

Dear Colleagues,

As we near the end of the eleventh week of this difficult semester, we thank you for all you are doing to continue to teach, advise, and support our students. We also acknowledge the many ways you have met the burdens and challenges our entire community has endured these past weeks, and we wish you all well as we progress towards the end of the Spring 2020 semester.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we negotiate the uncertainties of our current situation and work to develop policies that will support the successful completion of this semester for our students. Below are the most recent policy decisions and updates. As always, we encourage you to consult with your departments, Executive Council and Staff Council representatives, and staff colleagues as we continue to adapt and adjust to the evolving landscape of teaching and learning in the age of COVID-19.

Deadline to Choose S/D/F Grading

Executive Council voted yesterday afternoon to revise the deadline for declaring S/D/F to **Friday, May 15**, the last day of finals. Its members did so in alignment with recommendations and votes from the Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Academic Standing. The revision was deliberated in a collaborative and iterative decision-making process, while keeping in the forefront the vastly different learning environments of our students. Many different perspectives from students, faculty, staff, and administrators were also considered as the decision was reached. We want to thank the representatives from CAS, SGA, the Curriculum Committee, and the Academic Continuity team, and the many faculty, staff, and students involved in these discussions both directly and indirectly, and we, with our fellow members of Executive Council, are hopeful that this new deadline will offer students the time and flexibility they need as they consider this option. It also removes for our students the uncertainty we all feel of not knowing whether our present situation will change before the end of the semester.

Every change presents new challenges. This one was made with the principle that the most flexibility will best address the vastly different conditions under which our students are seeking to complete their coursework. In our communication with students about this new policy, we emphasize in no uncertain terms that students should not expect their instructors to determine a grade by that Friday, which is unfeasible given the myriad difficulties our entire community has faced these past weeks. We want to emphasize to you here as well that in no way should you feel obligated to provide grades by May 15. Students should decide on S/D/F based on their capacity to demonstrate their understanding of the course over time. This greater flexibility allows for students to switch to S/D/F at any time if their learning environment prevents them from doing their best work.

As you continue to work with your advisees and with students in your courses, please encourage your students to consider carefully the excellent guidance on S/D/F policy that was compiled by the Office of Academic Advising and that will accompany our

announcement to students of the new deadline. This decision-making guidance can be found [here](#).

We hope that you can help your students focus on learning for the rest of this semester rather than on grades. Some students, such as those who will apply to certain medical schools or for certain scholarships, need to keep their letter grades this semester. For many others, the switch to S/D/F is a way to give themselves permission to focus on learning at a time when other conditions in their lives may necessarily be taking precedence over school.

Additional Spring 2020 Deadline Changes

The following deadlines for spring 2020 were approved by the Committee on Academic Standing:

- Incomplete request (5 p.m. CDT, May 11—first day of final exam week)
- Course withdrawal (5 p.m. CDT, May 15—last day of final exam week)
- Emergency leave of absence (5 p.m. CDT, May 15—last day of final exam week)

Students are being granted the rest of the semester to make their decisions, though they may benefit from deciding sooner. For example, if they withdraw from a course before the deadline, they may have more time to focus on their other courses. Conversely, students who wait until very late in the semester to withdraw should have enough information about their situation and course performance to make an informed decision.

We want our students to learn from our teaching, not just do the work to earn a grade. That's especially true during this pandemic, when lives have been upended and the impact of this crisis on students' ability to learn may be significant. Much depends on individual students' circumstances and future plans, and this flexibility is in place to acknowledge the vastly different learning environments within which our students are doing their work.

Summer 2020 Options

With thanks to the faculty and staff in Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and other areas of the College, planning for a limited summer term is well underway. While the COVID-19 crisis has undoubtedly affected all of our students, there are a few constituencies with particularly acute needs requiring our attention. To meet these needs, a limited summer session, vetted by Executive Council, will offer a modest number of 4-credit courses and 2-credit options such as guided readings. Continuing student summer employment opportunities will also be available where necessary and possible. We know this represents a significant cultural shift in how our community has thought about the summer. However, our current circumstances require creative solutions. The care that members of Grinnell's faculty and staff have put into devising summer options for our students demonstrates our tremendous commitment to student intellectual engagement and well-being.

A detailed description of this summer 2020 course initiative, including information about the particular student constituencies we are seeking to support and criteria for eligibility, will be

circulated soon along with a call to any faculty members who would be interested in volunteering to participate. Our thanks to all involved in this further response to COVID-19.

As delineated in Tuesday's Academic Continuity message, MAPs and research opportunities that can be conducted online can proceed. Faculty and staff have been busy identifying possible options for students whose MAPs and research are not able to be conducted online, including participation in the summer term for those who are eligible. It is important to note, however, that we will not be able to meet all student needs arising from cancelled MAPs and other research opportunities in these unfortunate circumstances.

For departments normally providing funding for summer opportunities from endowed funds or grants, such as language study or advanced research, the College is generally in support if opportunities can be pursued online, and will work with each department in determining feasibility, including credit transfer and accessibility. Some advisees may benefit from taking summer coursework online at another institution. As a reminder, the College's comprehensive policy on transferring credit and a link to the Transfer Course Approval Form is in the [student handbook](#).

Through your efforts and expertise, and the planning and forethought of President Kington and our Board of Trustees, the College is fortunate to be in a position to continue to safeguard its mission of "graduating individuals... who are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and their abilities to serve the common good." Thank you for your continued commitment and dedication – they have made all the difference.

In admiration,

Anne F. Harris, Dean of the College
Todd Armstrong, Chair of the Faculty