

Senate  
56th Legislative Session  
8th Meeting  
3 November 2020

**Student Association Resolution [RES 56.03]  
The COVID-19 Student Academic Success Act**

**Action Requested**

In response to the implications the *SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic* (COVID-19) had on student educational success and access to academic resources, the Student Association at the State University of New York at Oswego requests that the campus administration and Faculty Assembly take the urgent necessary steps to adopt an optional Pass/Fail grading system with effective parameters that ensures all students are treated with academic equity during the 2020-2021 Academic Year.

**WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the lives of many people in this country and around the world, and many students are at risk of falling ill with COVID-19 and/or have at-risk household members; and

**WHEREAS**, the lives of students have radically changed since the beginning of the mandated isolation regulations put in place by state, and federal agents because they have been forced to conduct distance learning; and

**WHEREAS**, while the decision to discontinue face-to-face instruction since mid-March in pursuit of social distancing measures is in the public health's best interest, but it places students at an educational disadvantage as virtual instruction does not allow in-person meetings with instructors, requires high-speed internet access, dampens the educational quality of instruction, eliminates traditional in-class participation, etc; and

**WHEREAS**, the lives of current students continue to be affected because the COVID-19 pandemic has not gone away and reports show that college students' outlook has changed for the worst due to the COVID-19. There is a clear disproportionate effect on students due to socioeconomic status and race. Lower-income students are more likely to delay graduation than their higher-income peers<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, students have testified that the pandemic has made it hard to keep up with classes and due dates; it's difficult to understand some of the material and that has affected their academic performance; it's hard to focus because they are not in a classroom setting and they are not getting the face-to-face guidance from professors; some professors constantly change their Zoom meetings and it conflicts with students' work schedules putting students who depend on their jobs to be able to financially support themselves at an unjust academic disadvantage;

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<sup>1</sup> Report: COVID-19 Has Hurt College Students | Inside Higher Ed.  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2020/06/23/report-covid-19-has-hurt-college-students>.

students feel extremely overwhelmed by the lack of structure and the overload of assigned work to compensate for participation and attendance grades;

**WHEREAS**, due to all the uncertainties some students who chose to live on campus for the 2020-2021 Academic Year may have left campus, returning to their home environment to once again take all remote classes, putting them in similar (if not the same or worse) positions as the Spring 2020 semester; and

**WHEREAS**, students should not be academically punished for not being able to quickly adjust to a virtual learning setting given that some signed up for hybrid classes this semester and their schedules were completely changed, and students should not be punished for deciding to leave campus to finish their semester/ academic year at home given health concerns or family emergencies during a worldwide pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, an optional Pass/Fail grading system was put into place last semester to combat the affecting disparities that came along with the new online education, it is necessary that the optional pass/fail policy continue to be an option for the 2020-2021 Academic Year because students continue to be affected by the everyday uncertainties and constant changes in social-distancing guidelines and all the reasons mentioned in this document.

**WHEREAS**, this is not an unique situation to SUNY Oswego students, it is affecting student all across the country and several universities are combating the issue by implementing some form of pass/fail grading policy, including but no limited to, Harvard University<sup>2</sup>, University of Pennsylvania<sup>3</sup>, University of North Carolina<sup>4</sup>, University of Virginia<sup>5</sup>, Ohio State University<sup>6</sup>, American University<sup>7</sup>, and George Washington University<sup>8</sup>.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the Student Association at State University Of New York at Oswego urges all SUNY Oswego faculty to recognize the urgent calls from students on behalf of the utmost academic and mental health hardship as a result of the continued SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and circumstances beyond the control of our students.

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<sup>2</sup> *College Extends Deadline to Switch to Pass-Fail Grading to Nov. 16 | News | The Harvard Crimson.* <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/10/21/pass-fail-deadline-extended/>.

<sup>3</sup> *“Opt In” Pass/Fail Grading FAQ.* <https://ugrad.seas.upenn.edu/opt-in-pass-fail-grading-faq/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Registrar COVID-19 - Office of the University Registrar.* <https://registrar.unc.edu/registrar-covid-19/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Newly Announced Fall 2020 Grade Options | Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.*

<https://provost.virginia.edu/quick-guide/all-instructors-and-guidance-for-inperson-teaching-resources/newly-announced-fall-2020-grade-options>.

<sup>6</sup> *“Pass/No Pass Options for Autumn 2020.” Office of Academic Affairs, The Ohio State University, 17 Sept. 2020,* <https://oaa.osu.edu/passno-pass-options-autumn-2020>

<sup>7</sup> *“University Announces Limited Pass/Fail Option for Undergraduate and Graduate Students.” The Eagle,* <https://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2020/10/university-announces-limited-passfail-option-for-undergraduate-and-graduate-students>.

<sup>8</sup> *“Officials Announce One-Class Policy for Pass/No Pass.” The GW Hatchet, 16 Oct. 2020,* <https://www.gwhatchet.com/2020/10/16/officials-to-permit-undergraduates-up-to-one-pass-fail-class-per-semester-for-academic-year/>.

**THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the State University of New York at Oswego urge the Faculty Assembly take the necessary steps to extend the Pass/Fail policy implemented in the Spring 2020 to the Academic Year 2020-2021

- 1) Institute an optional “Pass/Fail” grading system for BOTH the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, with the following parameters:
  - a. The pass/fail grading option will be available to students enrolled in all undergraduate courses until a week after grades are posted.
  - b. Students may choose the pass/fail option for courses that use the normal grading mode (A,A-, etc). All grades of D- or better will be considered passing.
  - c. The pass/fail option will be expanded beyond all college electives where the course does not satisfy a specific requirement in the student’s degree program. It will also include courses in General Education and courses for majors/minors where a C- is not required for the course.
  - d. Courses where C- or better is required for the student’s degree program may not be taken pass/fail.
  - e. No limit on the number of courses to select Pass/Fail option.
  - f. Remove 2.0. GPA requirement for Pass/Fail application.
  - g. Students should consult their academic advisors prior to choosing this option.
- 2) Inform students of the P/F option at least a week prior to the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester.