

Dear Colleagues:

Your loyal correspondent from UIC United Faculty here again. Our Executive Vice President, Aaron Krall, will be UICUF's representative to the Task Force. I predict that it will be a real treat to work with him. For those of you who don't know Aaron, who hails from the English department: he is extremely smart, thoughtful, and wise. He also is amazingly calm, level-headed, and well-tempered, as he showed as the union's lead negotiator in bargaining for the last contract. He helps bring people together. He is looking forward to meeting with you on Friday.

For those of you who have just turned in your final grades today, I hope you are enjoying some momentary respite from a long and trying semester.

Yet in honor of the grading deadline, let's please put some issues about grading on the table. These concerns don't come with a testimonial from one of our members, but they have been bubbling up in plenty of discussions with our faculty colleagues.

The provost announced definitively at the Town Hall that there will be no return to a Credit/No Credit system in the fall. Yet we at UICUF have questions about this:

\*has there been substantive faculty input into this decision? Certainly we have not heard of any, although perhaps the faculty members on this Task Force have been able to offer their viewpoints.

\*has there been any substantive *student* input into this decision?

\*even if there had been such input from students and faculty previously, it would have been too early to make a wise decision for the fall. No one will have had the full chance to reflect on this issue at least until after 5:00 p.m. today—if not for a week or two.

\*which leads one to ask: why the rush in making the decision? Why can't we survey, perhaps both quantitatively and qualitatively, those who are wisest in such matters (the faculty and the students) to get a better sense of what the best policy for fall 2020 might be?

\*and to get at that wisest policy, shouldn't we be waiting to see what other institutions will be doing—institutions that recognize the value of taking some time at the end of a tremendously difficult semester to make such a decision?

A wide variety of reflections points both to the advantages, and the disadvantages, of a Credit/No Credit system. There are therefore all kinds of reasons to have a substantial debate on an issue that matters so much to our students. The following articles represent a drop in the bucket in the copious commentary on why there remains such value in continuing to consider alternatives to the traditional system of grading.

Here is a sampling:

In terms of the emergency—which we are still in, and likely will still be in during the fall:

Allison Stanger, "Make All Course Pass/Fail Now," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Make-All-Courses-Pass-Fail-Now/248281>

In terms of equity:

Elizabeth Redden, "Is Pass-Fail an Equity Issue," *Inside Higher Education*, April 22, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/22/students-petition-university-system-georgia-pass-fail-grading-arguing-it-equity>

In terms of the highest goals of education:

Jonathan Zimmerman, "Reviving the Original Purpose of Pass-Fail," *Inside Higher Education*, March 26, 2020  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/26/reviewing-history-pass-fail-reminds-us-how-we-should-consider-option-today-opinion>

Just to be clear: UICUF has taken no position on what grading system would be best. We do, though, strongly support shared governance, which is our main request on this, as well as on so many other matters.

With best wishes,

Robert

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