



SEPTEMBER 26TH, 2023

FALL 2023 P/D/F STATEMENT

We, the members of the General Studies Student Council, write to you, the Committee on Instruction (COI), today in order to convey our desire for a permanent change in the Pass/D/Fail policies set forth for the School of General Studies and Columbia College. Our Council consistently receives feedback from our student body regarding the deadline of the current P/D/F election process, and we are formally requesting that the COI permanently change the date of P/D/F declaration for courses to the last day of the academic semester. We are requesting this change on the basis of (1) allowing students the time to make knowledgeable decisions and (2) encouraging students to maintain engagement with their coursework by providing more time to increase their grades by the end of the semester.

During the peak impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the COI made temporary adjustments semester-by-semester to the P/D/F policies, changing both the date of P/D/F declarations as well as policies involving P/D/F for the Core Curriculum and for majors. While those decisions were made out of extreme circumstances created by the pandemic, these changes demonstrated that the current policies surrounding P/D/F should be revisited to see if they are best suiting the student body's needs as well as the academic standard set forth by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. At this time, the General Studies Student Council is only requesting a review of the deadline for P/D/F policies to be permanently changed to the last day of classes, not for a change in the types of classes allowed to be used for P/D/F. For the current Fall 2023 semester, the P/D/F deadline is set at November 16th for the School of General Studies and Columbia College, and we are requesting a permanent change, starting this semester, to allow students to elect a class P/D/F up to and including the day of December 11th.

After many semesters of feedback and testimonies from the student body, students have made it clear that they require more time to make the most informed decision regarding whether they should elect a class for P/D/F or not. Many classes in the humanities and the social sciences have only a few major assignments or exams, oftentimes with no major grades received back by students until after the P/D/F deadline. Other classes might have larger assignments or exams due toward the end of the semester, which occurs after the current P/D/F deadline. In these situations, students have to make decisions based on caution or a best guess on their performance in a class, rather than based on actual feedback from instructors. By extending the P/D/F deadline, we also hope that students will engage more fully and completely with course material over the entire semester, encouraging



them to work with faculty to obtain a grade they feel comfortable keeping, rather than hastily choosing P/D/F and not fully engaging throughout the remainder of the semester.

Students frequently remark that P/D/F policies contribute to their mental wellbeing in situations where coursework has become unexpectedly greater or more demanding. Rather than having regret or doubt about academic performance after the current P/D/F deadline, which leaves grades unknown for many courses, an extended deadline would remove the mental stress of lower-than-expected academic performance and allow students more flexibility over when and how they use P/D/F options during their time here at Columbia. Challenges, individual or otherwise, inevitably will occur for students at Columbia, and an extended P/D/F deadline will provide a renewed opportunity for students to demonstrate their full potential.

While we acknowledge that the faculty composing the COI have differing opinions on the purpose and usefulness of P/D/F elections, since the choice does exist to elect classes for a Pass/D/Fail marking, we feel that the deadline should best reflect when the students will have the opportunity to make the most informed decision. We firmly believe that increasing student control over academic choices like P/D/F allow for a better academic experience for both students and faculty.

Ultimately, the usage of the P/D/F option provides students with the ability to explore challenging classes and new fields, have reassurance when unexpected circumstances might affect academic performance, and protect the mental health and wellbeing for students in classes that are presenting them with challenges in a given semester. With this proposed change, we hope that the rigorous standards of a Columbia education can be upheld while also advancing sensible policies that benefit faculty and students.

Respectfully,

The General Studies Student Council, 2023-2024

Addendum (Updated October 26th, 2023):

The Columbia College Student Council (CCSC) has taken a vote in their General Body on October 22nd, 2023 in support of the aforementioned statement and subsequently acts as a co-signer of the statement moving forward.

Respectfully,

The Columbia College Student Council & General Studies Student Council, 2023-2024