ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
  Stop Grading Your Students

• Author(s) Name:
  Zachary Vernon

• University or Company Affiliation:
  California State University, Los Angeles

• Abstract (300 words):
  With the move to remote and online-teaching students can become even more risk-averse in their work, fearing failure more than mediocrity. This is especially true of lower-income and first-generation students who can’t afford to fail and retake classes, both figuratively and literally, and who are pressured to “finish” their degrees and get jobs in order to contribute to their households and families. Without the productive and collaborative environment of a physical classroom to help motivate and encourage bold decision-making, how can we as educators provide incentives to push boundaries, take risks, and fail without potentially devastating repercussions for our students? One way is to abolish the traditional grading system as we know it. In this paper, I will provide case studies from my own design classrooms in both the upper and lower divisions where I have implemented an “ungrading” policy that shifts focus from arbitrary letter grades and point systems to deeper critical self-assessment by students in pursuit of tangible and detailed learning objectives. Through these case studies I will show how this system, popularized in K–12 education, provides realistic milestones that help students better grasp the purpose of learning, advocates and supports a growth mindset in the students, rewards experimentation and failure as a learning mechanism, and assists students in
carving their own unique path to success through taking ownership of their design education. This philosophy is applicable to a variety of disciplines.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Zachary Vernon is an Assistant Professor of Art, Graphic Design/Visual Communication at California State University, Los Angeles. His background in advertising, creative strategy, and branding comes from working with agencies, companies, and non-profit organizations at local, national, and international levels. His work and research focus on collaborative storytelling and design for social good.