

Office of the Provost Response to Faculty Senate Constituent Concern about Midterm Grades at WSU

November 5, 2024

We appreciate this constituent concern because there continues to be significant challenges at WSU related to undergraduate student retention and overall student success. Providing timely and regular feedback to students in their courses about their academic progress is one of many important contributions our instructors and faculty can make to ensuring the success of every undergraduate student at WSU.

The Provost's Office views the submission of mid-terms grades for undergraduate students to be a required part of the teaching role of all faculty and instructors as outlined in Academic Regulation 88. Midterm grades play many roles in the success of students with the following intended outcomes. 1) They provide a performance check to students. Mid-term grades allow students to identify areas where they need to improve and seek assistance if needed (e.g., contacting their professor, attending student office hours, or finding a tutor). 2) They trigger outreach from student support areas. Mid-term grades allow academic advisors and student support staff and faculty to assess whether a student is at risk of performing poorly in a course and making proactive contact with a student to help them develop help-seeking behaviors. 3) They identify potential fiscal impacts for students. Many scholarships and financial aid awards require students to maintain a specific GPA. Midterm grades can motivate students to take action to raise their grades before the end of the semester or engage in proactive conversations about alternative resources for financing their education.

In practice, the earlier students receive academic feedback the better (good supporting information for this contention is available at this [site](#) from the University of Colorado). Having midterm grades due in Week 8 or earlier is a practice seen at other R1 institutions (e.g.; [Virginia Tech](#) (have to use academic calendar and mid-term grade submission date to calculate week 8), [University of Connecticut](#), and [Georgia Tech](#)). Currently, the Office of the Provost does not support a petition to change the Mid-term submission deadline.

There was a second constituent concern regarding midterm grades at the October 17th meeting. This was a concern about the level of compliance with AR 88. The Provost's Office does not currently have comprehensive data about midterm submission rates across all undergraduate courses at all campuses. However, Vice Provost Davis did an analysis for the WSU Associate Dean's Council in June 2024 that looked at mid-term grade submission rates in introductory courses at WSU-Pullman, WSU-TriCities, and WSU-Vancouver during the Spring 2023 and Fall 2023 semesters. "Introductory Courses" include all "high enrollment" courses at the 100-course level, as well as any course that is specifically listed in the program of study of an undergraduate degree in the WSU Catalog (see the accompanying Word document "SpF 23 Midterm Grade Data Overview.docx" for more information). This data, obtained from OBIEE, was previously provided to the Associate Dean's Council members and we are happy to share it with the Faculty Senate.

Briefly, this analysis shows that there is high compliance (>90% of all introductory course sessions) with AR 88 on the Vancouver and Tri-Cities campuses, whereas the compliance at WSU-Pullman is considerably lower. In Pullman there are often issues with specific sections in multi-section courses, whereas this is a minor problem on the other two campuses. Compliance rates are also typically higher in the Fall Semester than in the Spring semester.

Overview of Midterm Grade Submissions									
Sp 23 and F23									
High enrollment and degree required first year courses									
Sp 23					F 23				
Campus	Number of Course Sections	% Compliant	% 1 or more sections non-compliant	% non-compliant	Number of Course Sections	% Compliant	% 1 or more sections non-compliant	% non-compliant	
Pullman	123	71.5	12.2	16.3	129	78.3	12.4	9.3	
Tri-Cities	26	96.2	0	3.8	32	93.8	0	6.3	
Vancouver	36	91.7	2.8	5.6	40	92.5	5	2.5	
Compliant:		Meets requirements in AR 88 for more than 90% of the enrolled students							
1 or more sections non-compliant:		One or more sections did not submit midterm grades as required by AR 88							
Non-Compliant:		The course met requirements in AR 88 for less than 10% of the enrolled students							

Running MyWSU queries for Fall 2024 results in the following data for midterm grades in all undergraduate courses.

Midterm Grades Fall 2024			
Campus	Grades Submitted	Total Possible Grades	%
EVERE	594	659	90%
ONLIN	7783	9134	85%
PULLM	57341	67919	84%
SPOKA	1812	1953	93%
TRICI	5178	5591	93%
VANCO	8705	9444	92%

Overall, the data shows that compliance rates in first year courses on the Tri-Cities and Vancouver campuses is nearly the same for first-year courses and the overall population of undergraduate courses. However, the rates of compliance in Pullman appear to be lower in first-year classes vs. the entire population of courses taught, and we will work with deans, chairs, and directors to help increase compliance in these critical first-year courses.

Given these compliance rates, the Provost’s Office commits to the following. 1) We will develop better and more timely communication with faculty, instructors, Chairs and Directors, VCAAs, and Deans each semester about mid-term grade submission and its importance. 2) We are nearing completion of a project with WSU Information Technology Services that has developed a way for instructors to submit mid-term grades directly from Canvas to MyWSU using “one-click” functionality. This will be similar to the current one-click functionality provided to instructors when they submit final grades. We anticipate this functionality will be available to all instructors in Spring 2025 and will be accompanied by documentation and training videos related to its use. The Provost’s Office is optimistic that this function will help expedite mid-term grade submission for our instructors. 3) Vice Provost Davis will analyze the 200- and 300-level course mid-term grade submission rates across all WSU campuses and share this data with the Associate Dean’s Council and Faculty Senate in the near future.