

From: Lee, MJ myung_joo_lee@brown.edu
Subject: Fwd: Regarding Brown's Grading Policy
Date: April 22, 2020 at 6:09 PM
To: Zoe Zimmermann zoe_zimmermann@brown.edu

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: Lee, MJ <myung_joo_lee@brown.edu>
Date: Mon, Mar 30, 2020 at 11:12 PM
Subject: Re: Regarding Brown's Grading Policy
To: Rashid Zia <rashid_zia@brown.edu>

Dear Dean Zia,

I spent a good week or so thinking and reflecting upon the Universal Pass system and whether or not it is the most equitable. I came to the conclusion that it is, and even though not everyone will be happy, I see absolutely no way that the current system is better or that it is in any way equitable. It is shocking that "equity and inclusion remain at the forefront of all [your] discussions" because the current system so disproportionately negatively impacts those who are already disadvantaged to begin with.

Many students have already come to you and have explained why the Universal Pass system is more equitable, especially describing their home lives and how the system favors those who don't have circumstances that negatively impact their ability to learn. I don't wish to bore you with yet another explanation of the cases many have already discussed. Individual circumstances aside, the fact that so many students are so adamant about adopting this system is indicative of a deeper issue. Students shouldn't have to advocate so strongly for themselves and share their specific traumas and stories in order to be heard. Brown students, as I've noticed in the past year and a half I've been here, are hardworking, passionate, and ambitious. These same students would not advocate for such a drastic change in the system if they didn't recognize that the current system is inequitable.

The current system is clearly not an equitable system when some are simply advocating for their sanity while others are advocating for their choice in grades.

The current system is clearly not an equitable system when some are simply advocating for their health while others are even able to think past the next month and think to the future during a worldwide crisis.

The current system is clearly not an equitable system when some are trying to stay afloat while others can think about how letter grades this semester can "showcase their resilience in the face of adversity."

I don't understand why students need to "showcase their resilience in the face of adversity" when the students who already need to have already proven that by being able to come to Brown. They have already shown how much they can do. They have been placed back in those conditions, wrenched away from the found family and haven Brown provides, and now amidst a crisis, why is this the time for them to show how resilient they are? The current state is also by far nothing like the state of their "homes" or where they may be staying when they were in high school, working to get here. Is the state of the world not enough of an adversity that students have needed to overcome?

My first year at Brown was harsh on me. The only reason I was able to make it through was because of the various resources that Brown prides itself on and the values that each of us undergraduate students hold; peer collaboration, peer support groups, and a sense of home. I've found home here, and that is such a hard word for me to say. Without these resources, without the Brown community to hold me up, I would not be here today.

When students have been sent home to not only handle a stressful situation that puts grades on a back burner, but without the very resources Brown prides itself on, and without the sense of community that makes Brown Brown, how can students be asked to do the same kind of work? I understand that Brown is an academic institution and that we still have our obligations as students to fulfill, but our dedication to being students would not change if we had the choice not to. We are still passionate, driven, and ambitious. But the current global crisis should not be the "face of adversity" that we "showcase our resilience," and prove our worth in.

I urge you to reconsider this decision. I personally do not benefit more from either system, and for that I am grateful, but I recognize that this current system of an opt-in S/NC system during this time hurts more than it helps.

Brown cannot both claim to care about equity and inclusivity and not support the Universal Pass system. Those two are absolutely mutually exclusive during this time.

Sincerely,
MJ Lee