TO:        Campus Community

FROM:     Grant Hayes, PhD
           Interim Provost & Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT:  Pass/Fail Modification

DATE:     March 11, 2021

On Monday, Interim Chancellor Mitchelson issued two initiatives relating to student and faculty evaluation for the Spring 2021 semester.

This message is to share an adjustment to the Undergraduate Student Evaluation and COVID-19 document that was part of that communication, specifically as it relates to the Pass/Fail option available to undergraduate students. Based on additional guidance from the Faculty Senate (Admissions and Retention Policies Committee), the attachment has been updated to reflect the ability to request a Pass grade for courses where the grade of D- or above is earned, for a maximum of two courses (up to 8 SCH).

We encourage students to carefully review the document if intending to consider any of the options discussed in it, including pass/fail grading, course withdrawal, or grade replacement. The advice in the “Before Making Decisions” section of the attached remains the best set of recommendations for students who may be considering these options.
However, Spring 2021 is anything but normal and we continue to cope with highly disrupted lives among faculty, staff, and students. We should acknowledge that this is fatiguing and that our collective mental health has suffered. In addition, these disruptions and their effects are witnessed disproportionately by some. I have received numerous messages from faculty, staff and students and I have listened carefully.

During the Faculty Senate meeting of February, I witnessed the continued excellent work done by Faculty Senate Committees. However, two recommendations gave me pause. They are Resolution #21-10 (Move the drop/withdrawal date during the Spring 2021 semester to the last day of classes), and Resolution #21-14 (Recommendation to use the Survey of Student Opinion of Instruction (SSOI) scores for the 2020-2021 Academic Year). Following provisions in the Faculty Manual, I met with the Faculty Officers and with the Chair of the Admissions and Retention Committee. During our meeting, I was given background for the recommendations, and I expressed my concern with both Resolutions. After serious deliberation, I will not approve these resolutions as originally presented by the Faculty Senate because I do not think that they adequately reflect the challenging circumstances that we are trying to cope with. We can illustrate our compassion with additional flexibility.

Upon consultation with Provost Hayes, Vice Chancellor Stacy, Vice Chancellor Van Scott, and the Faculty Senate Officers, I have approved two initiatives to promote a more flexible and compassionate evaluation of faculty and students during Spring 2021. You can find details about these initiatives attached to this communication.

Both of these initiatives are in line with approaches at other UNC institutions. “Faculty Evaluation And COVID-19” allows faculty the option of using the SSOI in evaluations if faculty wish to do so and it provides the option of submitting a COVID-19 impact statement in current and future personnel processes. “Undergraduate Student Evaluation And COVID-19” extends the withdrawal date, permits a maximum of two courses (8 sch) P/F, and provides additional flexibility for grade replacement.

In the coming days more information will be forthcoming about these two initiatives. Faculty wishing to submit a COVID-19 impact statement for personnel decisions in the Spring semester should discuss this with their unit administrator. Students are encouraged to initiate discussion with their advisors to help them plan the remainder of spring semester.

Thank you Pirates and do take care!

Regards,

RonM
Ron Mitchelson, Interim Chancellor