

# MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty Senate  
From: International Studies Advisory Committee (ISAC), Todd Lee Goen, Chair  
Date: 12 October 2016  
RE: Recommendation for Pass/Fail Option for Study Abroad

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Per the request of Faculty Senate President Adamitis and the Faculty Senate, the ISAC engaged in a robust discussion as to whether or not pass/fail should be an option for faculty-led study abroad courses at CNU. This memorandum addresses the major points the committee considered and its recommendation. More than one committee member noted compelling arguments to permit as well as disallow this option. Some members noted this seems to be an isolated problem already corrected by the Honors Faculty. The ISAC examined institutional data provided by the Registrar and surveyed faculty who led study abroad in the past three years. The faculty survey yielded mixed results (some in support of pass/fail and some opposed) with the majority in opposition to allowing a pass/fail option.

In support of allowing pass/fail for study abroad, the committee discussed the intent of pass/fail (providing students the opportunity to explore courses outside their areas of interests without penalty). This is important for many students studying abroad as they take courses outside their majors. Removing this option could create a recruitment barrier as well. Also, there are non-administrative remedies to address concerns about group dynamics related to pass/fail (e.g., offering only courses that meet university requirements, targeting majors only, requiring certain levels of work to pass, etc.). Most committee members address group dynamic concerns using one of these remedies.

In opposition to allowing pass/fail as an option for study abroad, committee members expressed concerns about the group dynamic created when some students fail to participate. The lack of participation creates a number of challenges and threatens the academic integrity of study abroad programs. Committee members also noted many of those electing pass/fail at CNU do so for reasons other than the intended purpose of this option. Indeed, some are using study abroad as an opportunity to travel and party rather than achieve academic goals. This violates the spirit of pass/fail at CNU as well as the aims of study abroad programs. The ISAC also noted concerns regarding the use of university funds to support study abroad. When the university invests funds in sending students abroad, it does so to further students' academic experiences. The university has an interest in ensuring monies allocated and donated for study abroad students fully support the institution's interests as well as the interests of its donors. The current use of pass/fail does not seem to align with those interests. Further, the decision of the Honors Faculty creates inconsistency with regard to study abroad options for pass/fail at CNU. This inconsistency is a concern for many of the ISAC. Furthering the inconsistency argument is the requirement for students who study abroad with external programs or at foreign institutions to earn the equivalent of a C or better in all courses to transfer those study abroad courses to CNU. A policy consistent for all students studying abroad is of value to the institution.

Ultimately, the committee voted on a recommendation to disallow pass/fail as an option for study abroad. The vote was four in favor of disallowing pass/fail for study abroad and one opposed with one abstention.