News Report on the Pass/Fail Issue

Last spring, Stanford Law School announced that it would be changing its grading system from a traditional letter system to a pass/fail system similar to the grading method used by Yale Law School. In September, Harvard Law School announced that it, too, would be moving to a pass/fail system. Both Harvard and Stanford are enacting a pass/fail system that has essentially four levels – High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, and Fail.

Many students may not be aware that although Columbia’s grading methodology revolves around a “traditional” letter system, Columbia students currently have a pass/fail option. Section 3.1.2 of the academic rules states that:

“Any student may, at any time, request that he or she be graded on the basis of Credit–Fail. In such event, the student's performance in every offering is graded in accordance with the standards outlined above [the letter system], and the grades entered on the student's permanent transcript; but the transcript released to the student, or to others at the student's request, shall contain no grades other than Credit (for all passing grades) and Fail. A student electing this option may revoke it at any time prior to graduation and receive or request a copy of his or her transcript with grades recorded in accordance with the above. In all cases, the transcript received or requested by the student shall show, on a cumulative basis, all of the grades of the student presented in a single format—i.e., all grades shall be in accordance with those set forth above, or all grades shall be stated as Credit or Fail.”

Many students may be unaware of the current system because it is often an unappealing option as there may be fewer career opportunities open to someone who has elected to convert their transcript to the pass/fail system.

Of course, the grading system’s impact on legal recruiting is very important to students. Historically, Columbia had a non-traditional grading system. The grades were E for Excellent (which roughly corresponded to an A+ or A), VG for Very Good (A-, B+), G for Good (B, B-), P for Pass (C), and F for Failure. One of the reasons that the law school moved to a traditional alphabetical grading system was that employers had trouble interpreting the grading scale and found it hard to rank Columbia students against candidates from other law schools. While today, employers may find it difficult to evaluate students from pass/fail law schools, it may be that if the pass/fail model becomes widely adopted that employers will eventually find it to be the preferable standard.

As this is an important issue, we hope that you will contact your student senators and share your thoughts and opinions on pass/fail grading systems.

Did You Know?

**If one of the vending machines in JGH eats your money, you can get a refund at the cash register in Lenfest Café.

Interested in planning the November CLS Blood Drive?

Volunteers needed!

Email senate@law.columbia.edu with subject line “Blood drive volunteer” and we’ll be in touch!
This Week at Columbia Law School: October 21-27

**Tuesday 10/21**
CPIL: Environmental Law Summer Internship Panel. 12:00 - 1:10 PM; WJW L104 (Lower Level).
Externship Expo for Spring 2009. 5:30 - 7:30 PM; JG Case Lounge. *Pizza served.*
CUPID: Community Forum. 8:00 - 9:00 PM; JG 106. *More info at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cupid/.*

**Wednesday 10/22**
Student Services Wellness Wednesdays: Ombuds Office. 12:00 - 1:00 PM; JG 940. *Lunch served.*
Career Services: LL.M. Interview Skills Orientation. 12:10 - 1:00 PM; JG 104.
SALDF: *March of the Penguins* Screening. 7:00 - 8:30 PM; JG 304. *Vegan food served.*

**Thursday 10/23**
CPIL: Firms & Split Summers. 12:00 - 1:10 PM; WJW L104 (Lower Level).
4:00 - 6:00 PM; JG 940.
Public Law Workshop: Mitchell Berman. 4:15 - 5:45 PM; JG Case Lounge

**Monday 10/27**
Maurice Rosenberg Memorial Lecture: Jeffrey Toobin, “The Supreme Court and Election 2008.” 4:00 - 6:00 PM; JG 104. *Reception to follow in Drapkin Lounge.*
Legal Theory Workshop: Erin Murphy. 4:15 - 5:45 PM; JG Case Lounge.

Event information is taken from the Advisor, a Student Services e-publication. To have your event listed, follow the link below and submit the on-line form. These must be submitted by 10am on Thursday, the week BEFORE your event. [http://www.law.columbia.edu/current_student/studentorgs_abc/studentorgevent/eventform](http://www.law.columbia.edu/current_student/studentorgs_abc/studentorgevent/eventform).

**Upcoming Event! Thursday, Oct. 30 at 9pm—Inter-Law School Halloween Party @ Mansion (530 W. 28th St.)**

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The 2008-2009 Student Senate

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- William Leavitt, Vice President
- L. David Peters, Treasurer
- Jessica Isokawa, Secretary
- Benjamin Brickner, Parliamentarian

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- Brian Goldberg
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- Mikhaila Savary
- Kathrin Schesinger
- Dan Y. Shin (University Senator)
- Adam Sparks

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- Rex Chatterjee
- Gillian Horton
- Christina Kim
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Brittany J. Schoepp
Kahlil Williams
Charles Wolf

**LL.M./J.S.D.**
- Celine Assaf (LL.M.)
- Patryk Labuda (LL.M.)
- Peter Lochove (LL.M.)
- Mathias Oleskow (LL.M.)
- Hiram Pagano Filho (LL.M.)
- Questions? Concerns?
- Email the Student Senate!
- senate@law.columbia.edu

The next general Senate meeting will be held on **Monday, November 10.**