitted by: Academic and Instruction Policy Committee

## **I. Introduction**

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to both teaching and learning. To address these challenges the University Senate has passed a variety of proposals designed to modify standard procedures to best support students and faculty as they navigate these new challenges and opportunities. As we as a community work to grow and improve each semester, our COVID related policies must also be modified. The goal of this proposal is to address all of the policies that have been modified in previous semesters and determine how they will be modified for the Spring 2021 semester.

## **II. Proposal**

We acknowledge that the disruptions to teaching and learning due to COVID-19 related problems can significantly affect some students. To support those students and help minimize the negative effects caused by these challenges we propose the following changes to existing policy.

### **A. Extended time to Withdrawal from a class**

It is proposed that the due date to withdraw from a course for the Spring 2021 semester, i.e choose a grade of W on their transcript, be moved to the last day of the regular semester Friday, April, 23rd.

This change allows students whose progress in a course has been negatively affected by COVID-19, to continue trying to learn and improve their grade with an option to protect their GPA if unsuccessful.

### **B. Extended time to complete a class with an I**

Senate Proposal 30-21 states that “the time to complete an “I” (incomplete grade) for any semester affected by the COVID pandemic, be extended to one year past the end of the course.” . In this proposal we acknowledge that Spring 2021 is affected by COVID-19 and thus this policy applies.

### **C. Course Retake Policy**

In the Spring 2020 semester proposal 57-20 was passed allowing students the opportunity to retake any class regardless of the grade that was received during the Spring 2020 Semester. And, that any class taken during the Spring 2020 Semester would not count towards the limit of retaking a class a maximum of three times as

stated in the University's policy. It is further proposed that this policy be extended to the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has caused serious disruptions to the teaching and learning process, both students and faculty have continued to rise to the challenge each semester and continue to learn how to adapt to the challenges, fight through adversity, and succeed. Because of this continued growth and improvement the following modifications to proposals will not be applied to the Spring 2021 semester.

#### D. Pass/Low Pass/Fail option

While we understand that students may be facing unique challenges this semester, the continuation of a Pass/Low Pass/ Fail could have the following negative consequences.

1. The accumulation of Pass/Fail grades could negatively impact students applying to graduate school or entering the workforce.
2. The use of these grades could represent a lower level of understanding of the course content which as they accumulate could significantly hurt students later in their programs.

Students encountering COVID related challenges throughout the semester should be being provided extensions from their course instructors so that they can fully recover from disruptions. If the disruptions occur later in the semester or if they are significant enough so that students aren't able to fully recoup the knowledge allowing them to earn their desired grade we feel that the student should seek an "I" which would allow them the time to complete the course and fully master the content rather than be given the option to choose a Pass/Low Pass/ Fail grade.

Finally, while not the primary reason, as with all policies there is an opportunity for abuse. Removing the policy, removes the abuse.

#### E. Faculty Evaluations

While we understand that faculty may be facing unique challenges this semester, we have seen faculty across campus continue to rise to meet the challenge and find new ways to successfully engage in the teaching and learning process. In the Spring 2020 semester, the senate passed proposal 43-20, which shifted student teaching evaluations to be "opt-in" at the instructor's discretion and not be counted towards merit and promotion processes. In Fall 2020 the senate passed proposal 32-21, which removed the "opt-in" option but still prevented student teaching evaluations from being used towards merit and promotion processes. This allowed students to provide feedback on all courses and further provide information for faculty to prepare for the Spring 2021 semester. The next step in this progression will be to run student evaluations as normal without modification.

Lastly it should be noted that the committee also considered how mid-semester changes to teaching might affect these policies and it was determined that even if Michigan Tech was required to transition to fully remote at some point, that these policies would remain in effect for this semester. While this statement doesn't prevent modifications to procedures from future proposals, we believe it is important to provide guidance to set expectations as early as possible so that students and faculty can make well informed decisions.