

March 27, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I have never seen our beautiful campus so quiet, eerily quiet. Yet I know that you—whether working in your offices or labs on campus or remotely from home—have been putting enormous effort into teaching online classes, continuing your research and scholarship, advising students, and conducting the business of your departments, institutes, schools, and colleges. By all reports, our students also have adapted to this new environment and continue to progress toward their degrees.

The purpose of this letter is to share with you several important decisions made this week in an effort to respond to the upheaval caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Earlier today, the Academic Council approved several temporary amendments to the academic codes that govern grading for undergraduate and graduate students, and several other temporary adjustments to policies as outlined below. These temporary measures were developed in consultation with the deans, department chairs, faculty representatives, the Registrar, the Advisory Committee on the Academic Code and Policies, and the undergraduate and advanced studies subcommittees of the Academic Council.

Changes to Undergraduate Student Grading for the Spring 2020 Semester. This semester undergraduate students will have the opportunity to view their final course grades at the end of the semester, and then choose whether to accept their letter grades or elect a pass/no credit option. Those receiving a letter grade of A through D can choose to receive a pass (P); those receiving an F grade can choose to receive a no credit (NC). Pass and no-credit grades will have no effect on a student's grade point average. Undergraduates may make this choice for any or all of their courses. This grading option does not apply to courses completed prior to spring break. The Registrar will provide in the near future administrative instructions for choosing the pass/no credit option.

Temporary Expansion of Leave of Absence Policy for Undergraduates. For the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester, any undergraduate student who withdraws from classes due to a specific COVID-19-related concern will be granted a leave of absence and be allowed to automatically re-enroll in the fall. The leave is subject to the approval of the dean of the student's primary degree-seeking college or school, or the dean's designee. The student must return to the degree program by the first class day of the Fall 2020 semester. Post-baccalaureate students should refer to their college or school for leave policies specific to their degree program.

Changes to Graduate Student Grading for the Spring 2020 Semester. Graduate students, after viewing their final grades, may choose to accept their letter grades or choose a pass/no credit option. Those receiving a letter grade of A through C can choose to receive a pass (P); those receiving a letter grade C- through F can choose to receive a no credit (NC). Pass and no-credit grades will have no effect on a student's grade point average. Graduate students may make this choice for any or all of their courses, by informing their individual professors. The Registrar will provide in the near future administrative instructions for choosing the pass/no credit option.

The Law School, Mendoza College of Business, and School of Architecture will articulate their own policies for professional students in the very near future.

Flexible Deadlines for Thesis and Dissertation Defenses. While the conferral date for graduate degrees will remain May 16, the deadlines for defense of theses and dissertations will be extended from March 30 for defense and April 6 for submission, to **April 20** for defense and **April 27** for submission.

Automatic Extension of the Tenure Clock. In recognition of the myriad disruptions to our faculty members' teaching, research, and personal lives, the deans of all our colleges and schools and I agree that we should take the unusual step of granting an automatic one-year extension to the tenure clock for all probationary faculty who are not currently under review for tenure. **Tenure-track faculty members who wish to opt out of the automatic extension of the tenure clock must notify their dean in writing no later than one year prior to the time when they would otherwise come up for tenure.** Tenure-track faculty members scheduled for tenure review in the upcoming academic year must notify their dean **by June 1** if they wish to opt out of this extension and be considered for tenure as originally scheduled.

I want to especially thank Registrar Chuck Hurley, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs Hugh Page, Dean of our Graduate School Laura Carlson, and the many members of the various college and school councils or their equivalent bodies for their diligent efforts to develop these temporary measures. We hope these decisions will address concerns that many of you have raised in past days. The deans, department chairs, OIT, Student Affairs, and many others will continue to partner with you to devise innovative solutions as further challenges arise.

It is often said that a crisis brings out the best in people, and that is surely what I have witnessed during the past weeks. Your ingenuity, selflessness, and dedication in overcoming obstacles are both humbling and inspiring. I shall always be grateful for your efforts and example.

Yours in Notre Dame,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Thomas G. Burish

cc: Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.