

3-19-02

To: Faculty Senate

From: Calendar Committee

Subject: Changes in the proposed 2003-2004 calendar relative to earlier calendars

This cover letter is meant to explain part of the rationale for the "radical" changes in the proposed calendar necessitated by the change to 750 contact minutes per credit hour (2250 minutes for 3 semester hour courses).

One important goal of the committee was to find a way to keep a one-week break between Spring semester and Summer School (rather than starting Summer school classes the Tuesday after Commencement) and to have a three-week break in August between Summer school and Fall semester.

A second point was to recognize that as registration has moved to the web and telephone registration and enrolled/re-admitted students can register at any time from "early" registration through the drop-add period, Fall and Spring semesters do not require a designated registration day. The Faculty Senate approved the Tuesday start for the Fall semester for the 2002-2003 Academic Year. Cancellation of schedules on August 8 due to unpaid fees allows students ample time to add classes that become available before the start of classes.

The committee struggled with the Fall calendar while trying to balance concerns from many different viewpoints. Major concerns are not starting too early (costs and faculty time off) and not ending too close to Christmas (avoid requiring staff to work up to the last minute before Christmas). The committee had restrictions such as holidays (Labor Day and Christmas) and Fall Break (for student mental health). Another concern is balancing the number of meetings for different days of the week for pedagogical reasons and ensuring complete weeks for laboratory courses. Christmas is on Thursday in 2002, and a calendar similar to past calendars (starting classes on Wednesday) would have regular exams end on Friday, December 19, with grades due on Monday, December 22. Last year the committee considered starting classes on Monday in August with exams ending on Wednesday with the 48-hour deadline for grades being Friday. This caused problems with housing and orientation, so the committee compromised on starting classes on Tuesday but still wanted to end exams by Wednesday so that grades would be due by Friday. In the proposed calendar, classes end on Tuesday. The choices seemed to be not having a Reading Day for students or having a Reading Day, which would force one day of exams to Saturday, and commencement to Sunday afternoon. The committee decided that replacing Reading Day with the light exam day (10, 1, and 4 TTh classes) and having the Chemistry lab common exams on the light day would result in most students having a day with no exams in place of an official Reading Day.

In order to reach 2250 minutes for 3 semester hour classes, the current 14 weeks and two-hour final examination comes up thirty minutes short. The committee considered adding two more class days to the schedule (one for MWF or MW classes and one for TTh classes). It was decided to extend the final examination times by thirty minutes (with a thirty-minute break until the next exam time). The Committee realizes that the changed exam period will not alter the way that exams are conducted. Thirty minutes between exams will allow ample time between exams for students who have two exams to get to their next one (this will occur if they have classes that start three hours apart on the same days (e.g., 9:00 and 12:00 MWF).

Other changes to the Fall and Spring final exam schedule involve night classes. Graduate level night classes were changed to have their exam starting at 7:30 p.m. as undergraduate level classes do currently. Also, graduate level final exams at night are to be the same length of time as for day classes (rather than three hours). Some departments have two night classes meeting in the same room on the same days (e.g., one meets 6:30 to 7:45 and the other meets 8:00 to 9:15); the exam schedule was modified to have classes starting 8:00 p.m. or later on the second night the class meets during the exam period.

At the request of a faculty member not on the committee, the committee recommends changing the class scheduling guidelines for summer school classes to have 15-minute breaks between classes to give faculty and students recovery time. In the summer, students and faculty are more likely to have back-to-back classes than in the Fall and Spring (there are only three choices for times for five-day a week classes).

The scheduling guidelines for Fall and Spring classes applied to classes beginning before 1700. This caused confusion about night class meeting times that were not addressed. The committee recommends allowing departments to have more flexibility in scheduling late afternoon and night classes when classrooms are not as difficult to find as in the morning and early afternoon.