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## Calendar Implementation Task Force

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# **MEMORANDUM**

January 16, 2009

To: Jane Rhodes Hudak, Provost

From: Linda F. Samson, Chair  
Calendar Implementation Task Force

Cc: Task Force Members: Ted Alex; Catherine Brady; Carol Cortilet; Dor Fitzgerald; Marge Godowic; Lisa Hendrickson; Rosemary Johnsen; Gary Lyon; Eric Matanyi; Joe Matula; Margaret Neumann; Colleen Rock; Barry Ryan; Jane Siefker; Jeff Slovak; Michelle Smith-Williams; Adam Taylor; Veronica Williams

The Calendar Implementation Task Force has been meeting over the last four months to continue the work of the Calendar Options Task Force and to determine whether there are insurmountable barriers to the conversion from our current three fifteen (15) week trimesters to a calendar with two semesters and a twelve (12) week summer term. In order to meet the charge given to the Task Force, five working groups were established. These groups looked at the following areas: 1) policies issues that are directly and indirectly related to calendar, scheduling, and registration; 2) development of the full calendars for a minimum of three years with all relevant GSU process dates; 3) information technology and CARS related issues that would need to be addressed in order to convert the calendar; 4) issues effecting faculty and curriculum; and 5) marketing and communication issues.

In addition to the regular meetings of the working groups, two faculty forums were held at the start of the process. The convener of the faculty issues group also attended Faculty Senate and Senate Executive Committee on three occasions. Finally, two student forums were hosted in December, 2008 to find out whether there were issues affecting students that the group needed to consider.

This document includes reports of each of the five working groups and concludes with a series of recommendations we believe should be considered by the University. However, careful review of all of our data did not suggest insurmountable barriers to conversion to a semester calendar in the 2010-2011 academic year.

## **Policy Issues Working Group**

The policy issues working group has addressed the following issues: timing of registration in each term, late registration fees, creation of a grade and processes for work that is designed to last beyond one term such as theses and capstone projects, and the use of the grade "I". A summary of the recommendations related to each of these areas follows.

A concern has been voiced by offices that support student admission, registration, financial aid, and student accounts because registration that is continuous for several months each term. The continuous registration prevents offices from correcting recording, purging inaccurate data, and providing the kind

of student-centered services the University desires. In order to address this issue and to allow students to enroll for the following Fall term in the Spring term, this group worked with the calendar dates group to schedule three registration periods each term, with registration closed between those time. These dates are incorporated in the attached calendars and are a part of the ITS considerations presented later in this report. A review of the patterns of registration suggests that limiting the length of registration each term will not have negative effects on overall enrollment numbers.

The group also discussed the problems that occur when students delay registration until after classes begin. Poorer student retention occurs in these late enrolled students because they often miss first class sessions of courses in which they enroll. In many cases these students are not prepared for a term, including job issues, child care, and other issues when they register late. The group proposes that a modest late registration fee be added to the registration charges for any student who either commences registration on or after the first day of classes or re-registers on or after the first day of classes if they had been previously dropped for non-payment in the earlier registration periods. We see this fee as a way to drive behavior and not as a revenue stream for the University.

There was also significant discussion about the need to create a process and grade (separate from I grades) for students enrolling in courses where it is expected that the work may take more than one term. This is particularly true in practicum, thesis work, and capstone experiences in the master's and doctoral programs. After much discussion and review of current grading options the group is proposing that the grade CR (or another code not previously used by GSU)—continuing registration be implemented to cover students for those circumstances. We further propose that students registering as CR in a term be assessed a fee equal to 1 credit hour. This will also allow the University to better track these students and to reduce liability for students not currently registered (as when they are clearing an incomplete) in our campus labs and in community agencies.

The group also discussed the use of the grade I and M (missing grade) on the GSU campus. We recommend that the University consider the time frame in which faculty members have to replace these grades with a final course grade. In some cases the grade of I is used to essentially allow a student to repeat an entire course without payment of an additional fee. This may be the result of a widespread misunderstanding of when it is appropriate to offer an I. Since the use of the "I" may not be appropriate the time for clearing such a grade may also be inappropriate. Although the use of the "M" may represent other system problems, in some cases it is used because work due at the end of the term has not been submitted in a timely manner preventing faculty from timely grade entry.

### **Calendar Dates Working Group**

The primary work of this group was to develop a long-term calendar for the University with the agreed upon two 15 week terms and one term of 12 weeks for summer. The products of those efforts are attached. The group developed 7 years worth of calendars so that we could identify the earliest and latest start and end dates over a period including a leap year. The group recommends that a minimum of 3 years of calendars be posted at all times, removing and replacing one year as we move into the first year of the current calendar.

The group also spent time discussing the differences between our internal working calendars and what needs to be in the public domain. We agreed that the public calendar needs to include start and end dates for each term (and block if used), holidays, application and graduation application deadlines, fee payment deadlines, and dates for commencement.

## Information Technology Working Group

The IT working group has provided a report of its recommendations and the time frames necessary to accomplish the stated tasks. As you can see from the list there is a synergy between this group's recommendations and the issues discussed in the other groups.

1. **Minimum required dates.** For an internal academic calendar we need: begin and end dates of the term, billing due dates, last admit date, schedule publish date; external academic calendar: begin and end dates of the term, holidays, commencement (where appropriate).
2. **Development of a seven year academic calendar.** Creation of a seven year calendar in CX would pose problems for admissions. If the academic calendar is set up in CX for seven years there is the potential for prospects and applicants to designate any of the terms within the seven year window as to when they would like to attend. One solution would be to load the dates into the event scheduling software and only enter the dates in CX when we are ready to activate a trimester for prospective students or applicants (probably a two year advance time frame).
3. **Blocks and alternate calendars.** Basically the Fall and Spring (Winter) terms remain close to what they are now. Three blocks (full term - block 1, 2 half terms - blocks 2 & 3). The Summer (Spring/Summer) term changes by shortening the length of the term over all. The block structure for the 12, 6, 6 week meeting pattern would remain blocks 1, 2, 3; the alternate calendar/refund functionality would address the registration, drop and withdrawal deadlines for the 4, 8 or 4, 4, 4 week meeting patterns but the block codes still need to be assigned for student billing, just like we do now. (1 -2 days to review the current alternate calendar and refund table entries; if new codes are needed, 2 days to create and test)
4. **Catalog and session rollover strategy.** Catalog and session rollovers would remain as is for the Fall and Spring (Winter) terms (after the first year where schedule would be built from scratch). The Summer (Spring/Summer) term would probably not be rolled over due to the drastic change in course length. This would require more time for the schedulers in the colleges to build this schedule the first time out. (Add 2 weeks on to the amount of time the schedulers in the colleges need to build the schedule for the Summer term.)
5. **Elimination of continuous registration.** If registration is not to be continuous, how do we turn it off during the 'down time'? We can reconfigure the assignment of registration group numbers and use the registration time table to control when a group can access registration. Currently groups 1 & 2 get day one, 3 & 4 get day two, 5 & 6 get day three and group 7 gets the following Monday. Options to consider:
  - a. One reconfiguration could be group 1 – day one, 2 – day two, 3 & 4 – day three, 5 & 6 – the following Monday. Group 7 would get reassigned to everyone for the second registration session. This would cover the early and 'regular' registration periods. Group number 8, which is currently used for Special Non-Degree students, since they cannot register until the

first day of classes, could be reassigned to everyone for the add/drop period. With this method, students would receive the message "*It is too early for you to register*" if they attempt to register when registration is closed. (2 days: program, test, implement)

- b. Another option would be to update the first student registration dates in the academic calendar. That way the student would receive the following message: "*Registration is not open at this time.*" Updating the dates in the academic calendar would convey the more accurate message but it would require updating the dates two additional times each trimester. (1 day: update procedure)
6. **Charging late registration fees.** Charging late registration fees for those who register for the first time during the add/drop or late registration period. This includes those who were dropped for non-payment and made no attempt to reregister until the add/drop period. This is a high priority to the Task Force and its sub-groups. We believe work should commence soon and not necessarily be delayed until Fall 2010. This will need to be researched and tested thoroughly since we currently do not do this. There is a charge date on the academic calendar which identifies when to start counting add and drop activity for a student. It is possible that we could use that data to identify students to charge a late registration fee. (Marge has put the question out to the Jenzabar listserv for some feedback. 14 – 18 days: program, test, implement)
7. **Extending the period to enter grades for courses that span two or more terms with a fee. (CR or other code)** Creating a new grade designation is the easy part. It would need to be designated as an incomplete type grade so the instructors can post the grades via Faculty View when the course work has been completed. If there is going to be a fee for each term the student remains 'in' the course, how and when is that assessed and applied to the student's account? New procedures for follow up on this new grade type, i.e. the grade must be converted to a final grade at a designated time, similar to the current Missing and Incomplete grades. (3 – 4 days, create grade, create reports, test, implement) The simpler method would be to have the student register for another course which is designated as a continuation of the first course so the appropriate fee and grading can be assessed. (no IT time)
8. **Shorten the due date for grades of "I" awarded by the instructor.** This is a policy issue not necessarily an IT issue. It is based on the published Academic Calendar. The Academic Calendar within CX controls when grades that are designated Incompletes can be submitted for a term. Should Missing grades be included? (1 day)
9. **Renumbering of courses for doctoral level courses.** This is going to be an intensive project which would require the development of a new numbering scheme, conversion of existing courses, creating equivalencies between the new numbers and the old, etc. This is a project that would need a great deal of lead time in order to prepare for the following year's catalog.

## **Faculty and Curriculum Issues and Concerns Surrounding the Calendar Conversion**

The working group charged with looking at faculty and curricular issues surrounding a proposed change to a semester and summer school calendar had one of the harder tasks, not because of the real issues related to programs but because of two unrelated but problematic occurrences. The first was the publication of the draft 2009-2010 calendar with some perceived problems just as the working group was trying to conduct its initial survey of faculty. This unfortunate and unrelated event led to the belief that a decision had been reached and the faculty's input was not desired. The second unfortunate event is the continuing push by a few faculty to confuse issues of calendar with issues of the Agreement. Although this group was charged to address the change of calendar without consideration of the Union Agreement, the issue did arise on several occasions in Faculty Senate. The report of this working group follows.

Identified Goals of this Committee:

- Act as liaison between academic programs and the Calendar Implementation Task Force of the Office of the Provost
- Give individual program coordinators and faculty the opportunity to share concerns and opportunities associated with calendar change.
- Give individual program coordinators and faculty the opportunity to identify barriers to calendar change and develop strategies to overcome these barriers.
- Give individual program coordinators and faculty the opportunity to identify and reference program accreditation challenges related to calendar change and develop strategies to surmount these barriers.

Steps to Meet Committee Goals:

1. A simple questionnaire, along with a copy of proposed Calendar Option I, was sent to program coordinators on October 6, 2008. The intent of this questionnaire was to identify concerns and barriers to calendar option #1 implementation in Fall of 2010. Program coordinators were asked to address these concerns/barriers on a term by term basis, to identify and reference any challenges related to program accreditation and to suggest strategies to meet these challenges. (see attached) These were sent by e-mail.
2. The questionnaire and calendar were again sent November 17, 2008.
3. On November 20, 2008 Catherine Brady attended the faculty senate meeting to present discussion and encourage response to the questionnaire.
4. Although the questionnaire was to be broadly distributed to faculty, the limited response by the coordinators precluded modification and full distribution to the faculty.
5. There has been little response to this questionnaire. The convener suspects that the inquiry sent to faculty on October 14, 2008 regarding a proposed calendar for the single academic year 2009-2010 has distracted the effort to get responses to the questionnaire.
6. There were a few comments received in relation to the questionnaire regarding the proposed calendar. These are included below:
  - a. Concerns regarding faculty "off contact" time in regard to the pre-Labor Day, mid-August start.
  - b. Concern for GSU students who are themselves teachers would not want to start their studies in the same time frame as their teaching/employment.

- c. One faculty member suggested a three week break between Fall and Spring in lieu of a Spring Break.
- d. Concern about transitional issues for shorter summer term.
- e. Concern for sufficient advanced planning for competitive field/internship experiences.

Recommendations to Address Concerns:

- GSU develop policies related to students in off-campus experiences that fall outside regular term dates. These policies should address tuition payment, grade assignment, diploma date, faculty assignment and liability.
- Pre-semester planning sessions to address concerns and share strategies regarding term specific implementation issues. This should be on-going for the first two years.
- To date no insurmountable challenges have been identified.

**Communication and Marketing**

The marketing and communication group was charged with identifying relevant constituents and assuring that appropriate and timely communication plans were developed. This group also helped arrange the student forums that were done in December and is working with the Student Senate to arrange time to discuss the proposal and address outstanding issues including spring break versus a longer time between Fall and Spring semesters. The report of this group follows.

**Constituents**

- Faculty and Staff – first group to be informed and educated about the changes; our front line to students and the greater GSU community
  - FAQ
  - Info Sessions
  - Email, hardcopy
  - GSU website
  - Presentation specifically to off-campus advisors and SXL staff
- Students – all ACTIVE (CX eligible to register field) and INACTIVE (able to be easily reactivated) students to be notified
  - Email
  - View
  - Monitors
  - External mailing
  - GSU website
- Community College Faculty, Advisors, Admin & Other Publics
  - GSU counselor transfer day
  - GSU Admission newsletter (March)
  - External mailing
- Community Groups – chambers of commerce, internship/practicum sites, etc.
  - External mailing
- Press/media
  - Press release
  - GSU website
- SXL Sites/Cohorts
  - Needs to happen ASAP, as certain programs recruit/plan for 2 years

- External mailing
- Alumni – not a primary target audience
  - Alumni newsletter – FYI only

### **Implementation**

- Presentations to Civil Service and Student Senates – Winter 2008
- Student Forum to Gauge Student Concerns – Fall 2008
- FAQ – All marketing pieces to point towards FAQ on the website
- Boilerplate text to be used in ALL related materials
- Boilerplate letter to be used by anyone communicating with external groups
- Immediate basic information (Winter 2009) to faculty and cohort staffs to inform students applying/enrolled in two-year pre-planned programs
- Develop frequent and ongoing communication to students after implementation related to critical due dates (e.g registration deadlines, drop dates, and financial aid dates)

### **Other Considerations**

- Usage of terms that are easily understood
- Consistent messages via all mediums and methods
- Immediate need for information by some faculty and staff

### **Recommendations**

- Based on the work of the Calendar Implementation Task Force and its 5 Working Groups, we believe that the University is capable of implementing a change to a Semester System effective August 2010.
- We recommend that the University adopt the calendars that are proposed as a part of this report as the working calendars for the seven years presented.
- We recommend the University implement a late registration fee as discussed above in an amount to be determined by PBAC or other groups but probably in the range of \$100 at the earliest possible date.
- We recommend that a grade of CR be implemented and that procedures surrounding its use and the charges be implemented with calendar conversion.
- We recommend that the University revise the procedures surrounding “I” and “M” grades so that time for replacement with a final grade is reduced.
- We recommend that the 3<sup>rd</sup> “drop for non-payment” date be moved to the end of the 100% refund period for Blocks 1 and 2.
- We recommend that a class time grid be developed for the 6, 6, 12 and 4, 8 and 4,4,4 schedule options in the summer term.
- We recommend the development of better strategies to make “imail” the primary method of communicating with students to include placing directions in the online orientation, in admissions materials, and through other forums.
- We recommend that course renumbering where necessary be undertaken as a part of calendar implementation and that for year one of semesters calendar be developed as all new entry without roll-over from previous years.
- We ask that the specific suggestions of the working groups be considered as recommendations for consideration.

- We recommend intensive efforts to communicate with all constituents if this report has been reviewed and approved in part or in total.
- Finally, we recommend that if this report is accepted that an Implementation Oversight Task Force be created to assure a smooth transition and to implement the approved recommendations from this report.

Attachments: Calendars for the academic years: 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017