

Implementing a 'no record' policy to improve student retention and success at CSU:

A proposal of the Undergraduate Student Success committee (April 2023)

Context: The following text is based on perceived areas of agreement in conversations among the members of the Student Success committee, and between the committee co-chairs and the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office, including the Vice Provost for Instructional Excellence, has shared intent to lead the implementation of a new 'no record' (NR) policy if it is approved by Faculty Senate, in collaboration with the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success; the latter VP has also been consulted by the Student Success committee and the former VP shared confidence that a NR policy can be implemented without harm to students (*e.g.*, by affecting their maintenance of financial aid).

Rationale: CSU is increasingly challenged by declining enrollment, with significant impacts on its operating budget, and by persistently problematic metrics of student success, including low graduation rates, low retention, and high DFW rates. For example, between Fall of 2018 and Fall of 2022, undergraduate enrollment at CSU declined by nearly 11%, a net loss of ~1750 students.

The *potential* positive impact of a 'no record' (NR) policy on student success is apparent by comparing recorded ('actual') GPAs with those calculated assuming all eligible DFW grades are replaced with NRs that do not impact GPA (Figure 1 & 2).

Focusing on first year students, the potential effects of a NR policy are larger in a student's first semester at CSU (+0.5 GPA), but still substantial in the next semester (+0.25 GPA).

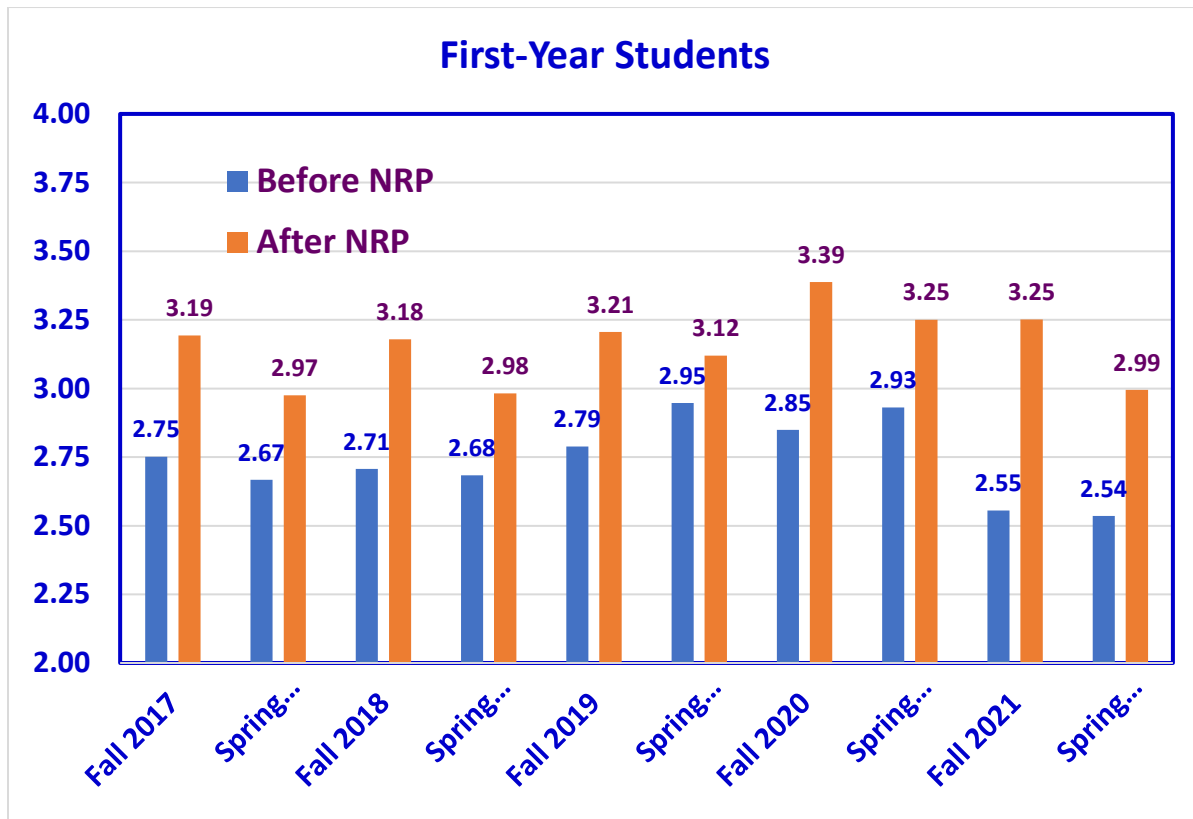


Figure 1. Effect of the No-Record Policy on term GPA for First-Year Students

Further analyses show that transfer students with less than 30 credits completed could also benefit substantially from a NR policy (+1.1 GPA in their first semester and +0.45 GPA in their second semester).

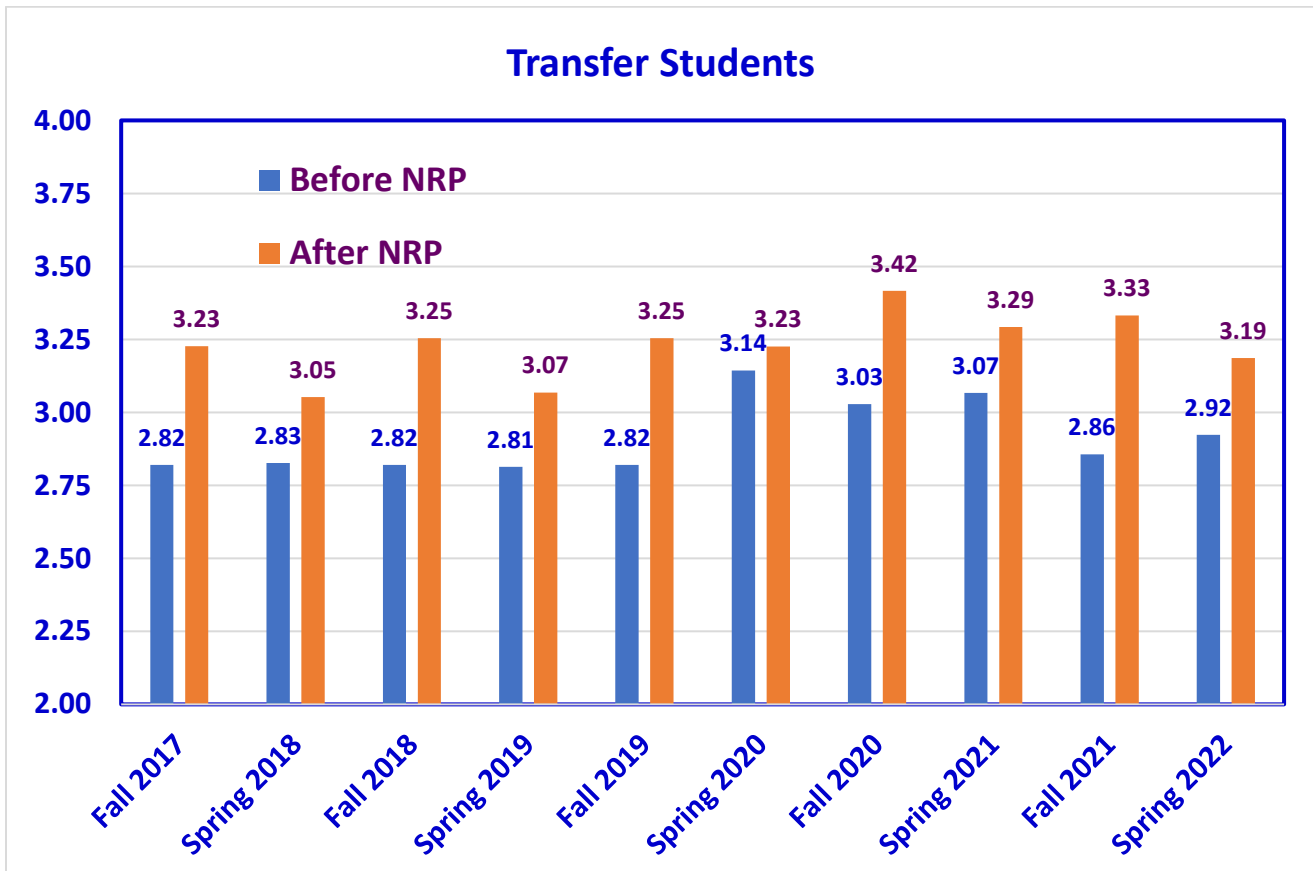


Figure 2. Effect of the No-Record Policy on term GPA for Transfer Students (with 30 credits or less)

Especially for first year students, it is evident that a NR policy may have larger positive impacts on some demographic groups, such as African American students (+0.9 GPA in their first semester and +0.6 GPA in their second semester).

As evident in figures 3 and 4, a NR policy has potential to boost many students' GPA from at or below 2.0, a threshold with much significance to students and CSU, to safely above it.

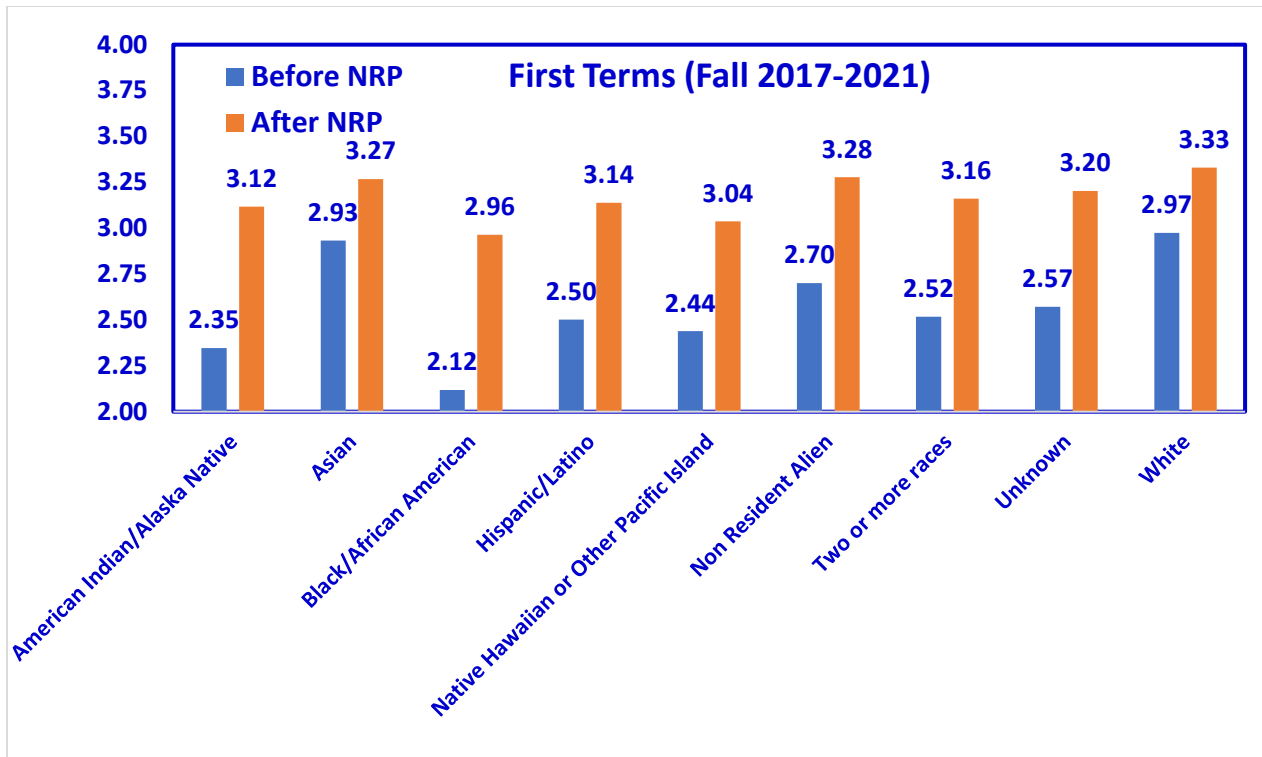


Figure 3. Effect of the No-Record Policy on different demographics (First Term)

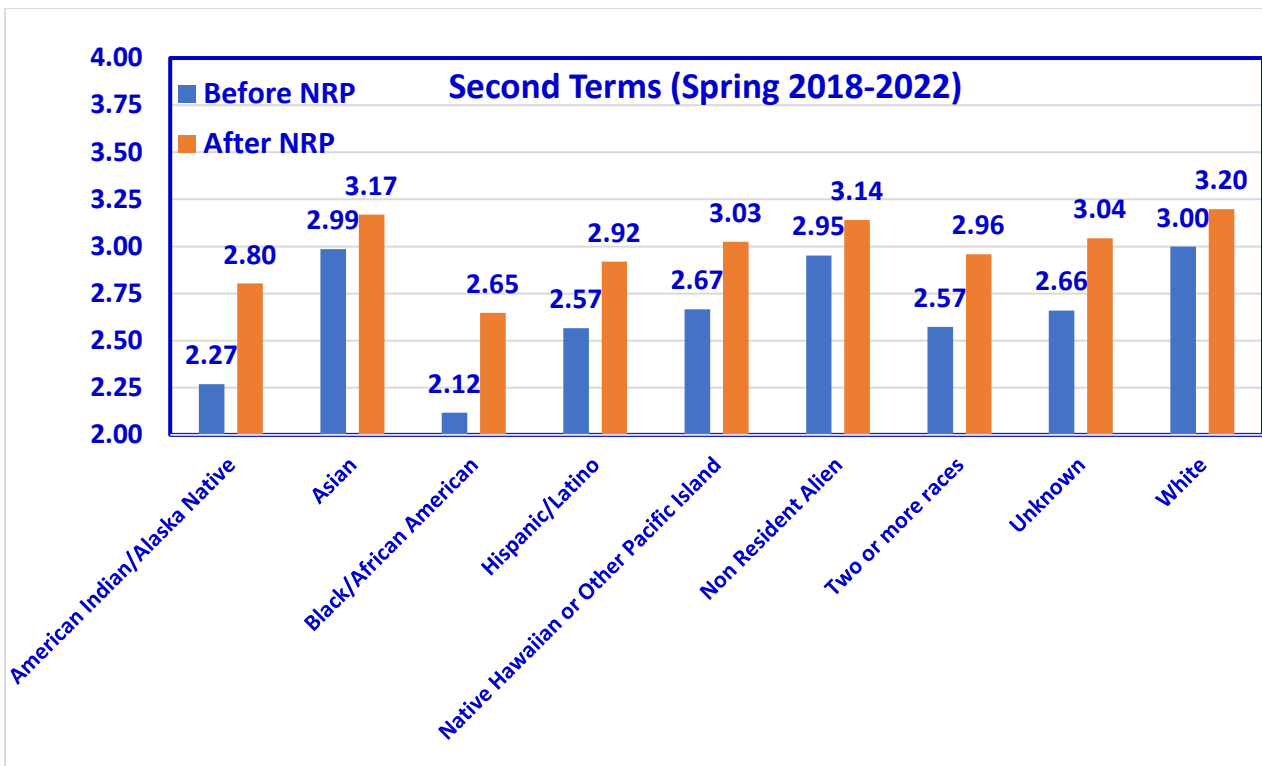


Figure 4. Effect of the No-Record Policy on different demographics (Second Term)

Draft policy:

Summary:

All undergraduate students with less than 30 credits will have the ability to replace a grade of D, F, or W with a 'no record' (NR) grade. This (NR) grade will not affect their GPA.

Eligibility:

- Only Undergraduate students are eligible for the No Record Policy.
- Any undergraduate student with less than 30 credits is eligible for the No Record Policy, including transfer students.
- The No Record Policy is not applicable to Post-Baccalaureate Students.

Process:

- Eligible students can choose which of their D/F/W grades will be designated as 'no-record'
- The original grades (for courses designated as NR) will remain in students' internal Academic Record (as apparent in their unofficial transcripts and in CampusNET). Thus, for example, instructors and administrators will still be able to monitor D/F/W rates based on the original assigned grade, retaining this important monitoring tool. However, NR grades will not be used to compute term GPA or cumulative GPA or appear in students' official transcripts.
- NR grades will automatically trigger advisor-flags and require students to meet with their academic advisor. The student and advisor will discuss the impact of NR grades on the student's academic progress and consider appropriate courses of action.
- There is no impact of NR grades on tuition billing. In other words, if a student opts to receive a NR grade in a class, and re-enrolls in that class in a future term, tuition will be billed for that next attempt to complete the course. No tuition reimbursements will be made for classes selected to be designated with a NR grade.
- If a student elects to receive a NR grade for a course that was originally assigned a passing grade (*e.g.*, D or S), for the purposes of applying financial aid protocols the course will be counted as having been completed with a passing grade; in this same scenario, following federal guidelines, a student could only use federal aid to re-enroll in the course one more time (*i.e.*, federal aid would not apply to a third attempt to complete the course).

- A NR grade for a course will only be replaced by a traditional grade (*e.g.*, A, B, C, D, F or W) if a student repeats that course and does not select the NR option following completion of the additional attempt to repeat that course.