April 29, 2020

Subject: Grading – Credit/No Credit

Dear San Dieguito Union High School District High School Parents and Students,

We thank everyone who has taken the time to write and share thoughts and questions about distance learning for spring term. We understand there are many perspectives and applaud everyone’s commitment to learning and planning for their future. The societal shutdown due to COVID-19 is the most unusual and complex situation educational organizations have ever faced. The abrupt school closure that disrupted the final quarter of our year is difficult for us all, and we had to adapt to meet this moment. We understand that the plans and activities our students were expecting have changed entirely. We are mourning the loss of connections, experiences, and a unique time in our lives and we are sorry for this loss for students. The prior methods of demonstrating engagement, like extracurriculars or athletics, and the academic environment have shifted at every level. We know the disruption of the normal learning setting is another of the stressful aspects of daily life currently. We understand the difficulty of these changes and the uncertainty about how this time will impact our students. We also know that the successful academic record, dedication and talents of our students will be apparent in their future college applications, and that our staff will work with students to show how their responses during this time reveals resilience and continued commitment to education.

As it relates to final marks, we received many messages in support of credit/no credit as well as allowing students an option for grades, issuing all students A or A- grades or “freezing” 3rd quarter grades. Our decision-making has focused on the health and well-being of all of our 13,300 students, their families, and our staff. It is recognized that we cannot replicate a comprehensive school program in this current environment and the state guidance is to focus on essential learning standards for courses and preparing students for the next level. This reality necessitated a change in our systems that would serve all students. When making such a change, we considered multiple factors and different types of systems and how each would impact our students. Taking into account all of the input from state and local governance, post-secondary institutions, larger community agencies, leadership teams, teachers, students and families, we developed a Distance Learning Plan - During School Closure Spring 2020.

In order to address different questions, we created a Frequently Asked Questions, which includes specific information about some of the issues that you raise. We outline our process in answering the questions about why we transitioned to credit/no credit rather than another system, as well as information about how credit/no credit will interact with eligibility for college. We encourage you to review the questions and answers for more details. We have been assured by institutions of higher education that moving to credit/no credit temporarily for this term will not adversely impact college eligibility and provides clarity. The State Board of Education, California Department of Education, California State University, University of California, California Community Colleges, and independent nonprofit colleges and universities as well as private universities like Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, USC, Northwestern, MIT, and Tulane and many others have provided statements that students will not be
penalized by the impacts of COVID-19. In addition, colleges, testing and athletic organizations are very aware of the current situation and have already posted that they will be flexible and compassionate in assessing student records.

As one example, Harvard’s Dean Claudine Gay captures the inherent inequities and challenges with offering student choice during this extraordinary time. “Instructors have come to feel that they cannot assign grades equitably, given the radically different circumstances students find themselves in. We cannot make the usual comparisons in the midst of a global pandemic, and the shift to an alternative grading scheme reflects the enormity of our current situation.” Gay continued, “Were we to permit students to opt-in or opt-out of P/F grading, students who find themselves in very challenging situations would have no choice but to shift to P/F--and they would suffer in comparison to their peers as a result. A mandatory Emergency Satisfactory/Emergency Unsatisfactory system is the only way to treat all students equitably.” Some college admissions officers have shared that, because they consider applicants in the context of their own school and utilize the school profile, it would be challenging to contextualize a student’s record and school profile if some students had grades, some had credits and/or some had “frozen” grades that could only improve. We do not want to create any confusion or further pressure around the college admission process.

Our historical experience has been that whenever there are circumstances beyond a student’s control, such as when schools are closed due to natural disasters, or there is an extended illness of the student or a family member, colleges are understanding when the student’s grades or tests scores are impacted. Colleges have always adapted by adjusting deadlines, resetting requirements, and taking into account the local circumstances of its applicants and they are all communicating that is exactly what they will do now. They want to admit even higher numbers of students in the subsequent fall terms and are encouraging students that they will be flexible. College admission offices are continuing to affirm that they consider student’s in their local context rather than comparing across different schools or districts or different years. SDUHSD is committed to supporting all students in successful learning outcomes and in their plans for after high school and we will continue to work to make sure that we assist all of you.

Again, we acknowledge the challenges of the current situation and are sorry that you are being impacted by the pandemic. Our decisions will continue to be anchored around student and staff wellness, equity and making the best choice for all of our students based on the information that we have during this time.

**Guiding Documents & Resources**

- [Dr. Haley, District Update](#)
- SDUHSD [Spring Term Grades](#) and [SDUHSD Distance Learning Credit](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Crescendo Education Group Grading Recommendation during COVID-19](#)
- Joint statement from the California State Board of Education, California Department of Education, California State University, University of California, California Community Colleges and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities: [https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/documents/jointk12highereducation](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/documents/jointk12highereducation)
- [University of California (UC) The University of California’s Response to COVID-19: Admissions and Financial Aid: UC Admissions FAQ](#)
- [California State University (CSU) COVID-19 Interim Impacts on CSU Undergraduate Admissions Policies and Practices](#)
- [Community College letter California Community Colleges Guidance Letter](#)
- [Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) AICCU Institution Activities to Serve High School Juniors and Seniors; examples, Harvard & Stanford adjusted admissions policies](#)
• NCAA guidance on COVID-19
• Challenge Success program guidance

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