

# LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

Date: 28 March 2020

Memo to: The Lafayette College Community:  
Students, Faculty, Staff, Coaches, Peer Tutors, PARDners...

From: Mike Olin, Dean of Academic Advising and Co-Curricular Programs  
Nancy McCreary Waters, Faculty Academic Advisor, Associate Professor Biology  
Simona Glaus, Health Professions Coordinator

Re: Temporary Pass/Fail Option for Health Professions Students

We know this is long...but please read in its entirety!!

Health Professions Advising is monitoring the dynamic landscape of how medical, dental, optometry, podiatry and veterinary schools are considering their requirements in the face of COVID19 disruptions. With our partners in Gateway Career Center we also are tracking changes in physician assistant, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology and nurse practitioner professional programs. The temporary policy option for Pass/Fail at Lafayette College seems within the range of our peer institutions, where 4 of 5 have some kind of P/F accommodation in place. It is a sound compromise for our community at this time, but the long-range effects are less obvious. They pose significant challenges that warrant careful consideration by our HP students. Things are still changing, but this is what we know:

1. *As of March 28, 2020, a number of both osteopathic and allopathic medical schools, including [Harvard Medical School](#) (HMS), have made decisions about whether P/F or P/NP grades for pre-req courses will be accepted for the 2021 application cycle. The list is being compiled at the national level; we will update you soon. But of the ~50 who have offered policies, the majority either will ONLY accept P/F in required courses **if the move was required and not optional** at the home institution (HMS above), or will accept P/F but STRONGLY PREFER letter grades for all courses (e.g., Georgetown). Many have set policies with notable restrictions, some of which include: (a) P/F will be accepted, but the school will require documentation of the college policy and/or confirmation of a "C" grade or higher in requirements, (b) no more than 3 courses on the entire transcript can be reported P/F, (c) P/F accepted for graduating seniors only in their final semester during Spring 2020, (d) schools which tout flexible prerequisites still strongly prefer letter grades, (e) schools will require applicants to explain decision to elect P/F akin to explaining a "WD" on their transcript. The majority of schools to which our HP students and alumni apply have not yet reported their policy. We are paying close attention and will update you as we receive them. Taken collectively, these suggest that the choice of P/F by an applicant might be a risk which could restrict the range and number of schools to which they may make successful application.*

2. *The nation's podiatry schools have issued a statement that they will accept P/F. The nation's osteopathic schools have updated the common application on AACOMAS to include questions related to impact of COVID19 and will be paying close attention to those responses. We will alert your to continuing developments in the other HP disciplines.*

3. Courses taken for P/F are not factored into either science or cumulative GPA calculations. This places greater weight on letter-grade-reported courses...and your GPA may not realize the benefit of the hard work you have undertaken to earn a respectable grade in adverse circumstances. It may also impact achieving Latin Honors or other distinctions.

4. For applicants who report core requirements as P/F, schools will weight with even greater emphasis quantitative metrics such as MCAT, DAT, OAT and GRE in making interview and admissions decisions.

5. Applicants can rest assured that our HPAC Composite Letter of Evaluation will speak to challenges that might result in sub-optimal performance in a course. But students will have to speak to their decision to mask a basic metric of their performance; in doing so you may inadvertently mask a critical piece of evidence that demonstrates your grit and determination.

We realize that these are weighty matters. And we remind you that your academic record—all 8 semesters, all metrics, all successes, all disappointments—is as unique as you are, and will be viewed holistically. The context of this particular semester is important. So, if your performance in one course suffers by a shift to online instruction, and in the absence of normal academic resources, you will be similarly situated as all other students applying at this time.

We know you will seek advice from many arenas. We remind you that our advice is not anecdotal or dated, but it is founded in the most timely and holistic sources available. You have time to weigh your options, and we urge you to do honest self-assessment. Our position in HP Advising is to encourage you to refrain from opting for P/F in any of your courses, so as to minimize or eliminate any potential confusion about your credentials. But please keep this in mind: you are seeking to enter a health profession which poses challenges in gaining admission, completing your advanced degree, passing competitive board exams, perhaps seeking residencies or fellowship training. You will need to perform where there are no P/F or any grade outcomes. Rather, your performance will be measured by the well-being and even survival of your patients. You may have to do this under less-than-ideal, acute emergency, or chronic extended pandemic circumstances. Cultivating an ability to remain focused, stay motivated and do the best job you can are all qualities that will stand you in good stead. You ought not only state that...you ought to show that with independent evidence.

We in HP Advising are here to support all of our students in navigating not just this monumentally challenging semester, but your entire educational trajectory. We recognize that some of you may face unavoidable obstacles and enormous disruptions that can affect your personal wellness. We urge you to pay attention to the bigger picture wherever you are able. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to us for assistance so we can talk with you and provide personalized advice reflecting your own, individual situation. Be Well. Practice Safe SoD (Social Distancing). Wash Your Hands...your future lies in them!

We are establishing regular Google Meet and/or Zoom 'office hours' for students to enter at their convenience. Dr Waters currently has a Monday afternoon block set up for the remainder of the semester. Ms Glaus is doing similarly. PLEASE email us with specifics about your questions and availability so we can assist you to the best of our abilities.