



Dear Chief Academic Officers and University and Faculty Senates:

As we continue to navigate through these strange and unprecedented times in our history, this pandemic, and its impact on students, staff and faculty across the State System, the Board of Student Government Presidents (BSGP) respectfully asks each institution to implement an alternative grading system for the Fall 2020 semester and for each subsequent semester amid a pandemic during which remote instruction comprises the majority of a student's learning experience.

Encompassing the Student Body President of each of our institutions, BSGP is committed to serving the interest of all students across the State System. It maintains a clear path of communication between all student bodies in order to promote a steady exchange of ideas and collaborative problem-solving concerning similar campus issues.

Students are appreciative of each of our respective campuses' reopening plans and for their providing them as much of a "normal" college experience as possible. However, with the transition to remote instruction, many faculty members have had to redesign their course modalities entirely, some switching to an asynchronous or synchronous instruction, and some courses still even having an in-person modality or component to the course.

BSGP is learning from student feedback that the adjustment to these new modalities of remote instruction has proven to be incredibly difficult and frustrating. While students across the State System appreciate the efforts taken by our respective universities, students still have to navigate through hours of Zoom classes, remote homework assignments, exams, projects, and research papers; all in the confines of an untraditional or unstable learning environment. These unusual and abnormal learning circumstances are no singular person's fault but the adaptability of students, faculty, and professors is unparalleled across the System.



On a daily basis, students battle mental health challenges, access to proper technology, having a consistent and stable learning environment, unexpected life issues, and fear of contracting or spreading COVID-19 in their household. While we do not expect professors and faculty to know the full extent of students' circumstances, we do urge them to fully consider these challenges and the impact that a 100% learning environment has had on students' consistent ability to stay organized and successful amid already busy lives.

During this Fall 2020 semester, universities such as Kutztown, West Chester, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Edinboro have provided their students with the option of opting into an alternative grading policy. As it is under consideration at other campuses, we write to share the data analysis done on the "Pass/No Credit" (P/NC) option at Kutztown University.

Overall, the implementation of such an option was very well utilized by the students it was intended to help. Before students at Kutztown changed their grade, they made multiple "touches" using a GPA calculator to identify the impact of their decision regarding the change of a grade or to keep the already earned grade in the course. For example, a student may have changed their C grade to "Pass," then back to a C, then back to "Pass," then back to C and finally staying with a C. All this could have taken place over the span of 2 minutes or it could have taken place over the span of two days.

- Almost 32% of students made a grade change—1,977 of 6,260 students.
- Thirteen percent of grades were changed—of the 28,510 courses offered, only 3,708 of those courses received a grade change from a student to a "P/NC."
- Forty-four percent of grade changes were from the original earned letter grade to a "P/NC" and never touched again—this indicates students were comfortable with their decisions to alter the originally earned grade and not change it back.
- The remaining 56% of grade changes had multiple touches over a period of time (no set period of time)—these students either returned to the earned grade in the course or took the "P/NC"—these students may have been more pragmatic in their decision or understood the full capacity of "P/NC."
- Of the students who took time/touches in their grade change decision process, 28.8% of grades reflect a final change to "P/NC," and 71.2% of students' final grades stayed as the originally earned grade.
- On average, it took students 13.5 hours to decide to keep a "P/NC" as their final grade.
- On average, it took students 21.5 hours to decide to keep their earned grade as their final grade.

The data indicates that students pragmatically weighed out their options before rendering a decision in using the option of "P/NC." Whereas many students continue to deal with an increased prevalence of mental health and financial hardships during this extremely trying time, the continued compassion and grace across the System is requested, and we believe the option of an alternative grading policy could further benefit students' individual situations.

As the BSGP, we witness a common thread amongst our institutions and our student bodies. That is, there is increased reports of loneliness, isolation, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Students are struggling mentally, physically, and academically. We implore you to continue to support students so they may succeed both academically and personally. For these reasons and many others, we urge you to institute an alternative grading system for the Fall 2020 semester and for each subsequent semester amid a pandemic during which remote instruction comprises the majority of a student's learning experience.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continuing service to our campuses.

Sincerely,

Agostino D'Ancona  
Chair, BSGP  
Student Body President, Kutztown University of PA

Elijah Brown  
Vice Chair, BSGP  
Student Body President, East Stroudsburg University of PA

Alex Fefolt  
Advocacy Chair, BSGP  
Student Body President, Indiana University of PA

Anthony Mastroianni  
Conference Chair, BSGP  
Student Body President, Mansfield University of PA

Chelsea Mason  
Secretary, BSGP  
Student Body President, Clarion University of PA

On behalf of ourselves and our fellow student body presidents:

Briana Vera, Bloomsburg University of PA  
Amanda Considine, California University of PA  
Tyah Fuller, Cheyney University of PA  
Nicholas Helfer, Edinboro University of PA  
Jacob Frie, Lock Haven University of PA  
John Smith, Millersville University of PA  
Stephen Washington, Shippensburg University of PA  
Joseph Sciuto, Slippery Rock University of PA  
Molly Scollo, West Chester University of PA