

Faculty Senate Minutes
4/1/2020
3-4 pm
Virtual Meeting Using Zoom

Present: Charie Faught (Chair), Karen Wesenberg, Provost Steve Gammon, Abhishek Choudhury, Laura Young, Brian Solomon, Katherine Zodrow, Miriam Young, Courtney Young, Ulana Holtz, Stella Capoccia, Rita Spear, Dan Autenrieth, Matt Stepan, Shauna Savage, Vickie Petritz, Tony Patrick, John Ray, Janet Friesz, Peter Lucon, Phil Curtiss, Todd Hoffman (Petroleum), Chris Gammons, Atish Mitra

Quorum @ 3:00pm

1. Informing administration regarding concerns (or opportunities) for moving forward with the option to have a pass/fail or other alternative grading method.

Chair: In this matter faculty senate is acting as an advisory body to ensure that students' interests are considered. Students came in with an expectation of the course being structured in a certain format, which got changed in the middle of the semester - hence this change in grading system. This proposal (if adopted) will not create a precedence for subsequent semesters, but will be for only this semester (Spring 2020) – in view of this situation of international emergency.

2. UM model proposal benefits

Provost: Most universities in the state and the nation are making some form of adjustment in the grading system. For example, MSU is going with a simple Pass/Fail grading model. In this competitive environment students will make decisions about choosing universities based on how universities act during this difficult time in protecting the students' interests. We are considering the UM model (as against the MSU model) as this has some flexibility (a student who gets CR cannot use it to move to the next courses which need this course as prerequisite). Accreditation bodies nationwide are approving some flexibility in grading under these special circumstances. We will make sure to keep records of the original letter grades in case there is need to roll back in the future.

Advantages of UM model:

- CR/NCR students cannot progress to other courses needing pre-requisites, hence this model maintains academic standards
- CCR/CR/NCR grades do not affect GPA – so students are not penalized for course structure changes in the middle of the semester

3. How it will be operationalized- registrar and financial aid

Janet Friesz (registrar):

The following procedure will be followed in assigning grades

- Faculty will submit letter grades on Oredigger as usual
- In case a student requests CCR/CR/NCR grade, the grade will be assigned (A,B,C=CCR, D=CR, F=NCR)
- There will be a note on the transcript about the special circumstance (COVID-19 shutdown) on the transcript
- A student with CCR grade will make progress towards degree (and pre-requisites). A student with CR will not make progress towards degree (and pre-requisites).

Shauna Savage (financial aid):

CCR or CR will count as successful completion of the course and will count towards meeting requirements of academic standing and scholarships. NCR will be counted as equivalent to F for this purpose.

4. Faculty Senate concerns and comments

- Senator: Can students choose the CCR/CR/NR grading course by course? (Provost: Yes)
- Senator: Some departments need to have letter grades for future professional purposes. (Provost: Students should contact advisors before electing to choose the alternative grading system to know all the ramifications of the choice)
- Senator: will the letter grades be available for future reference? (Janet: Yes, they will be retained in Banner)
- Senator: There should be a checklist available to students making this decision (have spoken to advisor, have checked professional body requirements, etc.)
- Senator: Will this really help students? Companies would possibly want a student to keep a grade of C, than change to CCR (Provost: There will be an asterisk sign beside the grade, which will remind employers of the special circumstances)
- Senator: There may be a possibility of this turning away future students, if this is perceived as lowering the standards
- Senator: Some of these courses are pre-requisites for other courses (Provost: CR/NCR grades cannot be used as pre-requisites for future courses)
- Senator: We should not support the Pass/Fail option
- Senator: Can graduating students graduate with CR grade? (Janet: Yes)
- Senator: Several lab courses got disturbed due to this situation - those students will benefit from this alternative grading scheme
- Senator: Can faculty choose this course by course – for example lab courses, senior design? (Provost: No, That will lead to complications related to inequity, and other organizational issues)
- Matt Stepan: Coaches have spoken with some student athletes. This proposal will take off pressure from students during this semester. Several students don't have good internet access which affects their performance

5. Next Steps

Chair: There will be a working group that will deliberate and make recommendations to the chancellor.

Motion to endorse the three-tiered (CCR/CR/NCR) model (for the Spring 2020 semester only) as an elective alternative, enforced as per clarifications above by Janet about the procedure of grade assignment. Motion seconded. **PASSED.**

The next regular senate meeting (on Zoom) will be Friday next week.

6. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn @ 4:10pm

Provisions for Alternate Grades during Significant Modifications to Instruction Implemented in Response to COVID-19

Complete Credit/Credit/No Credit (HCR/CR/NCR) Grading

In light of the challenging remote instructional environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in order to moderate student stress while adapting to a new system of course delivery, the University of Montana will implement an alternative grading mechanism effective during the spring semester of 2020. This optional Complete Credit/Credit/No Credit grading mechanism, made available for all courses taken for undergraduate credit, will afford students more flexibility and reorient their focus to achieving course outcomes without the inherent anxiety of traditional letter grades.

A Complete Credit (CCR) designation reflects performance at any of the levels A, B, or C (C- or above), and designates adequate understanding of the subject matter and adequate preparation for more advanced work in the field. Courses completed with a CCR grade will qualify as prerequisites and will satisfy degree or general education requirements at UM or other MUS campuses.

A Credit (CR) designation reflects minimally acceptable performance at any D level (D- through D+). Courses completed with a CR grade qualify as prerequisites and satisfy degree requirements only in those instances where a CR is normally accepted.

The No Credit (NCR) designation is for work of failing quality (F).

Complete Credit/Credit/No Credit grades do not factor into students' Grade Point Average (GPA). Complete Credit/Credit grades count towards earned semester hours. A No Credit grade does not count toward earned semester hours.

Faculty will grade students as usual per their syllabi grading structure, with an understanding that the transition to remote learning might impact each student differently.

Students have the option of choosing Complete Credit/Credit/No Credit grading for any number of their courses up to seven calendar days after their final grade is posted to their transcript by the Registrar.

UM will include a designation on students' transcripts, indicating the extraordinary circumstances of the global public health emergency during Spring 2020.

The University cautions students that many graduate and professional schools and some employers do not recognize non-traditional grades (i.e., those other than A, B, C, D, F) or may discriminate against students who use the CCR/CR/NCR option for many courses.

Note: This policy does not apply to graduate students. Graduate Council will expedite language by April 2nd.