Many of you have recently contacted me about what election to make regarding your Spring 2020 grades in reference to how it will impact employment opportunities. Based on these questions, I offer the following thoughts for your consideration in making this decision:

1) Most every law student in the country faced some level of educational challenge this past term. Employers are aware of the challenges you experienced Spring semester and that this may well have impacted your academic performance.

2) Many national and large regional employers are deferring their recruitment for 2021 summer associate positions until after students receive Fall 2020 grades. This is because a large number of top-tier law schools went to a strictly Pass/Fail option and the employers would like further assessment of student abilities before making decisions. For the most part, this applies to highly competitive, top law firm positions and to some post-graduate judicial clerkships. If this is not the market you will be competing in, I would not get caught up in worrying about that.

3) For Gonzaga Law, our students have the advantage of having a Spring assessment that they can use to define their narrative to a prospective employer. Essentially, if your letter grade helps advance that narrative, I would use it. If not, showing a “Pass” is not likely to negatively impact you. Again, employers understand the challenges of this past term and many, many law students from other schools will only have “Pass/Fail” options to present.

4) If your Spring letter grades generally show an uptick, I would elect to keep them. The ability to show your progress is always an important part of your narrative when presenting yourself to an employer.

5) If you have grades that show you excelled in a course (i.e., B+ or higher) noting that on your transcript is a way to distinguish yourself.
6) If you have mostly distinguished grades but one that is lower, I still think listing all of your grades is helpful to provide the complete picture. This is especially true because showing these grades will not impact the Official GPA that you will list on your resume. If you have a grade or two that is a bit lower, you will have the opportunity to explain a grade drop in your cover letter or interview if necessary.

7) If your letter grades are all lower, electing “Pass” is likely wise. Essentially, you will situate yourself the same as most of the other law students in the country who do not have the option to elect grades vs. “Pass/Fail.”

8) What should you put on your resume? You must show your Official GPA, which is based off of Fall 2019. If your GPA based on your Spring grades would be higher, then you could also include a listing for “Imputed GPA” to reflect that change, but must still list your Official GPA. If you are calculating your “Imputed GPA”, this only works if you elect grades for all of your courses. You can’t cherry pick high grades and just add those in to the number. Also, be sure that you are calculating your GPA correctly. Remember that you may not “round up” your GPA and that we calculate out two decimal points, i.e., 3.37 is not a 3.4. If you are not listing an “Official” and “Imputed” GPA on your resume, simply list “GPA” without the “Official” designation.

9) Last, every student situation is unique. There are no right or wrong answers. For whatever you choose to do, know that CPD is available to talk with you about how to present yourself, and your Spring academic experience, to your potential employer. Please feel free to reach out to us.