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UNH FACULTY SENATE MOTION # XXIV – M5 On allowing first term students to change up to 4 credits to Pass/Fail

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**UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION # XXIV – M5**

On allowing first term students to change up to 4 credits to Pass/Fail

1. Motion presenter: Lisa MacFarlane, on behalf of the Academic Program Committee
2. Dates of Faculty Senate discussion: 11/25/2019 and 12/09/2019

3. Rationale: The Academic Program Committee is aware that first-year students enter college at varying levels of scholarly preparation and familiarity with academic protocols. Furthermore, many first-year students will not immediately know or will change their mind about which academic path and major they wish to pursue. Nationwide, the U.S. Department of Education reports 30% of students change majors at least once during their undergraduate experience (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018434.pdf>). Many students must gradually sort out not only their passions and ambitions, but also their needs and aptitudes. Finding a major that is a good fit early in their academic career is critical to student success.

At UNH, the timing of a first-year student's decision to switch majors has significant ramifications for their scholarly career. Having canvassed numerous campus constituencies—faculty, students, and administrators—the Academic Program Committee has discovered that there exist certain roadblocks which can seriously interfere with a student's ability to complete the process of discovering the course of study best suited to their talents and interests. These obstacles do not serve the students whose academic careers they can derail, and they do not serve the university, especially at a moment of increased effort toward raising retention and graduation rates.

The most common situation is this: a first-year student enrolls in a course for which they lack the preparation. The course is required for the major they intend to pursue; it is the first stepping-stone to the career they have envisioned. They are reluctant to drop the course even though they may be failing; they hope to persevere and somehow turn their fortunes around even after advisors and instructors counsel them to reassess their goals. Late in the semester or even after, they conclude that they wish to go in a different direction; Yet the drop date has passed, and they are still failing the course. With an F on their transcript, they will be in a bind: in many cases, they will be unable to enter a new major, and in all cases, their GPA has suffered. They can retake the course to replace their F, but it is now part of an obsolete career path, adding little value to the student's future and absorbing both money and space in the student's academic schedule. Moreover, if the student is truly unprepared for the course, there is no guarantee that retaking it will improve their situation.

The Academic Program Committee has found that this situation helps no one and it pleases no one; only a solution is lacking. While respecting the need for scholarly rigor, we feel that the following policy change in fact fulfills the university's intellectual mission far better than the present protocol. It will facilitate students' intellectual exploration and personal development but will not incentivize carelessness. We have used already existing guidelines for the Pass/Fail option in order to set in place strict criteria for its use; we are confident that it will not and cannot be abused.

Under current policy, while earning a bachelor's degree, students may choose the pass/fail grading alternative for a maximum of 4 credits per semester up to a total of 16 credits toward the degree.

4. Motion: All students, in their first term at the University, have the option to change up to 4 credits from graded to Pass/Fail at any point prior to the Friday of the 10th week of the semester.

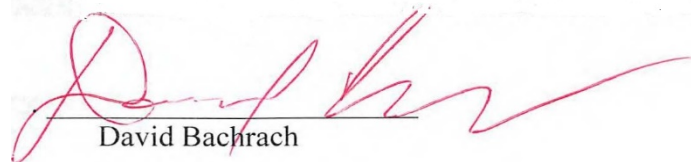
As with UNH's current policy, Pass/Fail cannot be used for Discovery requirements, for writing-intensive courses, for courses required by a student's major or second major, for option or minor requirements, for ENGL 401 First-Year Writing, or for repeated courses. In addition, B.A., B.F.A., and B.M. degree candidates may not use pass/fail for courses taken to meet the foreign language requirement, and no Paul College course may be taken on a pass/fail basis by a student majoring in administration, economics, or hospitality management.

The minimum passing grade for credit is a D- (0.67); any grade below this minimum is a fail. All grades will be recorded on the grade roster as A, B, C, D, F, or intermediate grades. The pass/fail marks will be placed on students' transcripts and grade reports by the Registrar's Office. The course will not be included in the grade-point calculation, but the pass or fail will be recorded, and in the case of a pass, the course credits will be counted toward degree requirements. Associate in arts students, see the University of New Hampshire at Manchester.

In addition, we make the following recommendations:

- 1. We recommend that all faculty, and especially those in classes with large percentages of new students, ensure that there are adequate assessment opportunities early in the term, and opportunities for students to receive additional support.**
 - 2. We recommend that information about this change of grade policy be added to syllabi or to the Important Information about UNH Policies and Procedures for Students that is automatically loaded onto Canvas.**
 - 3. We recommend that the University should develop a way to improve, enhance, train for, and assess advising, given its importance for student success and retention.**
 - 4. We recommend that this policy be reviewed in three years.**
- 5. Senate action: The motion passed with 48 in favor, 3 opposed, and no abstentions.**

6. Senate chair's signature:



David Bachrach

Forwarded to the following on February 18, 2020

President James Dean
Provost Wayne Jones
P.T. Vasudevan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Ted Kirkpatrick, Senior Vice Provost for Student Life and Dean of Students
Andy Colby, UNH Registrar
all deans
all department chairs