

March 23, 2020

Dear Students,

Many of you have expressed concern about this semester's grading and exam processes, and how best to account for the many challenges you are facing with COVID-19. Thank you for sharing with us your varied experiences, perspectives, and opinions.

Today, the College of Law faculty met and considered a number of options for proceeding with grading this semester. Our Academic Standards Committee had studied the issue and provided materials to the broader faculty. In addition to materials provided by the Committee, the full faculty reviewed the student petition and many emails and communications from individual students to me, Student Affairs Director Sarah Collins, faculty members, and LawPreparedness@law.syr.edu.

The faculty also considered how other law schools have decided to proceed and shared information and research, considered our law school's context, and you—our students. Your SBA President, Omar Mosqueda, joined the meeting.

After thoughtful deliberation, the faculty voted to switch to elective pass/fail grading for this spring semester.

Specifically, the faculty has determined that the most appropriate approach is to give you the opportunity to make the final decision on whether to take the pass or fail grade or receive a letter grade. Under this approach, for each of your courses, you will first receive a letter grade and then you will have the **option** of electing to keep the grade or convert it to pass/fail. If you should elect a pass grade, the restrictions or limitations contained in current Academic Rules 13.4.1, 13.4.2, and 13.4.3 WILL NOT APPLY.

With this change, there will be ramifications for various other processes and assessments, including grade point average calculations and class rank, dismissals and probations, structured curriculum referrals, and eligibility for *Law Review* and other journals. **We will provide additional guidance on the details of this election process and these ramifications early next week.** By then, I also plan to update you on processes and procedures for the administration of final exams.

No single system is perfect, especially under today's conditions. I know that some of you wanted an absolute shift to pass/fail, while others strongly opposed it. Our faculty spent a considerable time weighing all options and landed on a plan that is as fair, transparent, and as generous as we can offer. I thank them for their service and all they continue to do to help us navigate this complex and constantly changing situation.

To be sure, this move is a dramatic shift for us, and for every law school that is doing the same.

Indeed, by now, all ABA-approved law schools have shifted to online learning, and many of them also are announcing a spring semester shift to a pass/fail grading system.

I hope that this news helps to reduce some of the anxiety you're experiencing as we continue to adapt our rapidly evolving learning environment. Together, we are making progress and moving forward. Thank you for your patience and flexibility.

Craig M. Boise

Dean and Professor | College of Law