Dear Students,

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have decided to add a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading option for undergraduate students for courses in the Spring 2020 semester. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges for our USA community. Although we know it has been and continues to be difficult, our students, faculty, and staff have shown tremendous resilience during this crisis. We do, however, understand the anxiety you may feel as it relates to this evolving situation and we also understand how transitioning to an online format may be impacting this anxiety. This situation is not ideal and we want to attempt to minimize any adverse effects on your academic progress while still supporting the academic goals of the university. We feel that having a grading option that does not impact GPA will, for some students, be of significant benefit.

Spring 2020 undergraduate students in courses for which traditional A-F letter grades are given will be assigned the letter grade they have earned at the end of the semester. These students will then have the option of keeping the letter grade that was assigned or requesting that the grade be changed to Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory (S/U) according to the following criteria:

- For a letter grade of A, B, or C, a student selecting the S/U option will receive a grade of Satisfactory (S)
- For a letter grade of D or F, a student selecting the S/U option will receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U).

We anticipate that having these options will help many of our students.

- Students who have been depending on a letter grade will still have that option if they are satisfied with the earned grade and that grade will be calculated into their GPA;
- Students whose life circumstances changed as a result of this pandemic can still earn credit for the course in which they earned a C or better by requesting the S/U option and receiving a grade of S without the grade impacting GPA; and
- Students who earn a D or F in a course may request the S/U option and receive a grade of U without the grade impacting GPA.

After final grades are posted on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, students will have until Friday, May 22, 2020 to decide to select the S/U option. Because receiving an S or U grade may have implications for a student beyond the impact on GPA, we strongly recommend that students communicate with their academic advisor prior to making the decision to change a grade or grades. More information about the mechanism for selecting the S/U grade option will be published before the end of the term.

As an additional way to accommodate and support you through the challenges presented by COVID-19, the deadline for clearing incomplete grades for the Spring 2020 term is being extended to September 1, 2020 and, as was indicated in a previous communication, we have also extended the last day to drop courses or withdraw from all courses for the Spring semester to the last day of classes, May 1, 2020. As with the grade change option, before dropping a class or withdrawing, we strongly encourage you to communicate with your academic advisor as well as your instructor.

The faculty, staff, and administration at USA wish you the best and hope that these decisions relieve you of some of your apprehension and help to ease your burden this semester.

G. David Johnson  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Tony G. Waldrop  
President