



Resolution: Pass/Fail

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The Associated Student Government (ASG) Senate calls for the adoption of the pass/fail option for all university courses and for the extension of the pass/fail deadline to the last day of classes for the Spring 2021 Semester.

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing situation that continues to create unprecedented circumstances that impact the academic performance of university students; and,

Whereas, in Fall 2020 Georgetown University adjusted the pass/fail policy in order to allow undergraduate students to have until the last study day to choose if they would like to take a class pass/fail and to allow all core, major, minor, and elective courses to be taken pass/fail¹; and,

Whereas, a survey conducted during the Fall 2020 semester found that 84.5% of the 14,000 college students indicated that the coronavirus pandemic negatively impacted their academic performance. The survey included freshmen, sophomores, and juniors from 232 colleges and universities across the country²; and,

¹<https://www.georgetown.edu/news/grading-policy-for-fall-2020/>

²<https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2021/01/05/survey-pandemic-negatively-affected-grades-fall>



Whereas, the virtual learning environment of the university limits the resources that students who use the DLDRC have access to, and such accommodations would be accessible to students in an in person setting. It is unfair to expect students to perform at the same level academically without the accommodations they would otherwise be given by the DLDRC.

Whereas, student accessibility to academic resources, such as the campus library, in person contact with professors and TA's, in person lab opportunities, in person study groups, and in person tutoring sessions, has been restricted to those living on/near campus; and,

Whereas, many students who are living out of state and internationally do not have access to the aforementioned resources, and are taking classes in a different time zone that does not align with USD's time zone. These time zone differences impact students by limiting opportunities for synchronous interactions with professors and fellow peers and by forcing students to take classes later in the evening. Pushing classes later into the night affects students sleep schedules further affecting their ability to perform to their greatest academic potential; and,

Whereas, many students' study and work environments were disrupted throughout 2020-2021 by inadequate wifi, familial responsibilities, noise distractions, sickness, grief, and natural disasters. These unexpected changes to students' work environments have a range of impacts that inevitably make learning more difficult for students; and,

Whereas, a survey polled 808 higher education faculty about their level of preparedness for the Fall 2020 semester. 58% presented concerns about their ability to create an engaging learning environment for their students. 50% also expressed



that they did not receive adequate support/training in how to utilize online resources to create an academically stimulating environment for their students³. These trends of faculty preparedness are likely to have impacted the Spring 2021 semester as well; and,

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced an increase in online communication between students and faculty. This transition to the dependence on online communication has caused a delay in students receiving answers to questions regarding course content/material and answers to general questions about assignments. These delays create setbacks and difficulties in students' ability to complete coursework and assignments in a timely fashion; and,

Whereas, students who are employed both part-time and full-time in order to combat financial hardships attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic have less time to focus on academic responsibilities; and,

Whereas, in February of Spring 2021, a survey was released that inquired about the mental health of higher education students during the pandemic. The survey included nearly 6,000 college students from 232 colleges and universities across the country. The results indicated that of the 6,000 college students polled, 91% reported having mental health struggles due to the developing effects of COVID-19⁴; and,

Whereas, additional surveys corroborated the decline in mental health of college students during the pandemic. One survey found that 71.3% of the 2,031

³<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200806005204/en/Faculty-Preparedness-for-Fall-2020-Survey-of-More-Than-800-Educators-and-Instructional-Support-Staff-in-Higher-Ed-Finds-Uncertainty-and-Lack-of-Confidence-with-Institutional-Plans>

⁴<https://oneclass.com/blog/featured/185708-9125-of-college-students-have-mental-health-struggles-during-covid-19.en.html>



undergraduate college participants indicated that their anxiety and stress levels increased as a result of the extenuating circumstances⁵; and,

Whereas, another study examined the psychological effects on 90,879 college students from 15 different countries. The results demonstrated that 39.4% of those surveyed reported anxiety, 31.2% of participants reported depression, and 50.5% of the students reported reduced sleep quality⁶; and,

Whereas, the pass/fail option for students makes academic responsibilities more achievable and less burdensome to students' mental health during challenging circumstances; and,

Whereas, the pass/fail option can prevent the loss of students from leadership positions in the campus community after failing to meet the minimum GPA requirement, a problem that can be attributed to the aforementioned circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic; and,

Whereas, the increase in the overall GPA of the USD undergraduate student body came at the cost of academic integrity and the mental health of students; and,

Whereas, the current pass/fail policy was not designed to address the drastic changes imposed on students due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it currently states 18 requirements for being allowed to take a course pass/fail when these requirements were developed outside of the circumstances of the current academic year⁷; and,

⁵<https://www.jmir.org/2020/9/e22817/>

⁶<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9032/9/2/222>

⁷<https://catalogs.sandiego.edu/undergraduate/academic-regulations/credit-grading-system/>



Whereas, 1,600 of USD's undergraduate student body signed a petition and many took time out of their day to share their personal struggles to have the pass/fail option for Fall 2020 during a virtual sit-in. Students continue to advocate for a pass/fail option to respond to the academic challenges that have characterized this school year; and,

Be it resolved, the University of San Diego's current pass/fail policy will be amended for the 2021 Spring semester to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on students and grades; and,

Be it further resolved, after consulting with an academic advisor, students will be allowed until the final day of classes to decide which classes they want to take pass/fail; and,

Be it further resolved, student transcripts will indicate that the decision to pass/fail a course was due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and,

Be it further resolved, students who set a class to pass/fail and receive a pass in that class will receive credit for major/minor requirements, core curriculum requirements, and elective requirements; and,

Be it further resolved, during the grading period, the USD faculty will not have access to the information pertaining to which students decide to pass/fail their course to eliminate bias against those choosing the pass/fail option; and,

Be it further resolved, regardless of a student's decision to pass/fail a course, the letter grade received by that student will still be recorded by the university. This information can be accessed, if needed for graduate programs or employment, through the official verification of the student.



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4/15/2021

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