

AAA held three open faculty forums to discuss the common calendar proposal – Mon., October 9 (2 & 5:30) and Tues., October 10 (11am)

The first meeting was attended by approximately 7 faculty, plus members of the committee. The second & third meetings were attended by members of the committee, but nonetheless were productive meetings to discuss issues and solutions. Registrar Dennis Hicks also attended.

Members of the committee also received feedback more informally outside meetings – from faculty, staff & students.

The key issues addressed & discussed:

- A 2-day Fall break in October during a Monday & Tuesday (rather than Monday & Tuesday of Thanksgiving week)
- A 3-day Thanksgiving break in November from Wednesday to Friday, plus the weekend (rather than a full week at Thanksgiving)
- A later semester end date, a later final exam period, and a later final grade due date

Student feedback

- From SGA, most students work, including during semester breaks. However, the sample size was small and not representative.
- From faculty, some faculty had discussions with their own students and with student-athletes. Although not representative, the following themes emerged:
 - Students tended to express preference for the full week at Thanksgiving or students tended to be ambivalent or indifferent. During Thanksgiving Break, students indicated that they work, travel, &/ spend time with family.
 - Ironically, many students indicated that they were tired and needed rest at this time of year, yet they did not associate it with a benefit of Fall Break even when their attention was drawn to the timing.
 - Students were more receptive to Fall Break & Thanksgiving Break when it was expressed as a four-day weekend in October and a five-day weekend in November.

Faculty feedback

- Two-day Fall Break in October & Three-day Thanksgiving Break
 - Teaching online
 - Most indicated that they would work around the break in some fashion, many agreeing that the Fall Break would simply be ignored for online teaching.
 - Most agreed they would treat Thanksgiving week like Spring Break – as a full week. Many faculty indicated that they use this week as an opportunity for students to either “catch up” or work ahead.
 - Bottom-line for online – the solution to part-week breaks seems to be to ignore them and continue teaching on an established, regular schedule of activities.
 - Teaching face-to-face
 - Some faculty indicated that students would benefit from a short break in October.

- Most faculty questioned whether students would attend classes during the Monday & Tuesday of Thanksgiving week. A previous resolution of the Senate indicated that attendance at other regional campuses was problematic during these 2 days.
 - The proposal will impact the structure of teaching in the nursing program.
 - Increasing the length of the semester (semester end date, a later final exam period, and a later final grade due date)
 - Pedagogical benefits
 - A few faculty suggested lengthening the semester could be beneficial in some topic areas (e.g., sciences) for face-to-face classes
 - Contract year issues
 - Several faculty indicated concern that that changing semester end dates amounted to extending the contract year by two weeks, presumably without a corresponding change in salary.
 - Some faculty indicated concern that faculty contracts would be extended, ...
 - Contact hour issues
 - IU East meets the minimum contact hours per the HLC (1 credit hour is the equivalent of 1 hour in-class and 2 hours out of class for 15 weeks)
 - Faculty's online courses already are tuned to credit & contact hours expectations in current semester format.
 - One justification for extending the semester was to provide a buffer for face-to-face class meetings.
 - Faculty noted other ways this would be accommodated (e.g., snow days with online work).
 - Faculty note that extending the semester was not necessary for online teaching, since classes are neither cancelled or made-up.
 - Compressed time between Fall grades submission and reporting to work in January.
 - Concern was expressed for students & staff
 - Administrative issues
 - Advising staff indicated that the reduced time could be problematic. Faculty with advising duties reiterated same, since advising often occurs between Fall & Spring semesters.
 - Fall probation letters would be going out later, and depending on the cycle, could be delivered after Christmas.
 - Spring academic appeals could be problematic in terms of timing of final grades
 - Faculty concerns
 - Some faculty expressed that their School tasks service responsibilities during break, shortening their break even further
- Faculty discontent, morale
 - Work-life balance.

- Concern was also expressed for faculty – need for work-life balance, need for research time, need for R&R. A short Thanksgiving break, coupled with a heavier service load, was not seen as promoting work-life balance.
- Indifference, Ambivalence.
 - Some faculty expressed indifference & ambivalence, not about the topic, per se. Rather, it was a sense of resignation to a decision had been (or would be made) for them elsewhere in the system.
- Salary issues.
 - Extended contract without increase in pay?
- Change without purpose or reason
 - Some faculty expressed concern that something was being altered or changed although it was not a problem or issue.
 - Some faculty expressed a concern that the calendar proposal was not put together with faculty, student or staff input. For instance, it appeared that the calendar was not devised to meet the unique needs of online education but rather was promoted under the auspices of administrative efficiency & expediency.
- Alternatives from faculty
 - Some faculty indicated that they would prefer Bloomington's Fall schedule (a Fall Break in October and a full week at Thanksgiving)
 - Other faculty indicated a preference for a full week in October to compensate for an extended semester end date.

AAA Conclusions

- A later semester end date, a later final exam period, and a later final grade due date
 - AAA does not believe this could pass Senate in current form.
 - It is possible it may pass with clear, delineated guidance & assurances about contact hours & contractual expectations.
- An early Fall Break and 3-day Thanksgiving break seemed generally workable, provided the semester end date was not altered.
- A viable alternative is a two-day Fall break and a full week at Thanksgiving, with extending the Fall semester by 2 days
- A common IUOCC calendar for online classes only may be more workable than a common regional calendar for online and face-to-face classes.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Brudvig (Oct 24, 2017)