

Suffolk County Community College

College Brief

No. 115 April 30, 2020

TO: The College Community

FROM: Dr. Paul Beaudin
 Vice President for Academic Affairs

 Dr. Christopher Adams
 Vice President for Student Affairs

SUBJECT: Assistance to Students for the Spring 2020 Semester:
 Addressing Student Grade Concerns

On March 6th, a College Brief was issued to faculty by Interim President Petrizzo indicating that, as the result of changing conditions related to COVID-19, we may ask faculty to provide fully online instruction. Based upon what we have experienced since then, it is hard to believe that was only seven weeks ago.

In addition to addressing the financial aid challenges of this semester, we have received requests from some students related to their grades and local payment issues. We are addressing that in the following ways:

1. Extending the W option to the last date of term without requiring instructor signature.
2. Encouraging faculty to affirm student requests for an *Incomplete* at the end of term to complete undone work to achieve their best possible grades.
3. Changing the *Incomplete* (INC Grade) to non-punitive criteria for prerequisite purposes. Students can register for higher level courses for the Fall term to stay on the schedule while completing assignments for the *Incomplete*.
4. Establishing a coaching support program to help students to complete all work to satisfy the expectation of their professors regarding *Incompletes*.
5. Not assigning “probation” and “dismissal” to student status based on student achievement for this semester.
6. Waiving late fees for the Spring 2020 Tuition Payment Plan payment through the end of this semester.

Some students asked us to consider a Pass/Fail grading option as some colleges and universities have done. We spent weeks discussing this issue with College administration, students, and with faculty governance leadership. SUNY leadership has advised us against adopting an across-the-board Pass/Fail grading scheme (i.e. a universal application for all students), because there are multiple considerations that could render such a process problematic for students. These multiple considerations include: a four-year institution not accepting a Pass for courses in the major, OR for courses in which a certain grade (i.e. B or better) is necessary for progression from one

course to another, OR for courses in accredited programs, OR for a necessary GPA for a scholarship opportunity.

First of all, a Pass/Fail grading option is not part of the grading structure at our College, as it is at some other institutions. For the students in the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science programs, we primarily serve as a transfer institution and, as such, we know that grades of D and F do not transfer. We weighed the benefit of how the option of receiving a P might benefit an A student who was concerned about the possibility of receiving a B or C. We then weighed that potential benefit against the fact that some of our own accredited programs and the progression standards of some of our own courses would not allow the P to benefit some students.

Secondly, we considered an opt-in P, D, F option as adopted at a few institutions. The opt-in would require students to indicate that they desired to receive a P rather than an A, B, or C and acknowledged that they would assume all potential risks related to that decision. While that option may have been satisfactory to a small segment of our students, that, quite honestly, does not take into consideration the long-term negative consequences for students. To say to a student, “As educational professionals, we do not think that this is in your best long-term interest, but if you agree to this, we will allow your B or C to be considered a P,” would be the easier solution to the requests of some students, but would be difficult to do because it could unknowingly hurt some of our students as they moved forward, costing them extra time and money at their next college or university.

Allowing for the extension of the use of a student-initiated W grade until the end of the semester allows students to withdraw from a course and not have a potential F impact the overall GPA. Students should always discuss this with their faculty member before doing so. We believe that students are often doing much better than they believe and requesting a W may be a mistake. As a result of consultation with other institutions and dialogue with each other, we have determined that we will not be implementing a Pass/Fail option for this semester because we simply believe that it has the potential of hurting students.

For further information related to academic issues, please email our counselors at:

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