





Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

DATE: November 13, 2017

SUBJECT: Academic Record Symbols and Grade Point Average; Withdrawal (PUBLIC HEARING)		Item Number: 3.1	
		Attachment: Yes (2)	
CATEGORY:	Academic Affairs	TYPE OF BOARD CONSIDERATION:	
Recommended By:	 Laura L. Hope, Executive Vice Chancellor	Consent/Routine	
		First Reading	X
Approved for Consideration:	 Eloy Ortiz Oakley, Chancellor	Action	
		Information	

ISSUE: This item is a first reading of proposed regulations amending California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55023, *Academic Record Symbols and Grade Point Average* and section 55024, *Withdrawal*. The purpose of the revision is to add a new non-evaluative symbol, Excused Withdrawal (EW), in order to reflect that a student’s withdrawal from a course was compelled by circumstances beyond his or her control.

BACKGROUND: Presently in the community colleges, students who withdraw from an academic course after the specified allowed drop period consistent with district policy will receive a notation of “W” on their academic record/transcript. In some instances students must withdraw from a course under circumstances beyond their control, yet their transcripts will show a “W” for each withdrawal. The “W” notation is then used to calculate progress probation and dismissal, though not included in the grade point average calculation. A non-evaluative symbol is needed to reflect the fact that a student’s withdrawal from a course was compelled by circumstances beyond his or her control. This non-evaluative symbol would permit the district/college to avoid penalizing students by excluding them from progress probation and dismissal calculations. For this reason, the Excused Withdrawal (EW) is proposed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: The proposed regulations are presented to the Board of Governors for a first reading and public hearing. The Board of Governors must hold a public hearing for receipt of comments, both written and oral, which are offered concerning the proposed action. It is anticipated that the regulations will be presented to the Board for adoption at its January 16, 2018 meeting.

ANALYSIS: Title 5, section 55024, currently allows a student to drop a course without notation of a “W” on the academic record/transcript as long as no more than 30% of a class has occurred (although districts may, by local policy, impose a shorter period of time for students to drop a course without the receipt of a “W”). If the student withdraws after 30% but before 75% of the class has occurred, the “W” notation will be issued and becomes part of the student’s academic record/transcript. No withdrawals are permitted during the last 25% of a course, except due to extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student for which a student may request a withdrawal through a student appeal petition process. If the appeal is granted due to extenuating circumstances, the grade recorded is a “W” rather than a less than satisfactory or failing grade. In all instances, the “W” is then factored into the student’s progress probation and dismissal and can result in a student being placed on academic or administrative probation with negative impacts to financial aid eligibility.

California Code of Regulations, title 5, section 55023(e), displays the non-evaluative academic record symbols that a college may use when certain conditions are met. Circumstances under which a student may be involuntarily withdrawn with no penalty are also discussed in section 55024 and include being called into active military service, or an extraordinary natural disaster such as fire or flood. On greater occasion, however, community college students have been compelled to leave their academic courses due to unanticipated circumstances beyond their control that affect their abilities to continue to attend their courses or remain in the institutions. Examples of these instances include: unexpected job transfers; significant changes in the student’s health or the health of a family member where the student becomes the primary caregiver; or release from custody or an involuntarily transfer of an incarcerated student. The purpose of the proposed regulations is to provide relief for the student who has not been able to continue in a course for specific events beyond their control or other extenuating circumstances by allowing the use of an Excused Withdrawal symbol. This non-evaluative symbol would permit the district/college to avoid penalizing the student by excluding them from progress probation and dismissal calculations.

In accordance with current reform and expansion efforts within the correctional system, community colleges have provided courses to incarcerated men and women throughout the state’s penal institutions. On occasion, incarcerated students are released from custody or involuntarily transferred out of the academic program inside the institution prior to the end of the academic term and are unable to finish their courses. In more traditional settings, a college may assign an “incomplete” symbol to the student’s record to signify that the student left after a significant amount of coursework had been completed but not enough to justify an end grade. For the incarcerated student this action is impractical because these students are often released or moved to other parts of the state and rarely have the option of returning to the college of the course’s origin. Released and/or transferred students who seek to continue their education and complete work on degrees or certificates can find that the “W” will result in negative implications to progress probation, dismissal calculations, financial aid eligibility, and could cause their being placed on academic or administrative probation. The proposed regulations, if adopted, would provide relief for these students by allowing the use of an “EW” symbol when the student is transferred or released.

The proposed regulation changes are included as Attachment 1.

A summary and analysis of the proposed changes are included in Attachment 2.