Resolution to Implement Fall 2020 Grade Change Provisions & Support Associated Student Government’s Proposed Retroactive Withdrawal Policy

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee understands that:

WHEREAS, as of December 2, 2020, the United States has recorded more than 13.9 million cases of COVID-19, resulting in at least 272,633 deaths;

WHEREAS, as of December 2, 2020, the State of Arkansas has recorded more than 161,500 confirmed cases of COVID-19, resulting in at least 2,522 deaths;

WHEREAS, as of December 2, 2020, the University of Arkansas community has recorded 2,101 of its members contract COVID-19;

WHEREAS, in Spring and Summer 2020, the University of Arkansas recognized the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the student body by extending a Pass/Pass D/No Credit grading system in recognition that the pandemic negatively affected student learning;

WHEREAS, the University of Arkansas has recognized the differential impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has on UA faculty productivity and well-being, allowing faculty to create a COVID-19 impact statement to document the pandemic’s effect on teaching, research, and service for their 2020 annual evaluation;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively impact students, with the National Institute for Learning Outcomes and many other national learning and health organizations recognizing that the pandemic is not equitable in its impact on University students, with first generation, underrepresented, and low-income students negatively affected in greater proportion;

WHEREAS, the isolation and uncertainty caused by the pandemic has caused increased rates of anxiety, depression, and other forms of mental illness among the student body, with 73% of entering UA Fall 2020 undergraduate students indicating on the PERTS Social Belonging survey that they would have a moderate degree of difficulty or higher in their transition to college;

WHEREAS, the Associated Student Government of the University of Arkansas passed a resolution supporting a retroactive withdrawal policy for Fall 2020 on December 1, 2020;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Arkansas Faculty Senate endorses the spirit of the Associated Student Government resolution to support a retroactive withdrawal policy for undergraduate students in Fall 2020 with the following caveats: no documentation shall be required for any student to retroactively withdraw from an individual course with any grade and the time limit to request a retroactive withdrawal shall extend to March 1, 2021;

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Arkansas Faculty Senate endorses modifying the Fall 2020 grading policy for undergraduate students so that all letter grades of “F” will revert in the system to “NC” automatically and will not count in the GPA;

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate encourages all faculty to answer the call that Provost Robinson and all University Deans made on August 21, 2020, that all faculty join them “in embracing kindness and flexibility...by giving each other the benefit of the doubt, by being supportive, and by banding together” when evaluating student performance in Fall 2020;

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Arkansas Faculty Senate encourages all faculty to consider the pandemic environment and student performance when assigning final grades;

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Arkansas Faculty Senate encourages all faculty to provide flexible options to support students in completing their Fall 2020 courses in this time of emergency, including but not limited to providing flexibility in assignments and the use of incompletes to facilitate student success;

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Arkansas Faculty Senate work with the Office of the Provost to distribute this resolution immediately to all University of Arkansas faculty.