A MESSAGE TO PENN UNDERGRADUATES

We know that the past few weeks have been very challenging, and we are immensely grateful for your patience and mutual support of each other as we all navigate these unprecedented times. While we are encouraged by the ways in which our Penn community has come together to adapt to learning and teaching remotely, as well as balancing the demands that this pandemic has put on all of us, we also recognize that the disruptions to our semester have been, and will continue to be, substantial.

Along these lines, we are writing with some major academic updates related to this semester. We have decided to extend the deadline for all undergraduate students, across the four undergraduate Schools, to change the grade type in any course for the Spring 2020 term. You have until Wednesday, April 29 – the last day of classes – to choose to take any course pass/fail. As we wrote before in our message on March 20, courses taken on a pass/fail basis in Spring 2020 may be used to satisfy major, concentration, minor, and general education requirements. You must “opt in” to this expanded pass/fail option, and any courses taken on a pass/fail basis during Spring 2020 do not count against the total number of courses you may take pass/fail according to the policy of your School.

We encourage all students to take advantage of the expanded pass/fail option this term and want to ensure students will not feel penalized for doing so. We have heard concerns from students about feeling pressure to continue taking courses for a letter grade. Therefore, we have also decided to suspend awarding Dean’s List for the 2019-2020 academic year. We know some of you will find this news disappointing. However, there will be a notation placed on every undergraduate’s transcript to recognize and honor the extraordinary disruption to the Spring 2020 term and the changes in academic policies. While we expect that graduate schools and employers will take a holistic approach to reviewing students’ records, we want to ensure we have done what we can to note these policy changes on your academic records.

We are confident that our great Penn faculty, staff and students will continue the outstanding efforts of this semester and are mutually committed to supporting each other. At the same time, we know that many challenges still lie ahead. That is why we are providing these expanded
academic supports for all undergraduates this semester. We strongly encourage you to discuss your plan with your academic advisor in the days and weeks ahead.

Thanks to all of you as we together continue our most profound mission of education at Penn. We will continue to keep you informed as the semester moves forward.

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