Memorandum

To: Rutgers Law School Students at the Newark Location
From: Reid Kress Weisbord, Vice Dean, Rutgers Law School
Cc: Rutgers Law School Faculty at the Newark Location
Date: September 8, 2015
Re: New Academic Rules and Policies

On September 4, 2015, upon recommendation of the Joint Academic Policy Committee, the faculty enacted a consolidated set of academic rules and policies for Rutgers Law School following the merger of Rutgers School of Law-Newark and Rutgers School of Law-Camden. Students have an obligation to review and abide by the rules contained in the attached “Academic Requirements and Information” document, which will be posted on the Law School’s website. Please note that, as a placeholder, the new rules currently include a new grading policy for upper level courses, however, that policy is subject to further study and is not in effect at this time.

As an aid in understanding the new rules, this memorandum will highlight some of the major changes to the academic requirements for students at the Newark location. This memo neither supplants nor serves as a substitute for the rules as stated in the official Academic Requirements and Information document. For the Class of 2016, which is exempt from rules that alter the graduation requirements, most of this memo should be of limited relevance except for the section on Dean’s List Honors on page 4.

**Juris Doctor Degree - Graduation Requirements:**

Under the new rules, the graduation requirements for the Juris Doctor Degree applicable to students who matriculated to law school in June 2014 or later are as follows:

**Rule 2(a) (excerpt)**

1. Successful completion of the required curriculum: Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law, Property, Torts, Legal Analysis, Writing, and Research I and II in Camden or Legal Analysis, Writing, Research & Skills I and II in Newark, and an upper-level course in Professional Responsibility.

2. 84 academic credits of work, of which at least 75 must be Course Credits. Course Credit is defined as academic work completed and evaluated in the context of a regularly scheduled class, seminar, or clinic. Course Credit may also be granted for Directed Research under the supervision of a full-time professor. A student may only complete one Directed Research for credit toward the 84-credit graduation requirement.

3. The Graduation Writing Requirement.

4. The Skills Requirement.
**The Required Curriculum:**

*Required curriculum unchanged:* The required curriculum remains the same.¹

**The 84 Academic Credit Requirement:**

*84-credit requirement unchanged:* The total number of academic credits required for graduation remains the same, 84 credits. Our prior rule regarding coursework applicable toward the 84-credit requirement, however, has changed.

*“Hard” and “Soft” credits retired:* The old Newark student handbook described the graduation requirements in terms of hard credits and soft credits. Hard credits referred to academic work performed in a regularly scheduled podium or clinical course that met at least weekly throughout the semester. Soft credits referred to an assortment of credited academic enterprises that were supervised by faculty but, for the most part, were not regularly scheduled throughout the semester. Under our prior rules, students had to complete at least 78 hard credits to graduate; soft credits applicable toward the 84-credit graduation requirement were limited to 6. Because the rules regarding unscheduled coursework have changed, and to avoid confusion between old and new terminology, we have officially retired the terms “hard credit” and “soft credit” altogether for purposes of the graduation requirements governing students who matriculated to law school in June 2014 or later.

*“Course” and “Non-Course” credits defined:* The current rules introduce two new terms: “course credit” and “non-course credit.” Course credits are interchangeable with our old hard credits—the term “course credit” refers to academic work performed in a regularly scheduled class, seminar, or clinical course that meets at least weekly throughout the semester.² Non-course credits are akin, but not identical, to soft credits under the old rules—the term “non-course credit” refers to faculty-supervised academic activities that occur outside of a regularly scheduled class or clinic including teaching assistants and fellows, moot court competitions, Hunter Moot Court Fellows (Camden location only), Marshall Brennan Fellows (Camden location only), journals sponsored by the Law School, and faculty research assistants (Newark location only).

*New course credit requirement:* Whereas under our prior rule, students were required to complete at least 78 hard credits to graduate, the new rules provide that students are now required to complete at least 75 course credits to graduate.

*New non-course credit limitations:* Whereas under our prior rule, students could apply up to 6 soft credits toward the 84-credit graduation requirement, students may now apply up to 9 non-course credits toward the same 84-credit requirement. Of the 9 non-course credits, however, no more than 5 may count from an externship or field placement, and no more than 7 may count from

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¹ Beginning Fall 2016 for full-time students, 5 credits for the year-long course on Legal Analysis, Writing, Research, and Skills will be allocated half to the Fall Semester for LAWRS I (2.5 credits) and half to the Spring Semester for LAWRS II (2.5 credits). This represents a minor change from our current practice, which allocates 2 credits for LAWRS I and 3 credits for LAWRS II.

² A small handful of specially scheduled courses meet for less than a full semester, but are regularly scheduled for purposes of the term “course credit.”
any other non-course credit offering. Thus, to earn 9 non-course credits applicable toward the 84-credit graduation requirement with in these limitations, students must complete both an externship/field placement and some other non-course enterprise(s), such as a school-sponsored journal or moot course competition.

Journal credit limitations: Whereas under our prior rule, students could earn up to 3 credits per year, beginning Fall 2016, students will be limited to 3 credits total (1 per year for 2 years plus an additional credit for substantial managerial work).

Moot court limitations: Whereas under our prior rule, students could earn up to 4 credits in connection with moot court activities, beginning Fall 2016, students may now earn up to 1 non-course credit for certain intramural and interscholastic competitions, which involve research, drafting, oral presentation, coaching or other substantive activities, as well as up to 1 non-course credit per year for completing the requirements for academic credit for Moot Court Board. These do not include those moot courts that are taught as classes by professors and are offered for course credit.

Teaching assistant limitations: Whereas under our prior rule, students could earn up to 2 credits per semester for serving as a teaching assistant, beginning Fall 2016, students will be limited to a total of 3 non-course credits for such work countable toward the 84-credit requirement.

Directed research limitation: Whereas under our prior rule, students could earn up to 3 soft credits per project for independent research, beginning Fall 2016, the new rules impose new substantive regulations governing “Directed Research,” as we will now refer to such activities, and students are generally limited to 1 Directed Research project for 2 non-course credits. See Appendix D for more details.

Non-course credits exceeding graduation requirement: As was true under our old rules, these limitations do not in any way restrict students seeking to exceed the number of non-course credits that may be applied toward the 84-credit graduation requirement.

Pass/D+/D/F grading system of non-course credits: All non-course credit, except for faculty research assistance in Newark, will be graded on a Pass/D+/D/Fail basis.

The Graduation Writing Requirement:

Under our prior rule, students were required to satisfy the Graduation Writing Requirement by completing, under faculty supervision, an upper class writing project consisting of at least 25 pages (or 7,000 words) that demonstrated critical analysis of a legal question. Under the current rule for students who matriculated to law school in June 2014 or later, students must now complete 2 such writing intensive projects after the first year. At least 1 writing intensive project must be satisfied in connection with a class, seminar, or clinical course. No more than 1 writing intensive project may be satisfied in connection with a Directed Research project or journal note or comment.
under faculty supervision. Each writing intensive project must be at least 6,000 words in length excluding footnotes. See Appendix B for more details.

**The Skills (or Experiential) Course Requirement:**

Under our prior rule, students were required to satisfy the Skills Course requirement by completing at least 2 credits of skills training coursework before graduation. Under the current rule for students who matriculated to law school in June 2014 or later, students must now complete 6 such credits before graduation. Of the 6 skills credits required under the current rule, up to 3 credits may be earned in connection with an externship or field placement. For each externship or field placement credit, a student must work 60 hours and the placement must be supervised by a faculty member. See Appendix C for more details.

**Pass / Fail Grading for Upper Level Coursework:**

Under our prior rule, students were allowed to take up to 1 elective course per semester on a Pass/D/Fail basis after completing the required curriculum. Under the new rules, however, beginning Fall 2016 for elective classes other than clinics, students will have the option of choosing between a letter-grade system and a Pass/D+/D/Fail system. A Pass/D+/D/Fail election may be exercised in only one course during the student’s time in Law School. When choosing this option, students provide the registrar with a target letter grade of B+ or higher. If the student earns the target grade or higher, the letter grade will be recorded on the transcript, and the one-time option is deemed not to have been used. If the student earns a grade lower than the target, but not a D+, D, or F, a grade of “P” is recorded on the transcript, and the student may not exercise the option again.

**Dean’s List Honors:**

Under our prior rule, academic honors were conferred only at graduation. Under the new rules, however, an additional set of honors will be conferred each semester. Each semester, the Dean may now designate the top 25% of students with the highest grade point averages in a semester as eligible for Dean’s list honors. The honor will be recorded on student transcripts. Calculations of honors under this subsection following the Fall Semester shall include courses taken in the preceding summer. Calculations shall be made across locations together.

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3 Grades of “Pass” earned in courses where students have no option to elect a letter grade, such as non-course credit enterprises including externships and journals, do not count as an exercise of the Pass/D+/D/Fail option.