

Faculty Response to Student Senate Resolution (REC)1-F20

Student Senate Members:

The Faculty Council (FC) received the Student Senate Resolution (REC)1-F20 on 11/3/20. The Resolution recommends extension of the pass/fail deadline to later in the semester and that a pass/fail option similar to last spring's option be considered. The FC discussed the request during the FC meeting on 11/4/20, and voted to advance the Resolution to the full faculty to be discussed during the general faculty meeting on 11/18/20.

The faculty is opposed to the expansion of the existing pass/fail policy for the following reasons:

1. Unlike last spring, when drastic change of academic policies was justified by unforeseeable circumstances, the current semester allowed a reasonable degree of planning. Since students may have already made decisions (such as withdrawal from a course) that would have been influenced by a different pass/fail policy, changing the policy late in the semester will have uneven effects on students and thus lead to equity concerns.
2. Since many graduate/professional programs do not accept P/F grades if a graded option is available, changing the current pass/fail policy may have unintended consequences in the future when students apply to such programs. To the Faculty's best knowledge, most higher education institutions are employing their regular pass/fail policies, even if many altered that when they switched to remote learning midway through the spring 2020 semester. Choosing to stand out in this regard may put our students at a disadvantage.

The CDC has predicted that the current pandemic may continue well into the year of 2021, or even 2022. The faculty of JCU is committed to a flexible instructional model that accommodates different student needs. However, the grading policy that we decide to adopt in the current semester must be sustainable in the foreseeable future. For the above mentioned reasons, the faculty cannot endorse the change of the existing pass/fail policy as recommended by the student senate.