March 25, 2020

Dear LLM and Exchange Students,

As we enter the tail end of the semester in this new reality of virtual learning, I know many of us are experiencing unexpected stresses and anxieties. Our current situation is uncharted territory for us all, and I’m grateful for the goodwill and flexibility demonstrated by students, faculty, and staff alike as we navigate our way through.

One question that has been on the minds of our entire community is how we’ll approach grading for this semester, given this transition to a new delivery of both classes and exams.

We have decided that in light of the enormous disruptions this semester, LLM and exchange students will have the choice to be graded on a credit/no credit basis or to receive a traditional grade. Although we have adopted an across-the-board credit/no credit system for the J.D. students, we recognize that LLM students are situated differently since a semester represents such a large percentage of the degree program. Likewise for exchange students, we know you are here for only a semester and your home institutions may require a grade in order to receive credit.

This is an exceptionally challenging situation for everyone. For some of you, your living situation has been disrupted and everyone has worries about their own health and that of their family and loved ones. None of us are sure how this new distance learning approach will work or what further obstacles may lie ahead. Given all the uncertainties, we thought the approach described above would give each of you the flexibility to deal appropriately with your individual situations.

Below, you’ll find answers to some of the questions you may have. Dean Preis and I are ready to answer any other concerns or questions that may arise. Thank you for your hard work and understanding as we take on this new challenge together.

Sincerely,

Dean Perdue

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How will grading work under this policy?
Under this policy, students will complete the semester and, initially at least, receive a traditional letter grade (e.g., A, B, C etc). After receiving that grade, students may decide whether to keep that letter grade or instead change the grade to the “Credit/No Credit” format. Under this format, any grade other than an F changed into “Credit” and the grade of an F will be changed into “No Credit.”

Do I have to change all my grades, or can I just change some?
You can change as many or as few of your grades to Credit/No Credit as you like.

Will Credit/No Credit Grades Affect my GPA?
No, unlike traditional letter grades, Credit/No Credit grades will have no effect on your GPA. If you change all your Spring semester grades into Credit/No Credit, your GPA will remain unchanged from what it was at the beginning of the semester.

Why would I change my grade to Credit/No Credit?
Students often desire to get the highest GPA possible, and low letter grades (e.g., C’s and D’s) can pull down your GPA. Thus, if some of your grades from this semester are lower than you want, you may wish to change those grades into “Credit.” On the other hand, if you earn an A in a particular class, you will probably wish to keep that grade.

How does this policy affect the “pass option” that LLM students have?
In an ordinary academic year, LLM students have the option to take one of their grades and convert it to a “Pass.” Nothing in this new grading policy affects that option. Given that this new policy allows students to convert their spring semester grades to “Credit,” however, students will now only wish to use that option for a fall semester grade.

Will students still be able to get feedback on their performance this semester?
Absolutely. We have encouraged faculty to provide feedback in some form to all students.