



DATE: April 23, 2015
TO: Deans
CC: Registrar *Donzell Lee*
FROM: Donzell Lee, Ph.D., VPAA/Provost
RE: **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY--GRADE CHANGES**

I write you this *Provost Advisory* to clarify the University's Final Grade Policy; encourage judicious use of Incomplete grade assignments; and, provide other considerations aimed not only at ensuring efficiency and course completion, but also grade change integrity.

I. Final Grades Are Final

The University operates under a semester-by-semester system. Alcorn's accounting, advising, BANNER, Blackboard, calendar, Goldcard, early alert platform, and other systems operate coextensively with the semester schedule. Students are required to submit all semester coursework by faculty deadlines; and, faculty must post their evaluations in the form of final grades into the BANNER system by the Registrar deadline. Because Alcorn effectuates a final grade policy, all grades are final barring (i) a student grade appeal, (ii) clerical error, (iii) computation error, or (iv) an I ("Incomplete") grade. Though exceptions are possible, timely submission of final grades must be the norm.

II. Appropriate "I" Cases

Generally, the Incomplete grade accommodates semester examination exigencies, where but a small portion of coursework remains outstanding; thus, I grades should not be granted early in the semester. Extenuating (court or jury appearances), exceptional (family illness or death, medical emergency, or hospitalization), and extraordinary (automobile accident) circumstances compel considerations of the grant of I grades. Ultimately, students are responsible for requesting--within reason--the I grade from the instructor and working with him/her in completing outstanding assignments before the I reverts to F (see Catalog).

III. Inappropriate "I" Cases

A recent spate of Incomplete grade change requests points up the need to clarify inappropriate I grade issuances. Accordingly, I grades should not be considered in the following situations:

- A. As a BANNER placeholder when a professor has not completed final assignment evaluations prior to the final-grade posting deadline. This becomes a performance matter;
- B. To allow students opportunity to (a) submit additional work or (b) improve upon previous work;
- C. To avoid assigning low grades (i.e. D or F) for poor, marginal, or failing work or delayed assignment submissions (Note: a delayed submission must be based on an extenuating circumstance as noted above);

- D. If a student must attend and repeat most of the course in the next semester to complete remaining work; or,
- E. If a student, without more, stopped attending class without contacting the instructor.

IV. Other Inappropriate Considerations

- A. In no case should a posted final grade be subsequently changed to I (or a higher grade) merely to help a student meet minimum scholarship, athletics, internship, or sorority/fraternity-membership requirements. This is an egregious policy violation.
- B. After a student completes a course with letter grade posted (including I when appropriate), retroactive withdrawal from the class is not allowed.

V. Documentation Required

- A. In all cases, grade changes, especially Incompletes, should be determined based upon provable evidence (e.g., HIPAA-based medical excuse, Blackboard report, court documents, etc.). A copy of such underlying evidence should be attached and forwarded to Academic Affairs so that university, registrar, and department files are consistent. Academic Affairs stores this information not only to ensure efficient/effective workflow, but also to respond to internal/external audits, US Department of Education requests, NCAA data reviews, court orders, legal action, etc.

Please know, student course completion is a critical metric upon which IHL's recent funding formula--and Alcorn's operational resources--is based. Alcorn's final grade policy was written long ago to promote efficient course completion while promoting persistence, progression, and graduation. Professors (mentors), professionals (advisors, counselors, retention specialist) and platforms (attendance monitoring and early alerts) are in full deployment to help propel students to the finish line--one class meeting, one grade, one course, and one semester at a time. In conclusion, please do not approve grade change requests which do not meet the *ASU Catalog* expectations and this *Advisory*. In addition, do not send them to Academic Affairs for signature.

I expect all deans to fully enforce the University's Final Grade Policy. Your usual cooperation is appreciated.