Senate Council
April 14, 2020

The Senate Council met in a specially called session at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 via video conference. Below is a record of what transpired. All votes were taken via a show of hands unless indicated otherwise.

Senate Council Chair Jennifer Bird-Pollan called the Senate Council (SC) meeting to order at 5:31 pm. The Chair welcomed those present.

The Chair informed SC that the Graduate Council made the decision to defer to program faculty about whether or not to allow pass/fail grading for graduate students for spring 2020. The Chair also reported that she has been in touch with associate deans, who are sending in their program's decisions about pass/fail grading. Although not all undergraduate programs have responded, most have opted to move to pass/fail grading for the spring 2020 semester. She added that the Provost met with deans this morning and there was some on-going discussion about what next steps might look like. The Chair welcomed Provost David Blackwell and invited him to share his thoughts with SC members.

Provost Blackwell thanked SC for meeting with him. He also thanked them for their work in March with various academic policies and for allowing undergraduate programs to decide about pass/fail options for spring 2020. The Provost explained how the University is in a different place at this time than it was on March 13 when SC first discussed pass/fail grading. He shared examples of challenges that many students are facing and how the University has reached out.

Provost Blackwell explained that, in a meeting with the deans, he asked that deans in colleges with undergraduate programs that have decided not to permit pass/fail grading for spring 2020 to urge the faculty in their colleges to support universally allowing courses taken on a pass/fail basis to count towards program requirements. Unfortunately, there was some confusion across campus about this message after the meeting.

Provost Blackwell asked, on behalf of President Capilouto and himself, that SC consider universally allowing pass/fail courses to count towards undergraduate program requirements for spring 2020 only. He assured SC that the University will support students should there be consequences down the road with accrediting bodies. He emphasized the importance of relieving some of the stress on students.

Provost Blackwell asked SC for their comments and questions. Those included:
- Clarification that pass/fail would not be mandatory for undergraduate students if implemented.
- Clarification that pass/fail would satisfy all program requirements if implemented.
- Should pass/fail grading be considered for the summer 2020 semester also?
  No, students were not expecting the drastic change to online during spring, but they are going into the summer semester under different circumstances.
- The importance of advising students of how pass/fail grading might affect them, especially if some accrediting bodies refuse to accept pass/fail graded courses as program requirements.
- Concern that some students have an advantage over others by not making pass/fail grading universal.
- Concern that students may not be ready for progression in a program or course typically requiring a minimum letter grade.
- Discussion of access to underlying/shadow grades for the purposes of progression in a program or course. It was noted that on March 30, 2020 SC voted to delegate to program faculty the

ability to require certain letter grades for progression requirements, without submitting a proposal to SC.
- Letter grades earned during COVID-19 may not fully represent a student's understanding because of extenuating circumstances.
- The flexibility that many faculty have already extended to students. There has been success in reaching out and providing support to students who are concerned.
- Discussion of including Graduate Programs in universal pass/fail grading option.
  Because graduate courses are graded differently and have a more flexible timeline, pass/fail grading raises different concerns for graduate students.

There was extensive discussion. Some SC members were supportive of universally granting students the option of choosing pass/fail grading and others were less in favor. There was significant discussion about the use of shadow/underlying grades and if programs could require certain shadow/underlying grades to be earned prior to the student progressing. SC members discussed the possibility of crafting a motion via email, but the general consensus was that it was too late in the semester to be able to wait.

Vincent (BE) **moved** that for spring 2020, all undergraduate academic program and college requirements can be satisfied with a grade of P. Hamilton (SGA) **seconded**. The Chair asked if there was any debate. There was much discussion about shadow grades and implications of pass/fail related to accreditation and licensure. There was also concern about setting a precedent.

Andrade (ME) **moved** to amend the motion that all spring 2020 undergraduate academic program and college requirements may be satisfied with a grade of D. Collett (HS) **seconded**. The Chair asked if there was any debate on the amendment. There was some debate about using a grade of P to satisfy graduation requirements for spring 2020, as well as satisfying progression requirements to be able to move to a subsequent next course. Given the discussion about whether or not shadow/underlying grades could be used to determine whether or not a student could progress, the Chair noted that at its March 30 meeting, the motion SC approved was that if program faculty want to use underlying grades for progression, the decision is delegated to program faculty. The Chair commented that nothing so far had indicated an intention to overturn that vote.

Grossman (AS) made a substitute **motion** that all undergraduate academic programs shall accept a grade of P in a course taken in spring 2020 as satisfying graduation requirements. There was **unanimous consent** that the previous motion be taken off the floor and this current motion replace it. The Chair asked if there was any debate on the substitute motion. There was some concern about possible confusion between graduation requirements and program requirements but it was clarified that the wording of the motion meant that students could graduate with any P grade, but even if a student opted for pass/fail grading, certain letter grades could still be required to progress from one course to the next. The Chair was supportive of including this clarification in any notice about an approved motion. A **vote** was taken and the motion **passed** with nine in favor and two opposed.

There was discussion of how to best communicate the decision to campus. The Chair agreed to work with Provost Blackwell to develop an email message.

After a question from Shaikh, Vincent (BE) **moved** to that the prior motion be made on behalf of the Senate and effective immediately. Richardson (SGA) **seconded**. The Chair asked if there was any debate and there was none. A **vote** was taken and the motion **passed** with all in favor.

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Provost Blackwell thanked SC for their serious conversation and thanked them on behalf of President Capilouto. Chair-elect Aaron Cramer (EN) thanked Provost Blackwell and SC Chair Jennifer Bird-Pollan for advocating for SC. The Chair commented that it was nice to have a good group of colleagues to work with.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 pm by unanimous consent.

<div align="right">Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Bird-Pollan,
Senate Council Chair</div>

SC members present: Andrade, Bird-Pollan, Blonder, Brion, Cantrell, Collett, Cramer, Grossman, Hall, Hamilton, Richardson, Shaikh, Soult, and Vincent.

Guests present: David Blackwell, Sheila Brothers, Roger Brown, Davy Jones, Douglas Michael.

Prepared by Stephanie Woolery on May 22, 2020.