Call to Action for US Medical Schools
Regarding Undergraduate Courses Taken During the Spring 2020 Semester

During the Spring 2020 semester, COVID-19 arrived and began to spread rapidly across the United States. Within weeks, college and universities campuses were closed, with instruction shifting to an online format. Concerns immediately arose about the disproportionate impact the new teaching format would impose due to differences in home environments, access to digital technologies, internet connectivity, and loss of in-person support services (help rooms, one-on-one office hours, counseling, advising, etc.). In addition, some courses clearly lend themselves to an online format better than others. All of these changes led to high stress levels among students and faculty.

In response, colleges and universities across the United States have adopted a wide variety of grading policies regarding the spring 2020 semester. They basically fall into three categories: 1) no changes – all courses graded; 2) all courses graded on a pass/no credit (P/NC) basis; and 3) students may choose to take some or all of their courses P/NC or opt for a grade. The stress level among pre-medical students remains high given the previously stated policies of medical school admissions offices that courses must be taken for credit with a letter grade.

A number of medical schools have already announced they will accept P/NC grades during the spring 2020 semester from students applying to medical school in the future. See Appendix A for the list of these schools. We applaud these medical schools for recognizing and acting on the extraordinary circumstances our undergraduate students are facing.

A variant announced by a few medical schools causes us concern. These schools have stated that they will accept P/NC courses provided it is the policy of the student’s undergraduate institution to only award P/NC grades without a graded option. This variant has created undue stress among undergraduates, with a disproportionate impact on our low income and underrepresented minority students.

We call on all medical schools to adopt a policy of accepting P/NC grades for courses taken during the Spring 2020 semester regardless of the grading policy established by students’ undergraduate institutions.

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Text above was fixed on 1 April 2020. Signatories below are increasing over time.

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Signed by:

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Appendix A: Medical schools that have announced they will accept P/NC grades for the spring 2020 semester without conditions

Boston University
Case Western Reserve University
Creighton University
Dartmouth College
Duke University
Emory University
George Washington University
Georgetown University
Harvard University
Johns Hopkins University
Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine
Loma Linda University
Louisiana State University HSC at New Orleans
Michigan State University College of Human Medicine
Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine
Northwestern University
Ohio State University
Pennsylvania State University
Stanford University
SUNY Stony Brook
Texas A&M University
Tulane University
University of Alabama Birmingham
University of Buffalo
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, Riverside
University of California, San Diego
University of California, San Francisco
University of California, Davis
University of Colorado
University of Kentucky
University of Louisville
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of Missouri
University of New Mexico
University of North Carolina
University of Pittsburgh
University of Southern California
University of Texas, Austin
University of Utah
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin
Vanderbilt University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VA Tech)
Wake Forest University
Washington University in Saint Louis
Yale University