

Senate Council Meeting
April 2, 2007

Revisiting Proposal from Senate Council's ad hoc Calendar Committee

At the March 19 University Senate meeting, a discussion was held regarding the proposed changes to the university's fall calendar, i.e., changing the current fall break (one Friday in October) to a week-long break during the week of Thanksgiving.

Proposal to the Senate:

Recommendation from CC (and Senate Council):

- *Decrease fall teaching days by two & eliminate fall break day;*
- *Offer Fall Break coinciding with the week of Thanksgiving; and*
- *Retain end of semester and exam week as currently scheduled.*

Rationale: Spring semester's teaching days are routinely 1-2 days fewer than fall semester's. The proposal preserves the pre-semester Kentucky Welcome and other activities that ramp up to the new academic year.

Senators offered a variety of comments, including:

- Teaching days would be lost.
- The proposed week-long Thanksgiving (TG) break would fall too close to the winter holiday break.
- Having the Wednesday before TG off will alleviate concerns about students traveling the night before the TG holiday.
- It was the beginning of a slippery slope – there would always be “a day before” any proposed break.
- The proposal did not address students' wishes for increased study time between the end of dead week and finals week.
- Academic aspects (teaching days) were being sacrificed for non-academic concerns (pre-semester activities).
- Faculty could make assignments that would be due upon return from the proposed TG break.
- The rationale of symmetry between semesters was not a sufficient rationale – why was there no discussion on adding two days to the spring semester, instead of taking two fall teaching days away.
- When solicited, no senator spoke against having the Wednesday before TG off, in lieu of the October Friday “fall break.”

Report of the Calendar Committee

I am writing this report on behalf of the Senate Ad Hoc Calendar Committee (Larry Grabau, Michael Kennedy, Josh Odoi, Joseph Sotille, and myself).

Process: Before bringing a recommendation from the committee to the Senate Council, I chose the prerogative of chair to meet with representatives of the Registrar and Student Affairs offices to see if consensus could be reached around reorganizing the Fall semester calendar in order to create a Fall break analogous to the Spring break structured into the Spring semester. I sought to do so in a manner that would meet the objections of these two offices to the original proposal brought to the Senate Council last year and referred back to committee for revision. At that meeting, which took place on Wednesday, January 24, 2:00PM, Registrar and Student Affairs representatives reviewed with me two proposals that I had formulated and put on the table for discussion, revision, and possible replacement by a preferred alternative. Those alternatives were:

Option #1: Decrease Fall Teaching Days by Two, Eliminate Fall Break Day

- Spring Semester's teaching days are routinely 1-2 days fewer than Fall Semester's
- Pre-semester Kentucky Welcome and other ramping up to the new academic year are preserved
- Offer Fall Break coinciding with the week of Thanksgiving
- End semester and exam week as currently scheduled

Option #2: Decrease Fall Teaching Days by One + One, Eliminate Fall Break Day

- Start Fall Semester on Tuesday
- Compress pre-semester activities by one day
- Offer Fall Break coinciding with the week of Thanksgiving
- End semester on Thursday, begin exams on following Monday

Over the course of an hour long discussion, strongest sentiment was voiced—indeed, unanimity was reached—for Option #1 among all parties to this Calendar conversation, complemented by a “we could live with and adjust to” attitude toward the second option.

I communicated to each of the Calendar Committee members the substance of the two options and provided information on the informal calendar conversation I had with representatives of the Registrar and Student Affairs offices. Subsequent efforts to schedule a meeting of the full membership were made by Ms. Sheila Brothers. Despite two attempts, the full membership could not be rallied for a meeting over a two week period. I then emailed the committee members, soliciting their views on the two options or their recommendation for another alternative. When the deadline for responses of Thursday, February 22, close of business, passed and only one response was forthcoming, I then contacted the remainder of the committee membership.

Recommendation: The committee split 4-1 in favor of option #1. (Significantly, Michael Kennedy, the originator of the Senate Council motion to launch the Calendar Committee, recommended for the favored option.) The lone dissenter reluctantly supported option #2, but made it clear that he preferred an alternative that encompassed expanding the number of study days between the end of the semester and the beginning of final exams. He also indicated that he was disinclined to create a gulf between student arrival on campus in the fall and the beginning of classes, since this encouraged partying during those pre-semester days. I would also like to mention that his comments reflected remarks made to him by students, i.e., that having an extra day or two to prepare for final exams is preferred over starting classes in midweek. I have encouraged him to attend the Senate Council meeting at which this report and positive recommendation for option #1 are presented.

I also wish to mention one issue raised by a supporter of option #1: the concern that some faculty would find reducing the number of teaching days in the fall semester, irrespective of the fact that the fall semester teaching days would be still identical with the number of spring semester teaching days, as diminishing or watering down the time for academic preparation and learning for UK students.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge that it was my decision to narrow the scope of purview of the Calendar Committee to reviewing the possibility of amending the academic calendar to considering the establishment of a Fall semester break and of excluding consideration of a longer hiatus for study days between the end of the Fall Semester and the beginning of final examinations in December.

On behalf of the committee, I submit this report and recommendation to the Senate Council for review and possible action.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernest J. Yanarella, Chair
Calendar Committee