

**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://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/COVID-19/COVID-19.cfm

<https://dso.college.harvard.edu/coronavirusfaq>

<https://preparedness.columbia.edu/news/update-course-instruction-and-university-commencement>

<https://facultygovernance.mit.edu/message-chair>
<https://healthalerts.stanford.edu/2020/03/27/spring-quarter-grading-policy/>]

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 permissible S/U graded courses.

ENDORSERS:

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
Wilma Santiago-Irizarry, Associate Professor, Anthropology and Latinx Studies
Neil Saccamano, Associate Professor, Department of English
William Sonnenstuhl, Associate Professor, ILR School

Cornell Faculty

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Lucinda Ramberg, Associate Professor, Anthropology and Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality
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Emerita, Department of Government
Jamila Michener, Assistant Professor, Government Department
TJ Hinrichs, History
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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