Post-Secondary Institution Response to Changes in Secondary Education Due to COVID-19 (4/14/2020)

Many changes have occurred or may yet occur in Idaho high schools that affect admissions, placement, and scholarship decisions for incoming college students for the 2020-2021 academic year, and possibly the 2021-2022 academic year. All of the public post-secondary institutions in Idaho desire to do everything possible to hold incoming students harmless from the effects of COVID-19.

This document provides a brief update on how Idaho’s public post-secondary institutions are responding to many of these changes, specifically related to Dual Credit courses, regular high school courses, the College Entrance Exam, Advanced Placement testing, other graduation requirements, the Idaho Standards Achievement Test, and general disruptions to learning that high school students are likely experiencing.

This update relates only to Idaho’s public post-secondary institutions. The State Board of Education does not have detailed information about how private post-secondary institutions in Idaho are responding to these changes in Idaho high schools.

**Dual Credit Courses**

Many high schools are moving their Dual Credit courses to virtual delivery and are considering changing the grading policies in their Dual Credit courses to Pass/Fail. According to Section III.Y of Board Policy, the grading policy for the college credit aspect of each Dual Credit course must match the grading policy of the regular non-Dual Credit course at the post-secondary institution offering the credit. The transition in the high schools to a Pass/Fail grading structure for the high school grading and transcripting aspects of Dual Credit courses need not impact college-level course grading and transcripting for Dual Credit courses, which are under the purview of the post-secondary institutions. However, all Idaho post-secondary institutions are currently working with the high schools to determine changes in grading policies for Dual Credit courses that are in the best interest of students.

All of the post-secondary institutions have agreed to accept transfer credit for Pass (P) grades in Dual Credit courses from the other post-secondary institutions in Idaho, as they would have if letter grades had been assigned. Students who receive a Pass grade in a Dual Credit course will not be required to take any additional placement tests related to the course at any post-secondary institution in Idaho. Students who receive a Pass grade in a Dual Credit course will be allowed to take the next course in the curricular sequence, as applicable.
All post-secondary institutions have agreed to grant college credit that is earned by a student in a Dual Credit course that has been moved to virtual delivery. Most post-secondary institutions have already extended or are working to extend the drop and withdrawal dates for their Spring Semester courses, which include Dual Credit courses.

**Regular High School Courses**
Some high schools are moving to Pass/Fail grading for regular high school courses, which may affect students’ Grade Point Averages. The post-secondary institutions have indicated that they do not anticipate Pass/Fail grading in regular high school courses will have significant impacts on admission, placement, or scholarship decisions. For example, Lewis and Clark State College plans to use 7th semester transcripts in making scholarship awards for Fall 2020 incoming freshmen. However, the post-secondary institutions may need to address potential impacts of course-specific Pass/Fail grades on admissions to some professional programs, like nursing and teacher education.

The State Board and State Department of Education are working together to determine what impact Pass/Fail grading in high school courses may have on Direct Admissions, Apply Idaho, and the Opportunity Scholarship. More information on this issue is forthcoming.

**College Entrance Exams**
In March 2020, the State Board waived the College Entrance Exam as a high school graduation requirement for this year’s Juniors, as well as for this year’s Seniors who need a make-up exam. In addition, the SAT School Day was canceled and COVID-19 restrictions are limiting many students’ ability to take the exam this Spring even if they desire to do so. The State Department of Education is currently working on two options for this year’s Juniors: 1) A potential SAT School Day in the fall; and 2) A waiver that will allow students to take the test at a later date on their own, if they wish to do so, at no cost to students.

The community colleges have open admission policies and do not require a College Entrance Exam. The post-secondary institutions that DO require a College Entrance Exam score for admissions and scholarships decisions are currently considering how to respond to these realities in ways that hold students harmless. Some post-secondary institutions, like Idaho State University, have already waived the College Entrance Exam requirement and will be basing admissions decisions solely on high school GPA. All post-secondary institutions are currently considering if they will need to develop alternative criteria for scholarship decisions for the 2021-2022 academic year, but these decisions are still to be determined.

The State Board and State Department of Education are working together to determine what impact the lack of College Entrance Exams scores may have on Direct Admissions and Apply Idaho. More information on this issue is forthcoming.
Students opting to attend private or out-of-state post-secondary institutions will need to check for any modifications to admissions requirements at the institutions they are interested in attending.

**Advanced Placement Testing**
The College Board has indicated that they will be changing the administration of all Advanced Placement tests at the end of this school year. Tests will be administered to students at home and will last 45 minutes. Students who take a test will still receive a score that ranges from 1-5. The College Board has announced that late fees and cancellation fees for all AP exams will be waived for the current year. Specific resources for high schools and AP coordinators can be found on the College Board website.

All post-secondary institutions will award college credit for AP test scores given via these modified testing procedures, as outlined in Board Policy Section III.Y. As such, the Board has not identified a need to waive the policy that requires institutions to grant college credit for AP test scores of 3 or higher.

**Other Graduation Requirements and the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)**
In March 2020, the State Board waived the Senior Project graduation requirement and administration of the ISAT for this school year. No post-secondary institution in Idaho currently uses the Senior Project results or ISAT scores for admission, scholarship, or placement decisions, so this Board action should have no impact on higher education decision-making.

**Disruptions to Student Learning**
The post-secondary institutions all recognize that COVID-19 disruptions may negatively impact student learning and academic growth during the final three months of this school year. The institutions are working to develop plans to help incoming students that may need additional support. Guidance from K-12 schools on the impacts these disruptions are having on their students would be very helpful for planning purposes at the colleges and universities.

The Outreach Team at the Office of the State Board of Education is hosting a series of calls on Thursday, April 16, 2020 to help facilitate this discussion.