Alternative grading option for spring 2020 semester

April 3, 2020

On April 2, the University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate, with the full support of the University’s Senior Leadership Team, took bold action in support of all URI students, voting to offer an alternative grading system for the spring 2020 semester to support student needs during the transition to remote learning and while students manage the challenges presented by COVID-19.

After much deliberation, national benchmarking, and consultation with peer institutions, the Faculty Senate voted overwhelmingly in support of allowing undergraduate and graduate students, for any spring 2020 courses in which they are currently enrolled, to elect to be graded using an alternative grading scheme. The URI faculty recognize the unprecedented challenges at this time and this alternative grading system reflects the compassion they have for students and families.

Students have the option to earn traditional letter grades in some courses and can elect to receive an alternative grade for the remainder of their courses. If a student elects to receive an alternative grade, it will consist of an S/S-/U* grading scheme (in lieu of A, B, C, D, F). The terms S, S-, and U* are described as follows:
1. The grades of S, S-, and U* do not impact students' grade-point averages.
2. A grade of S signifies satisfactory completion of the learning outcomes of the course.
3. A grade of S- signifies marginally satisfactory achievement of learning outcomes.
4. A grade of U* signifies non-punitive unsatisfactory completion of learning outcomes of the course in question and no credits earned. In order to advance to subsequent courses in different curricula for which the course in question is a prerequisite, the student must retake the course.

Equivalency between the traditional grading system and the alternative scheme is:

A = S
A- = S
B+ = S
B = S
B- = S
C+ = S
C = S
C- = S
D+ = S-
D = S-
F = U*

Students must communicate their course-by-course opt-in intent by May 15 through a web-based form directly to Enrollment Services. Course instructors will submit traditional letter grades for students through the usual e-campus grade roster process, which will be translated into S/S-/U* for students who opt for the alternative grading scheme.

To ensure successful programmatic progression standards are maintained, accredited programs may implement a petition process in order for students to gain access to this alternative S/S-/U* grading scheme.

IMPORTANT: Further advising instructions will be developed and shared in the
coming days to ensure students have every opportunity to make the most informed decision about how they want to be graded for each of the courses they are enrolled in this semester. We recognize there are many questions related to academic standing, financial aid and other areas that will be addressed in these instructions and guidelines.

On behalf of all URI students, staff, and faculty, I want to acknowledge the courageous leadership and extraordinary efforts of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Remote Teaching and Learning Task Force for bringing this alternative grading option forward and to a successful conclusion in the best interests of our students.