

## *Motion on an Equitable Grading Policy for the Fall of 2020*

**Purpose:** Given the diversity of challenging circumstances students face this fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Student Government Association finds it of the utmost importance that the College implement posthaste a satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading option for all courses, including those necessary for the fulfillment of major, minor, and distribution requirements, available to students for the remainder of the fall 2020 semester. Provided that it is a central goal of the College to allow students as much flexibility and choice as possible in their academic affairs, and given the priority of the College to allow students to focus on their learning while knowing that they have control over their evaluation, SGA strongly recommends that the College adopt a grading system for the fall of 2020 whereby students can choose to receive regular letter grades for all courses or designate some or all of their courses satisfactory/unsatisfactory. This option, if elected, should not impact the existing 16 credit limit on S/U elections available to students over their time at Colby. With consideration to the volatility of student circumstances over the course of the semester, we recommend that the acceptable election of an S/U option, to be made at the discretion of the individual student, should be permitted to be made up to the final day of classes for the 2020 fall semester. It is the opinion of this body that the College must preserve its charge to provide an equitable and inclusive educational environment by implementing a grading system which adequately reflects these commitments in the fall of 2020.

**The What:** We strongly recommend that the College implement for the fall semester of 2020 a non-compulsory satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading option for students which applies to all major, minor, and distribution requirements. This option, if selected, should be made available to students up to the final day of classes.

**The How:** This recommendation will be communicated through a letter — included in the appendix of this motion — to the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), the faculty, and the College signed by the SGA. This would be brought forth to the faculty by the AAC in the form of their own motion, which would be subject to approval by the full faculty. Departments will have to individually decide on their acceptance of S/U options for courses being counted for majors and minors.

**The Who:** The College will be responsible for implementing this policy, similarly to the spring of 2020.

**Strengths and Importance:** Given the diverse and challenging circumstances confronting students in the fall of 2020, we believe it crucial that a grading policy be implemented which reflects the priority on equity which the College has consistently, and fairly, supported in the past.

**Possible Risk Areas:** Students may encounter trouble deciding whether to elect S/U. By giving students an extended option to elect S/U, some students may get a D or below and not get credit where they would have without S/U. Additionally, we do not yet fully know the long term effect of an S/U election on graduate programs, so there could be unexpected repercussions for students.

### **Questions Already Addressed:**

**Q:** Would a universal S/U system be a more equitable grading option for the spring of 2023?

**A:** While a universal S/U system would be the most equitable option for students, it is the position of this body that students deserve a level of flexibility and control over their final grades given their diverse range of circumstances.

**Q:** Why are we choosing this option over, say, extending the traditional period whereby students can elect to take their courses satisfactory/unsatisfactory?

**A:** While an extension of this period would be helpful, it would not fully address the central concerns of the SGA to preserve the equitable learning environment which should be available to all students. Many students, for example, will be taking many courses required for their major or minor. Because these courses would, in many departments, be unable to be taken for S/U, an extension would be of no help to them in regards to academic equity.

**Q:** What can the SGA do to actualize this policy more effectively?

**A:** The furthest extent of the SGA's authority lies in communicating student sentiment to the College. While the SGA cannot directly implement this policy, it can voice strong support which will be taken into consideration upon further deliberation by the faculty and College.

### **Contact Information for questioning, clarification, or pre-meeting critiques:**

**Name & Year:** Josh Brause, Class of 2023 Co-President.

**Email:** [jhbrau23@colby.edu](mailto:jhbrau23@colby.edu)

**Phone:** (203) 988-4748

**Favorable Hours to Meet:** Thursday, 1:00pm to 2:00pm

## **Appendix**

**Letter to the Academic Affairs Committee, the faculty, and the College:**

**To:** Karlene Burrell-McRae, Dean of the College  
Doug Terp, Vice President for Administration and CFO  
Margaret McFadden, Provost and Dean of Faculty

**Subject:** Regarding an Equitable Grading Policy for the Fall of 2020

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Thank you for your consideration,

The Colby College Student Government Association