RESOLUTION TO ADOPT A MANDATORY UNIVERSAL S/U GRADE POLICY FOR SPRING SEMESTER 2020 DURING THE CRISIS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, Cornell University has shifted to remote online instruction for the balance of the spring 2020 semester due to the current crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, the current crisis has created conditions of dislocation, stress, and anxiety for all Cornell students and conditions of extreme personal and economic hardship for many Cornell students;

WHEREAS, students experiencing personal and economic hardships such as family job losses, illness, childcare obligations, and lack of access to internet technology or difficulty participating from distant time zones are particularly disadvantaged in their ability to fully engage in online classes;

WHEREAS, in keeping with its educational mission, Cornell University must respond to the new context and take actions that mitigate the harm to students resulting from the economic and social inequalities that are exacerbated by the current crisis;

WHEREAS, Article XIII sec. 2 of the Bylaws of Cornell University states that one of “The functions of the University Faculty shall be to consider questions of educational policy which concern more than one college, school or separate academic unit, or are general in nature”;

WHEREAS, Article X of the Organization and Procedures of the University Faculty (OPUF) delegates these University Faculty functions to the Faculty Senate as the representative body of the University Faculty;

WHEREAS, grading policy is a fundamental part of the educational policy of the University;

WHEREAS, other schools, colleges and universities, including the Cornell Law School, Harvard University, and Stanford University, have used the shared governance process in considering whether to adopt a mandatory universal grading policy of S/U for the current semester;

WHEREAS, other schools, colleges and universities, including the Cornell Law School, Harvard University, Columbia University, MIT and Stanford University, have adopted a mandatory universal binary grade policy of S/U (or P/F, P/NF, or Emergency Satisfactory/Emergency Unsatisfactory), as an equitable way to mitigate the unequal harm resulting from the current crisis;

https://dso.college.harvard.edu/coronavirusfaq
WHEREAS, in response to the current crisis, the University has adopted an opt-in grading policy that permits students “to change their grading basis to S/U in any Spring 2020 course (with the exception of 7 week courses from the first half of the semester that have already been completed and graded) until April 21,” permits S/U grades from the Spring 2020 semester to meet “requirements for entering and meeting major and minor requirements and satisfying college requirements for good standing,” permits courses in which a grade of S is earned to “be applied toward fulfillment of graduation requirements,” and excludes credits taken for an S/U grade “from the maximum allowable S/U credits toward major or graduation requirements”;

WHEREAS, permitting all students to choose the S/U option for their classes, instead of mandating a university-wide S/U grade policy for all classes, will not mitigate and may exacerbate the unequal harms caused by the current crisis, as students facing fewer obstacles will more easily pursue a letter-grade and thereby achieve what appears to be stronger academic record, while students facing the greatest obstacles will bear the adverse impacts of either: a) choosing S/U and achieving what appears to be a weaker academic record, or b) driving themselves to pursue a letter-grade at whatever cost, in order to avoid the appearance of a weaker academic record relative to other students.

WHEREAS, adopting for the current semester a mandatory universal grade policy of assigning S/U grades, rather than an opt-in or a default policy for S/U grades, increases the acceptability of those grades in terms of the evaluative criteria used by fellowship programs or admissions offices of graduate and professional schools, including medical schools;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that grades for all Cornell University courses will be on an S/U (technically SX/UX) basis for the Spring 2020 semester, regardless of how they were originally designated. All letter-grade requirements are waived and thus deemed satisfied by the receipt of a grade of S in a spring 2020 course. All transcripts will be annotated to indicate that Spring 2020 grades reflect the Cornell University policy in response to the current public health emergency rather than student choice;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a grade of S from the Spring 2020 semester will be permitted for meeting requirements for entering and meeting major and minor requirements and satisfying college requirements for good standing;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that courses in which a grade of S is earned in the Spring 2020 semester will be applied toward fulfillment of graduation requirements;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that whether or not a student had been enrolled in any course on an S/U basis, the S/U grading in Spring 2020 shall not count against any student’s maximum number of permissable S/U graded courses.
ENDORSEES:

Cornell Faculty who are Faculty Senators

Risa Lieberwitz, Professor of Labor and Employment Law, ILR School
Joanie Mackowski, Associate Professor, English/Creative Writing
Richard Bensel, Faculty Senator representing the Department of Government
Vilma Santiago-Irizarry, Associate Professor, Anthropology and Latinx Studies
Neil Saccamano, Associate Professor, Department of English
William Sonnenstuhl, Associate Professor, ILR School

Cornell Faculty

Jill Frank, Professor of Government
Sunn Shelley Wong, Associate Professor, Asian American Studies Program/English Department
Joseph Margulies, Professor, Government
Viranjini Munasinghe, Associate Professor, Anthropology and Asian American Studies
Verónica Martínez-Matsuda, ILR faculty
Kurt. A. Jordan, Associate Professor, Anthropology/American Indian and Indigenous Studies
Derek Chang, associate professor, History and Asian American Studies
Michael Nussbaum, Professor, Department of Mathematics
Matthew Evangelista, President White Professor of History and Political Science, Department of Government
Begum Adalet, Assistant Professor, Government
Chantal Thomas, Cornell Law School
Aziz Rana, Professor of Law, Cornell Law School
Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió, Assistant Professor, Architecture
Patchen Markell, Associate Professor, Government
Carole Boyce Davies, Professor of Africana Studies and English
Eli Friedman, Associate Professor, ILR School
Raymond Craib, Professor, History
Nerissa Russell, Professor, Anthropology
Ken Roberts, Richard J. Schwartz Professor of Government
Iftikhar Dadi, Associate Professor, Department of History of Art, Director, South Asia Program
Ifeoma Ajunwa, J.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Labor Relations, Law, and History Dept., Cornell University ILR School; Associated Faculty Member, Cornell Law School
Vanessa Bohns, Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior, ILR School
Allison Weiner Heinemann, Lecturer, ILR School
Seth Sanders Ronald G. Ehrenberg Chair, Professor of Economics, ILR and Department of Economics
Russell Rickford, Associate Professor of History
Nicholas Mulder, Postdoctoral Associate (Assistant Professor as of July 2020), Department of History
Kate Bronfenbrenner, Senior Lecturer, Labor Relations, Law, and History, ILR School
Mostafa Minawi, Associate Professor, History
George Jakubson, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Cornell University
Claudia Verhoeven, Associate Professor, History
Trevor Pinch, Goldwin Smith Professor of Science and Technology Studies
Lucinda Ramberg, Associate Professor, Anthropology and Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
Ella Maria Diaz, Associate Professor, English
Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Stephen and Evalyn Milman Professor of American Studies, Emerita, Department of Government
Jamila Michener, Assistant Professor, Government Department
TJ Hinrichs, History
Paul Nadasdy, Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology
Christine Bacareza Balance, Associate Professor, Department of Performing & Media Arts, Asian American Studies Program
David Bateman, Assistant Professor, Government Department
Michael Evan Gold, Associate Professor, ILR School
Timothy Murray, Professor of Comparative Literature and English
Lee H. Adler, Lecturer, ILR School
Ernesto Bassi, Associate Professor, History Department
Mary Pat Brady, Associate Professor of English
Helena María Viramontes, Goldwin Smith Professor of English, Director of Creative Writing, Department of English & Creative Writing Program
Scott J. Peters, Professor, Department of Global Development
Rachel Weil, Professor of History
Mukoma Wa Ngugi, Associate Professor, English Department
Lawrence Glickman, Professor of History and American Studies
Jumay Chu, Senior Lecturer, Dance, Department of Performing and Media Arts
Alexander Livingston, Associate Professor, Dept of Government and American Studies Program