Dear Students,

While many downstream issues are yet to be addressed by the faculty and by the good people who deal with the LSU computer systems, I write to share the results of a more-than-two-week process regarding how to report the results of our grading of your coursework this semester, which included information gathering (including from you) and internal discussion, as well as a faculty meeting today. As you are all painfully aware, this discussion and debate arises as a result of the unprecedented and uncertain situation in which our Law Center community and the global community now find ourselves. We are all navigating these uncharted waters together, without a clear map.

As you well know, we face challenges and choices. The effects of the move off campus and into each of your homes or other living quarters—wherever they may be—are quite different for each of you. Some of you are quite insulated from the external shocks of the move, but a fair number of you have been dramatically affected and find yourselves barely afloat for a variety of reasons. You were also each differently situated coming into this semester; some of you have been working, even struggling, day by day to make headway with your academic progress, and you want to keep on track with that forward movement, and you even want to later prove to yourself and others that you did so. We applaud that tenacity. Others of you were doing okay—maybe great, maybe not so great—but due to the challenges you now face, which were thrust on you by “stay at home” orders, illness, family situations, technology, financial effects, and more—keeping things “as is” truly invites disaster. These tensions cannot be perfectly balanced; moreover, there is the problem of trying to weigh future uncertainties in the present moment. We must look at both what we see happening now and what seems most likely in the future.

We are working for solutions in the best interests of the Law Center community both now and over time. This is no small feat, given the uncertainty all around us—and little certainty in sight.

With many considerations in mind, the faculty decided to move our Spring 2020 courses to a mandatory Pass/Fail grading system.

This decision places us alongside many, although not all, schools around the country. The Louisiana picture is mixed (fitting for a “mixed jurisdiction”?), and we will fit in. One Louisiana law school adopted mandatory High Pass/Pass/Fail, while another Louisiana law school adopted an optional version of Pass/Fail. The fourth Louisiana school has, to my knowledge, not made a final decision. Other regional peers, whether in Texas or in the SEC, have taken several approaches, using multiple “flavors” of Pass/Fail or HP/P/F (with or without options) or have policies yet to be finally determined. At least one has a policy instituted by the main campus to retain normal grading (the main example of this in the SEC, to my knowledge, is the University of Georgia).

As I noted at the start of this message, there are important downstream issues to be addressed by the end of this week. We will work on academic actions, such as exclusion and probation policy, which hinge on GPA. We will address the other end of the GPA scale and determine how to award honors to the graduating class this spring. And while this is one of the details for subsequent determination, I anticipate the mandatory P/F grading policy will not be applied to any course credit where the work was 100% complete and turned in before March 13, the last day we were in live classes. To my knowledge this will exempt only certain independent study credits carrying over from Fall 2019. All these questions and more will be discussed on Friday; many have been examined, but today’s meeting could not address and finalize them all.

Today, the faculty also voted to retain the attendance policy, which prohibits taking an examination after more than a certain number of absences—but we will use an altered mechanism for certification of “attendance” in the remote learning environment. The details for certifying your attendance will be circulated to you soon by Associate Dean Carroll. As a preliminary matter, I can say now that the certification will allow for attendance either “live” or via watching recordings, and it will allow for “attendance” (in courses where it is appropriate) by completing an equivalent proportion
of course material and requirements as provided by your professor. The certification will be subject to the Code of Student Professional Responsibility.

More information will follow at the end of the week when I know more. As you know, I am doing all I can to keep you updated as a group as decisions are made.

I’m rooting for all of you.

All my best, and ... you know what to do,

Dean Lockridge

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