

Report of the Education Affairs Committee to University Council - Amended

March 23, 2017

Since the last report to University Council, the Educational Affairs Committee has met three times on December 14, 2016, and January 18 and February 8, 2017 at 3:00 or 3:30 pm in 315 New College. Our primary discussion topic was the amending the 2018 spring and summer terms, and developing the 2018-19 academic calendar. University Council approved an amended fall 2017 calendar that moved the start date from Thursday, August 10 to Monday, August 14 last November. At our January meeting, the EAC approved an amended 2018 spring and summer calendar that moved the start date from Thursday, January 4, to Monday, January 8, 2018. This change pushed Commencement back one week to Friday, May 11. However, after the EAC and university administration were notified by Athens community businesses that area hotels and the Classic Center venues were unavailable due to previously scheduled conferences and events for that week and weekend, the EAC removed the amended 2018 spring and summer calendars for further review. At the February EAC meeting, it was determined that due to the hotel and venue conflicts that the starting date of the 2018 spring calendar could not be adjusted at this time due to federal and institutional requirements. As such, there was no longer a need to adjust the 2018 summer calendar.

The EAC has been working thoughtfully and diligently on the academic calendar, in particular concerning semester length, reducing the number of summer sessions to move Maymester into summer session I, and alternative period scheduling to alleviate student and faculty concerns. Due to concerns of negatively impacting students who register for both Maymester and summer session I courses, as well as the potential for significant financial loss to programs from credit hour generation, it was determined that Maymester and summer session I could not be scheduled concurrently until more comparisons are completed and input from affected programs is obtained.

After much discussion among committee members, the registrar, and administration, and in comparison of peer and aspirational institution academic calendars, it was determined that shortening of the academic calendar to include final exams as instructional time would not align with federal and institutional requirements given the breadth and diversity of university programs. The EAC approved a 2018-19 academic calendar based upon the 15-week model of past calendars with a fall 2018 start date of Monday, August 13, and concluding on Tuesday, December 4. An alternate calendar that started on Wednesday, August 15, but included classes Monday and Tuesday prior to the Thanksgiving holiday break was also considered. However, students in the discussion preferred to begin the semester earlier on a Monday in order to maintain the weeklong Thanksgiving break.

We realize the desire within the University community and the need to modify semester starting dates and calendar length to avoid negatively impacting faculty, as well as student experiential learning and internship opportunities. In reviewing internship data provided during calendar discussions last fall, 72% of internships listed end the second week of August, by starting the semester after this, we have addressed this concern. An additional 16% of internships run through the fourth week of August, which would be impacted at any August starting date. Excluding Olympic and athletic internships, having an academic calendar that begins after the second Friday of August would allow for 90% of the internship opportunities noted. To address time constraints for faculty development and experiential learning opportunities, we have continued to discuss and develop an alternative period scheduling model of 75-minute periods Monday-Friday as opposed to our current 75-minute periods only on Tuesday/Thursday, and 50-minute periods Monday/Wednesday/Friday. The EAC subcommittee has developed guidelines for its implementation; however, we have not had time to develop this further due to the continuing calendar length discussions.

Lastly, the EAC Petitions Subcommittee has reviewed 36 student appeals and approved 21, denied 14 and tabled 1. The EAC also thanks Ms. Deborah Bell, who retired from her position as Director of Academic Honesty & Student Appeals at the end of February, for the tremendous help she provided to the EAC and the academic honesty program.

Respectfully submitted,



Jean L. Williams-Woodward, Ph.D.
Chair, Educational Affairs Committee