

Dear all,

Two updates for a Saturday morning.

**First, all classes will be offered online through the rest of the spring semester** at their regularly scheduled meeting times, even if we are able to reopen campus. The faculty made this decision yesterday in light of the various stay-at-home orders in place across the state of Texas and other areas, as well as the closing of schools and day cares in Harris County and elsewhere.

**Second, regarding grading, the faculty will finalize a plan by next Friday.** Thank you to all who sent me their thoughts regarding grading. I read each email (more than 120 students reached out to me) and provided the information and arguments from each to the faculty. Yesterday, the faculty met for more than two hours and had a very good, robust and nuanced conversation regarding the best approach forward. Personally, I was gratified to see the care exercised by each member of the faculty on this important issue, as well as the concern shown by the faculty for every member of our community. As everyone knows, the decision regarding a change to the grading policy has many ramifications (including for employment, scholarships, tuition reimbursement, financial aid, awards, and membership in organizations). Before reaching a conclusion, and to ensure that we are best addressing the needs and concerns of all members of our community, including those most affected by COVID-19 issues, the faculty determined that it would be helpful to gather some additional information on the ramifications of proposed changes, including from local employers. The faculty has scheduled a special meeting next Friday to finalize its approach.

While I know some might desire a quicker resolution to this issue, I appreciate your patience. While there are many things I appreciate about our faculty, two are relevant here: First is the level of care that our faculty has for students and ensuring that the decisions we make will benefit our students. Second is the community and culture of collaboration among the faculty (which is not present on many, many campuses). The effects of this decision that will remain on students' transcripts forever, and the faculty appreciates that. We will do this right.

All the best, and be safe,

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