

April 14, 2020

Dear Brigade,

In an email to you a few weeks ago, I indicated that the decision regarding the use of Pass/Fail grades in place of our traditional letter grade system would be better informed by data if we waited to have the experience of administering the 12-week exam period fully online. Now that we have done so, the data is clear.

We have surveyed the faculty, and with an unprecedented 91% response rate, 83% say that they can assign grades using our standard A-F (and, as needed, an “Incomplete”) model in a way that fairly differentiates levels of student knowledge and ability. This data, along with consultation and concurrence from the Superintendent, has informed my decision to remain with our standard A-F grading system; we will not be moving to a blanket Pass/Fail grading system.

Of the faculty who supported moving to Pass/Fail grading, the main point in doing so was concern with the individual living situations of each Midshipman. The Superintendent and I remain mindful of the many challenges you face, and your faculty instructors are equally invested in your success and are committed to helping you overcome any such challenges, so please take advantage of that. In this environment, it is impossible to overcommunicate.

With the help of company officers and faculty members, we are tracking Midshipmen by name who are facing challenges due to circumstances outside of their control to ensure that they are not academically disadvantaged. If you believe you may fall within this category, please communicate this within your chain of command. As always, Midshipmen may request special considerations from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Dean Jennifer Waters) and the Director of Academic Advising (Professor Pam Schmitt).

We are proud of the resiliency, determination, and professionalism you have displayed as we all work together during these unprecedented times. There are only 11 days of academic instruction left in the semester before final exams begin ... so stay the course and continue to give it your very best effort.

Best regards,
ATP

Andrew T. Phillips

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