

June 18, 2020

California State University
Office of the Chancellor
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach CA 90802

Dear Chancellor White,

We write to implore you and the California State University Presidents to provide future CSU students fair and equitable standards for admission as a result of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 response efforts and school campus closures.

All school districts in California have been affected by Governor Newsom's shelter in place order. In response, schools have moved to a distance learning format. This has required teachers to learn new pedagogies and instructional approaches, explore new assessment and grading methods, while simultaneously caring for their own families. In addition, students who are furthest from opportunity are now even more disadvantaged due to inequitable home conditions and access to distance learning. These conditions have led many school districts to question the consistency, predictability and accuracy of assigning grades and the ability for grading to accurately reflect proficiency of standards and content knowledge.

For this reason, Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) and many other districts in the state have implemented a Pass/No-Pass grading system for the Spring Semester of 2020. While we strongly believe that this is the most equitable grading system for our students, we are concerned about the fact that some school districts are still assigning letter grades for Spring Semester 2020 and that the California State Universities may use these letter grades in the calculation of students' GPA for admission to the CSU.

Although grades assigned during Spring Semester of 2020 reflect students' achievement to some extent, the grades also reflect students' access to technology, their parents' status as essential workers, and economic hardships experienced as a result of the COVID-19 response. Those students who are able to achieve high grades during this time and choose to have those grades count toward CSU admission per CSU policy are likely to be those students with greater advantage.

Because of the wide disparities in grading policies implemented across the state of California and nationwide, we urge the CSU to level the playing field by excluding both Spring 2020 Pass/No Pass and Spring 2020 letter grades from the calculation of students' GPA for CSU admission.

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Holding future CSU applicants harmless requires the CSU to recognize that existing inequities are exacerbated by the current pandemic and to respond appropriately. We believe that the many challenges related to student assessment as a result of school closures should further encourage the CSU system to continue to move towards a more holistic review of student achievement by considering all elements within an application. Excluding all Spring 2020 grades from GPA calculation ensures that applicants are not advantaged nor disadvantaged (relative to other students) by their personal circumstances or their school district's grading policy in response to COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Cindy Pickett	Joe DiNunzio	Tom Adams	Alan Fernandes	Bob Poppenga
President	Vice-President	Trustee	Trustee	Trustee

cc:

Dr. Lynnette Zelezny, President CSU Bakersfield
Dr. Erika D. Beck, President CSU Channel Islands
Dr. Gayle E. Hutchinson, President CSU Chico
Dr. Thomas A. Parham, President CSU Dominguez Hills
Dr. Leroy M. Morishita, President CSU East Bay
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Dr. Tom Jackson, Jr., President Humboldt State
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Dr. Tomas D. Morales, President CSU San Bernadino
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Dr. Jeffrey D. Armstrong, President CSU San Luis Obispo
Dr. Ellen J. Neufeldt, President CSU San Marcos
Dr. Judy K. Sakaki, President Sonoma State
Dr. Ellen N. Junn, President CSU Stanislaus