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2019-2020 FACULTY SENATE XXIV - March 23, 2020 Minutes Summary

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2019-2020 FACULTY SENATE XXIV

The fundamental function of the approved minutes of the Faculty Senate is to accurately document actions taken by that body. Additionally, the minutes traditionally seek to provide context by capturing some statements of Senators, faculty in attendance, and guests. The minutes do not verify the veracity, authenticity, and/or accuracy of those statements.

I. Meeting called to order at 3:12 pm on March 23, 2020 via ZOOM MINUTES SUMMARY

II. Roll – The following senators were absent: Herold and Robin. The following senators were excused: Bedker and Laird.

III. Remarks by and questions to the Provost - Provost Jones provided the following updates in connection with the university's COVID-19 Response:

- Today is the first day of remote learning and we're going to have some bumps. We all need to be very flexible. The support page for faculty for instructional continuity is being updated daily. There is also a page for students.
- There is a concern for students who don't have internet access. The university has set up drive-by hot spots for students. This requires the students to drive to a particular location to pick up a Wi-Fi signal at any USNH institution.
- The Residential Life staff has been amazing. They have moved out over 4,000 of the 7,000 residential students. At the same time, we are trying to take care of students who are housing insecure. We have one dining hall that is open for meals. There is an effort to transition all on-campus residents to one dorm with all private rooms.
- Most buildings on campus are locked. We want faculty to have access, but we don't want too many people in a building. Research needs to be protected but we need to be working remotely whenever possible.
- The administration is working with the AAUP on the issue of faculty who are coming up for tenure this year. Hopefully there will be a joint message to the community by the end of the week.
- Turning Point USA has been suggesting that the current situation gives students an opportunity to video their faculty and post bad behavior for the world to see. We do have in place Faculty Senate policy and Students Rights and Responsibility policies that say that students can be brought up on student conduct charges if they were to do this. There are also copyright laws. NH law requires both sides to agree to a recording but some students may not be in New Hampshire. The administration is working on language for syllabi and MyCourses in connection with recording.
- Jeffrey Halpern shared a story about a graduate student in another program who was given 24-hour notice to move out. He is an international student and he can't go home. He will be traveling to stay with a relative. Jeff asked that the university offer some flexibility with its policies for situations like this. Wayne said that the university is giving students who need to move out until March 30. He suggests that the student, department chair, or Jeff should contact Ted Kirkpatrick with any concerns in this area.

- In response to a question about the lecturer's contract, Wayne said that he believes there has been positive action on it. He doesn't have information to confirm at this point.
- In response to a question about building access after 5 pm, Wayne advised that if a faculty member has a reason to be on campus, they should notify their dean. Faculty and staff should carry university ID with them all the time since there is now a need for more security. Note, if the state puts an order in place, it could override university policy for access to buildings.
- In response to a question about maintenance needs for labs, Wayne explained that every lab should have a continuity of operations plan that includes information about people identified to perform equipment maintenance. However, the information is not known to the State Police. So, if access rules are changed at the state level, there will be separate guidelines sent out.
- In response to a question about rumors that UNH has already laid off staff, Wayne said that the university is paying all employees through April 3. We are trying to protect our employees as best we can. It is not known how long this can be extended. All federal work-study students will be paid whether the students are on campus or not. TAs will continue to be paid and we need to think creatively about how to keep them engaged. We have confirmation from some federal agencies that as long as our policies are the same across the board, they will respect the charging of grants. NIH and NASA are out publicly on the topic and we are hopeful about other agencies.
- In response to a question, Wayne said that there is a new link on the instructional resources page about testing options and software to deal with plagiarism. Erin said she would also reach out to AT about this as well.
- Wayne met with graduate student leadership the other day. Graduate students realize they are in a precarious situation. We need to be flexible for graduate students.
- Wayne offered that at this time we are hoping for the best and planning for the worst. There are currently three teams working on 1) the current situation, 2) how to deal with it if it gets worse, and 3) how we turn back on again when the crisis is past. We are in a good position to come out of this strong.
- Wayne thanked the faculty for their work at this difficult time and offered that faculty should contact him if they have any new ideas, technologies, or challenges. He encourages faculty to be flexible with students.
- Wayne closed out his comments by explaining that UNH is an emergency operation center for the state of NH. UNH is also trying to figure out ways to leverage PPE (personal protective equipment). All PPE resources should be funneled through the Police Chief Paul Dean. Chief Dean is on the state emergency operations center team and he will direct the PPE equipment where it is needed most. UNH is also working to identify some equipment that may be valuable for testing for COVID 19.

IV. Remarks by and Questions to the Chair – David Bachrach thanked all for being on the call and for continuing with their jobs and Senate work. The Faculty Senate will continue to collect feedback, questions and comments, and information about real bumps in the road. Please use the [feedback form on the Faculty senate homepage](#).

V. Special Procedural Rule for Extraordinary Electronic Meetings – Jim Connell of the Agenda Committee presented the motion on a procedural rule to allow the Faculty Senate to meet via electronic means. Jim explained that the Agenda Committee has already voted in favor of this motion. The Senate’s action on this today is to ratify the motion. It will need to be ratified again by the Senate when it next meets in person.

**Special Procedural Rule for Extraordinary Electronic Meetings
of the University of New Hampshire Faculty Senate**

Rationale:

The novel coronavirus pandemic that has engulfed the world, the nation and the University of New Hampshire brings with it unique challenges. A meeting the size of the UNH Faculty Senate would contravene the latest authoritative guidelines. At the same time, the voice of the faculty must be heard in shared governance during this crisis, particularly on matters involving the academic mission where its voice is held to have primacy. While electronic meetings will diminish the deliberative nature of the Senate, it is infinitely preferable to no meetings and silence.

Motion:

Acting under Article 6, Section a., second paragraph of the Faculty Senate Constitution, the Agenda Committee adopts the following extraordinary procedural rule:

- 1) Until such time as face-to-face classes resume at UNH, the Faculty Senate shall meet extraordinarily via electronic means using such software (e.g. Zoom) as the Agenda Committee shall deem most suitable, provided such software is readily available to all members of the Faculty Senate;**
- 2) Actions of the Senate during this time of crisis shall be limited to those that are exigent or relate directly to the crisis;**
- 3) This motion shall only apply provided it is ratified at the first extraordinary meeting of the Faculty Senate;**
- 4) This motion shall be further ratified at the first ordinary meeting of the Faculty Senate when face-to-face classes resume.**

The motion was put to a voice vote **and it was ratified unanimously with none opposed and no abstentions.**

VI. - Agenda Committee motion on Student Evaluations of Teaching for Spring Semester 2020 - The chair explained should the Senate wish to vote on this motion today the Senate will first have to vote to suspend the rule that requires main motions of a substantive nature to be voted on at the regular meeting following the meeting when the motion was introduced.

Scott Smith from the Agenda Committee introduced the motion. Discussion followed. A friendly amendment was offered to add the sentence “This motion applies to all course instructors and teaching assistants.” The amendment was accepted by the Agenda Committee.

The amended version of the motion, as follows, was presented for a vote:

Academic Program Motion on Student Evaluations for Spring 2020

Rationale: Given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 outbreak and the disruption caused to instruction—especially the need to transition unexpectedly to online delivery—the Faculty Senate believes it is prudent and equitable to suspend student evaluations for Spring 2020. Realizing, however, that some instructors may wish to use the university’s evaluation system, we recommend that there be an opt-in mechanism for faculty to do so through their chair and departmental managers. Instructors choosing not to opt in are encouraged to create their own course surveys, and faculty may find the appended template helpful.

Furthermore, chairs and deans are given the additional guidance not to use the evaluations from Spring 2020 in any assessment unless a faculty member explicitly states that she wishes to do so.

Motion: The Faculty Senate moves that university-wide evaluations be suspended for Spring 2020 unless a faculty member chooses to opt into them by notifying the Information Technology team through her or his departmental administrator. These evaluations are not to be used in assessments for renewal or promotion and tenure decisions unless the faculty member explicitly asks for them to be admitted into the process. This motion applies to all course instructors and teaching assistants.

Template for Open-Ended Student Surveys

Please note that the university expects all courses, including Discovery and elective courses, to be rigorous and challenging.

- 1. Your year, major and (if desired) your expected grade**
- 2. What did you learn in this course, and did it meet your expectations? Why or why not?**
- 3. What aspects of the course were effective in helping you master the material? You may wish to choose a class session that was most inspiring and discuss why.**
- 4. What aspects of the course would you suggest the instructor reconsider in future iterations? You may wish to choose a class session that you found less successful than other and explain.**
- 5. Further feedback for the course.**

A motion to suspend the rules to allow for voting today was put to a vote. **The motion passed with 62 in favor, none opposed, and no abstentions.**

The motion on Student Evaluations for Spring Semester 2020 was put to a vote. **The motion passed with 63 votes in favor, none opposed, and no abstentions.**

VII. Faculty Senate motion on Pass/Fail for Spring 2020 - Scott Smith of the Agenda Committee made a statement before presenting the motion. (See Appendix VII.1)

The motion was presented as follows:

Note: Changes from 03/21 Distribution appear in red

Rationale: The students, faculty, and administration of UNH are experiencing unprecedented disruptions, not only to their academic work, but also in their personal lives. The university community believes that learning and teaching can be an important means of helping both students and faculty maintain some aspects of normalcy even as we all experience the negative reality of these extraordinary times. The Faculty Senate is operating on the understanding that both students and faculty will continue to work hard to maintain the university's standard of excellence. At the same time, it understands that distance learning, suddenly and globally imposed, will engender difficulties for both students and faculty. It is incumbent on members of the faculty to work in concert with their students to achieve the best possible learning outcomes, with an emphasis on communication, compassion, and flexibility. To that end, the Faculty Senate recommends **that the university move all courses to P/F and that all passing courses count toward degree requirements, including major and minor courses. Furthermore, the Faculty Senate favors the opportunity for students to be able to "unveil" their letter grades after grades are posted.**

We realize that this action will infringe upon departmental autonomy and the standards that individual departments have set. Nevertheless, these are extraordinary times that call for simplicity and clarity, and a convoluted set of rules and regulations are likely to lead to further disruptions in the learning process. There are additional imperatives for this action:

- 1) first, the unexpected move from in-person to distance learning has imposed on both faculty and students' pedagogical formats that they did not expect. There will be disruptions as these are converted into new formats.
- 2) It is misleading to claim that the grades in courses taught under these circumstances are comparable with grades from other semesters.
- 3) This is also a matter of equity for students. Some students inevitably will face challenges beyond those of others due to a host of circumstances beyond their control, including lack of effective internet access, students or family members becoming ill, loss of family income due to economic conditions, and the generally increased level of stress.
- 4) Such a move is likely to benefit student success and retention. Students whose work suffers will not be unduly punished and lose ground for their degree completion.

Such a move does not necessarily compromise rigor. A faculty senator from the Education department writes:

A change to pass/fail grading does not necessarily compromise the rigor of our courses. Faculty can retain the current assessment schemes evaluating and weighing assignments. Instead, the move prevents our most affected students from being penalized for choices

they will need to make regarding their or others' physical and mental health during this global health emergency.

In the recognition that some students will wish to have their grades recorded, the Faculty Senate takes up this motion with the intention for a further step to be taken later, to work with the Registrar's Office and university leadership to come up with a solution so that students can unveil their grades after the fact.

Motion

Because of our unprecedented position, the Faculty Senate moves that:

1. Faculty members will continue to grade students using letter grades and will enter them as such through Webcat. **All grades above a D- will be P; all grades marked F will remain so.**
- ~~2. Undergraduate students will have until seven days after grades are posted to change a course or courses to pass/fail;~~
32. All passing grades will count for all degree requirements, **including those for Discovery, and major, and minor and program courses, as well as the BA language requirement and WI courses;**
43. This policy is in effect only for Spring Semester 2020 courses;
- ~~5. The requirement to obtain an advisor's permission to choose a pass/fail option is waived; however, students are encouraged to speak with their faculty and advisors before doing so;~~
64. The faculty senate instructs the Registrar's Office to annotate students' transcripts appropriately to indicate the unusual circumstances of the semester.
- 5. Any courses listed as P/F for the Spring 2020 semester will not count toward the maximum number of P/F courses a student can take toward degree fulfillment.**
- 6. This action is intended only for semester-long undergraduate courses and does not pertain to E-Term 3, which ended before Spring Break.**

Discussion followed, including from representatives from the Student Senate and the Graduate Student Senate. The motion will lay over until the next meeting of the Senate. The Agenda Committee and Andrew Coppens will be working with the Registrar to understand the implications of this motion or any other proposals that provide some flexibility in grading for this semester.

Additional questions and feedback should be shared using the [feedback from now located on the Faculty Senate page.](#)

VIII. Adjournment. More information about the date of the next Senate meeting will be communicated. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Some UNH acronyms

AAC	Academic Affairs Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
AC	Agenda Committee of the Faculty Senate
ASAC	Academic Standards & Advising Committee
APC	Academic Program Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
AT	Academic Technology
BAC	Budget Advisory Committee
CaPS	Career and Professional Services
C&PA	Communications & Public Affairs
CCLEAR	Clinical, Contract, Lecturer, Extension, Alternative Security, Research faculty
CEITL	Center for Excellence & Innovation in Teaching & Learning
CORPAD	University Committee on Real Property Acquisition and Disposal
CPC	Campus Planning Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
FAC	Finance & Administration Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
FAR	Faculty Activity Reporting
IRA	Institutional Research and Assessment
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Information Technology Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
JSMB	Joint Strategic Management Board (Navitas review)
LC	Library Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
OISS	Office for International Students & Scholars
OS	Operating Staff
PACS	Psychological and Counseling Services
PAT	Professional and Technical Staff
PSC	Professional Standards Committee (FS permanent committee)
RPSC	Research & Public Service Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
SAARC	Space Allocation, Adaption and Renewal Committee
SAC	Student Affairs Committee (Faculty Senate standing committee)
SHARPP	Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program
SSSC	Student Success Steering Committee
SVPAA	Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
UCAPC	University Curriculum & Academic Policies Committee (FS permanent committee)
VPFA	Vice President for Finance and Administration

APPENDIX VII.1

Remarks on the Pass/Fail R. Scott Smith on Behalf of the Agenda Committee in association with Andrew Coppens (Education)

Introduction

Good afternoon to the Senate Chair, Vice Chair, Agenda Committee, Senators and guests. It has fallen to me to present the motion concerning grades during this turbulent time. Let me state at the outset that I believe that this is the most important motion I have presented in my eight years on the faculty senate; what we decide today will either increase the stressors on students and faculty, or it will mitigate them. I will attempt to speak slowly and deliberately so that you have time to consider the message while also referring to a number of files concerning this motion in the Box file Kathy Brunet has helpfully set up for our deliberations.

Before I move to the arguments for the motion, it is important to stress that the motion that was sent out with the agenda has been substantially modified in response to the feedback sent in by faculty. I want to thank all of you not just for responding in a timely manner, but also for all the hard work you have been doing to move your classes online.

You may view the substitute motion in the Box folder. The most substantial change, made in response to many comments, is to move to a global and immediate P/F model, with the potential for students to “unveil” their grades after the fact. This latter point is complex and needs further study, and so you will find in the rationale but not in the motion itself. The faculty senate Agenda Committee strenuously supports this change, and it is my job here to persuade those on the fence that such a move is not only timely and equitable for students, but also necessary in the face of increasing challenges. I will break my case into five parts. In some parts I will argue why it is preferable to other, less aggressive measures, such as that from ASAC; in others I will try to anticipate objections that were raised by faculty in our survey.

I beg forbearance from you as I take 15 minutes of your time or more; the Agenda Committee feels that it is important to lay out the case completely to forestall already stated or obvious objections so that deliberation in this unusual format may be most effective.

Before I move on to the first part, I would like to propose **three core principles** that we believe all faculty should keep in mind when making this decision:

- 1) we desire to maintain *equity* among students in their ability to make progress toward their degrees;
- 2) we want to offer faculty the *flexibility* in adapting their courses to new modes of instruction while not inadvertently taxing students during these unprecedented times; and 3) we believe that *simplicity* and *clarity* of policy will alleviate concerns, confusion, and stress on the university community.

The last point is worth dwelling on more, and I plan to do so at the end of this presentation, but for now I will simply state that simplicity in this action will allow us all to focus on *other* pressing matters instead of worrying about this or that detail.

I: Business as Usual?

It is by now a hackneyed phrase, but it bears repeating: we are dealing with unprecedented health and economic challenges. It took two months to reach 100k cases worldwide; it took seven days to reach 200k; it has taken three days to reach 300k, which was around 1 am Sunday morning. At present, in less than 36 hours, we are at 344,000.¹ The United States themselves are experiencing an exponential bloom of cases even as we forego testing in areas that are already swamped. But we do not need to study morbidity or mortality rates, exponential curves and R-naught figures to know, with absolute clarity, that the disruptions to student learning and faculty teaching are only going to increase. To imagine that the situation today is going to endure unchanged over the next weeks is wishful thinking; just look to Italy, which is ten days ahead of us, for what we might be facing: 5000 health workers infected, a 9% apparent mortality rate, and choices being made who receives care and who does not. In other words, to treat this situation as “business as usual” goes against what we know is going to happen and ignores the incredible disruptions our students and faculty are likely to face. Students will have family members get sick. Students themselves may get sick. Family members may lose their jobs. Students may be pulled away from their work to care for younger siblings. One could go on, but the central point I’m trying to make is that whatever we think is affecting our students now will only get worse in time. To offer halfmeasures now will likely redound on us later in a negative way, meaning that we may have to revisit this later if we do not act decisively *now*. I argue we should act with certainty and clarity today so that we do not need to revisit this later.

ASAC’s Proposal

On March 19 of this year, that is, last Thursday, the Academic Standards and Advising Committee, or ASAC for short, voted unanimously for a limited relaxation of standards. These are:

Students have until April 28 to drop or change to Pass/Fail a single course with the following exceptions:

- Pass/Fail is not available for any course required to fulfil any of the degree requirements for a major or minor
- Any single course used to meet the University (non-major/minor) requirements for graduation is eligible for conversion to Pass/Fail
- Discovery courses that fulfill a major requirement may be dropped but not changed to pass/fail

On May 19th, four days ago, the United States had fewer than 10,000 cases of Covid-19. Today it is over 35,000 [my curve suggests 38000+ by the senate meeting]. These measures, to which ASAC agreed, were made with good intentions: with the conversion to online classes, we should give students more flexibility to release some of the tension that they are bound to face as instructors go online and as they have to deal with disruption in the method of instruction. But I would argue that their deliberations were based on the mistaken premise that this is business as usual and that the current level of disruption would continue as is. As senators, if you believe that the only disruption will be students adapting to online instruction, then you will vote against

¹ Data taken from the Johns Hopkins Website at 10 am every morning (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>). Number for today accessed at 8:00 am.

this motion in favor of a more narrow expansion of what we already offer students. If, however, you agree that things are likely to become more complicated, more disruptive for students in a week, two weeks, a month, then I ask you to weigh that against other, less urgent objections that you may have for a move to a global Pass/Fail model.

Main Academic Objections

I turn now to my third part, that is, the major concerns that faculty raised in the survey about academic standards. First, I would like to address the legitimate concern that by turning to Pass/Fail at this time would result in students using it to game the system, do no work and yet reap all the benefits that accrue to passing your course. At this point I would turn all of your attention to the FAQ document that Andrew Coppens, my co-presenter, has helpfully composed, where you will find succinct and data-driven answers to the most pressing of these. It is in the Box folder. Leaving aside the obvious fact that students game the system every day even in a graded course, leaving aside the question of extreme grade inflation that this very body encountered not two months ago, and leaving aside the vital fact that grades in the first place are not grounded in some empirically based gold standard, it is imperative to note that moving to P/F does not necessarily diminish the rigor we demand of the students, nor of the learning outcomes we seek. It may be worth asking this question: if two of your twenty students face real distress and have to do C- work where they may normally do A- work, does that not outweigh the two other students who use this to skate through? That would be tantamount to punishing good students just to ensure that the lazy bums do a minimum amount of work. I believe that we ought to err on the side of student success rather than on the side of unstinting rigor in the face of terrible circumstances.

A second concern expressed by some faculty involve major requirements that need a certain grade to count for the major or to take the next level course. We recognize that choosing a global model for Pass/Fail infringes on departmental decisions about their curriculum. We ask that departments recognize that these are uncharted waters and that everyone has a role to play in ensuring our students' success. It is here that we think that strong departmental advising would compensate for a move to P/F. It is true that a student's C- may be masked by a generic "P," but instructors and faculty advisors would have access to grades and could flag students who, in their minds, were not ready for the next course. Advisors could offer guidance to these students, to take remedial steps over the summer, or to retake a class in some instances. Some departments could call upon their tenured faculty to put off some research over the summer to offer tutorials for students who were disadvantaged by the crisis. For my own part, I intend to make myself available over the summer to Classics students who may not have made the progress they wanted. Not all can and have the time to do so, but I believe that this is an "all-hands-on-deck" kind of moment when normal regulations are not necessarily sufficient.

I'll ask the question now, leaving it hanging until the end: Do we think that this move for one semester will bring the entire edifice of our institution crashing down?

III. A Call for Simplicity and Clarity, Not Complexity

Some faculty wonder why we cannot simply differentiate between Discovery and elective courses on the one hand, and allow major courses to remain graded. While I personally bristle at the notion that we ought to treat Discovery and elective courses as less-important step-children to the star major courses, let us put that at the side and consider this possible response because the Faculty Senate controls the Discovery Program but not major requirements. There are two substantial concerns. The first is obvious: what if a

course counts both as a Discovery and a major requirement? For instance, if a student is taking PSYC 401, but happens to be a PYSC or Nursing major, so it counts for the major. But it's listed as Discovery. Is that course to be converted globally to P/F? Another student might be an English major taking the course as Discovery, might earn a P for the course, but then decide the very next year that she wants to be a PSYC major—does that student have to retake the course marked as P? How does the Registrar's Office handle such a complex series of requests? Second, from a student's perspective this may create confusion: which courses are which? Do I have to choose and make it P/F myself, or is it done for me? I have this paper to write or an assignment to complete for tomorrow, but I suppose I'll have to fill out paperwork or make the request.

In a time of crisis, people need clear and simple guidelines to gain some sense of control over the situation. We believe that a move to global P/F is the simplest and clearest statement we can make.

It is important for us to recognize that under the P/F system, instructors will still grade using the letter system, and can hold standards where they want; a final letter grade will be entered into the Webcat system. All grades A through D- will show P on the transcript, while Fs remains. This option allows us to capture the original grade for possible unveiling later; the Credit/Fail option does not allow us to do so.

Why have we shifted to Pass/Fail as the default, instead of an "opt-in" approach in the original motion? The reasons for shifting to a Pass/Fail default policy have been described in terms of administrative and academic simplicity, and we feel these are compelling as rationale for the motion before the Senate. Yet, there is more: a move to a Pass/Fail default very likely will help to circumvent a well-known and empirically robust phenomenon that prevents large numbers of individuals from seeking mental health services and other kinds of essential help: stigma (Corrigan, 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2009). We are seriously concerned that if students are required to "opt in" to an academic safety net, rather than having one put in place on their behalf, various kinds of stigma will prevent this policy from benefitting as many students as it could.

V. Why Now? Why Not Wait?

Central administrative leadership has taken a wait and see approach to the subject. We have been advised that this is not a time to rush into a decision, but we should wait and deliberate and take our time. We respectfully but strenuously disagree. We have seen the chaos and uncertainty in our faculty and students when first no call was made to suspend in-person classes after spring break, then a two-week suspension, and only late was that finally followed by a suspension of all such classes after Spring Break. We understand that university leadership was responding to political exigencies, possibly beyond their control, but the result remained the same: people wondered "what is going on here?" Such a situation is presented with us now: what is going on? Why haven't we figured this out yet?

You will have noticed that so far I have not mentioned any other university or college that has made such a decision. There are many, some of which are institutions we aspire to compete with: UVA, Michigan, and so on. In the Box folder can see a file of what other institutions have decided to do. I have left them out because what UVA does should have no bearing on what we do here; yet, it does suggest that the obstacles we see here against moving to such a policy can be worked out, and that *other institutions do not see such a move as bringing the whole edifice crashing down, as somehow hamstringing their students for the future, or as compromising the quality of their overall education.* And we have the responsibility as instructors to ensure that what we do deliver is the best that we can under extraordinary circumstances, to mitigate the worst of a very bad situation about to get worse.

Keeping in mind the principles laid out above, we believe that student success is best effected by a move to a global Pass/Fail system that maintains equity as students progress on their paths toward their degrees and offers a flexible system that relieves the pressure on faculty and students whose focus and attention may be, and in some cases will inevitably be, taken off a course or courses. It also offers the clearest and simplest policy, one easily explained to all students and faculty and requiring the least amount of time teasing out “exceptions” with a more complicated policy.

I am a faculty member without children or child-care needs, with no particular worry about food security or job loss, so I cannot imagine what it would be like to have to take care of children at home *and* keep the online courses going like a well-oiled machine. I cannot imagine a student having to take care of a family member who is sick *and* try to maintain a high grade because of a major requirement of B-. I cannot imagine a student whose family is in disarray because his mother got laid off and so they are not certain how to pay for heat, food, clothing. What I *know* is that my 75 year-old mother, a smoker for 40 years, is likely to die if she catches Covid-19. What I *know* is that I might not be at the top of my game in the delivery of my courses in such a scenario. Multiply this kind of psychological stress over 12,000 undergraduates and all of our faculty, and we will find many unable to perform up to par. It will be impossible distinguish a “bad” student from one that is dealing with silent and in some cases unimaginable trauma. Will we not err on the side of flexibility and charity, rather than rigidity? In closing, I simply reiterate the basic point: this is *not* business as usual.