

MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT



Dear Michigan Tech Undergraduate Students,

The past few days have been filled with uncertainty, change, and lots of emails. You may have seen, in the midst of all the communication, a petition circulating on Change.org which called for a change in MTU grading policy to allow for pass/fail course grades. The Undergraduate Student Government (USG) received a range of responses to this, including support and serious concerns.

Because of the vested interest students showed, USG discussed the possibility of passing a resolution, drafted by two of our USG members, which was aimed at allowing for pass/fail course grades without disadvantaging students. Afterwards, USG was made aware of an emergency proposal being brought to the University Senate floor addressing the same topic. In order to respond quickly, USG held an emergency meeting to discuss the advantages and disadvantages, looked into grading policies from other institutions, and heard advice from MTU Registrar, Theresa Jacques.

During the USG special meeting, it came to light that according to grading policies, “courses taken under the pass-fail option may only be used to fulfill free electives” (<https://www.mtu.edu/catalog/policies/grade/>). This would mean that even if the Senate passed a resolution to give students the option to have a class count as pass/fail, it would not count towards their major or general education requirements. A clause addressing this was added to the USG Resolution and then the USG body voted to approve our internal resolution.

Following the emergency meeting, USG members Harley Merkaj, Jordan Craven and I attended the University Senate meeting to give student input, share the internal USG resolution, and advocate for the student body, especially our graduating seniors who would not be able to count pass/fail courses towards graduation requirements. After constructive conversation, the Senate passed an amendment, at the request of USG, to their resolution to suspend the grading policy mentioned above for the Spring 2020 semester. The University Senate then passed resolutions 41-20 and 42-20 pertaining to pass/fail courses and the extension of time for completion of Incompletes grades. More information can be found here: <https://www.mtu.edu/senate/meetings/docs/2019-20/636m.pdf>

What does this mean for the university? As you saw from President Koubek's email, the University approved Emergency Proposal 41-20. This means students taking classes in the Spring 2020 semester now have the option to choose to have one or more of their classes count as a pass/fail on their transcript rather than a traditional letter grade. In keeping with the University Senate resolution, a pass/fail course may be able to count towards major and general education requirements, in addition to free electives. Students have the ability to make this choice for themselves after considering external factors which may require letter grades. More information on the pass/fail option and other COVID19 policies will be coming from the University.

I have a lot of people to thank here. Thank you to Theresa Jacques, Registrar, for taking time to attend the USG Special Meeting after being invited by Dean Bonnie Gorman. Thank you to Dr. Mullins, University Senate President, and all of the Senators for recognizing student concerns and supporting our students during these difficult times. Thank you to all of the students who reached out through different avenues and all of the USG members who put in extra time and work in order to pass our internal resolution and support the University Senate Resolution 41-20. Thank you to Jordan Craven and Zachary Olson for drafting this resolution and to our advisors who attended the special meeting and have been giving us insight where needed.

In my time as USG president, this is by far one of the most rewarding moments I have experienced, and I wouldn't have been able to represent USG at the University Senate meeting if it weren't for the student support I received. This is not just a win for the undergraduate students, but Michigan Tech as a whole. Go Huskies!

Best,

*Melanie M. Thomas*

Melanie Thomas  
USG President (2019-2020)