

Minutes for the Curriculum committee meeting Feb. 21, 2005:

Members present: Ken Rousslang, Beckie Bailey (Student Representative), Sam Armocido (Student Representative), Lynda Livingston, Lisa Wood, Joyce Tamashiro, Lori Ricigliano, Suzanne Barnett, Jim Jasinski, Brad Tomhave, Bill Barry, Carrie Washburn, Richard Anderson-Connolly (Chair), Carlo Bonura (Secretary)

The meeting was called to order at 2pm.

The meeting of the Committee focused solely on a discussion of possible changes to the academic calendar. The different options considered were variations of the “Finney plan” recommended by the Academic Calendar sub-committee.

Announcements

Barry announced that motion from a previous meeting of the Committee related to students’ (freshmen) ability to petition for entrance into transfer sections will be “coming back” to the Committee.

Conversation on the academic calendar

Anderson-Connolly by way of opening discussion summarized the progress of considering the calendar stating that it began with a volunteer subcommittee that looked at the Finney plan. He reminded the Committee that it was revising the calendar on its own accord and was not “charged” by the Senate to do this although it was within the Committee’s responsibilities. In terms of procedure he suggested that after the Committee confers the procedure is somewhat unclear with regard to presenting the changes to the Senate (whether to send the Senate one plan for change or a number of different options).

Anderson-Connolly described the different options facing the Committee summarized in an “Academic Calendar Options” handout:

Academic Calendar Options

Spring semester:

- Option S1: Finney plan: Start Friday before MLK, teach on MLK, celebrate MLK the following Friday; ending 1 week earlier than currently (70 days)
- Option S2: Start Monday after MLK; ending as currently (70 days)
- Option S3: Start Tuesday after MLK; ending 1 week earlier (69 days)
- Option S4: Start and teach on MLK (and celebrate MLK); ending 1 week earlier (70 days)

Fall semester:

- Option F1: Finney plan: Classes on Labor Day, 2 day break in Oct, No classes on Wed before Thanksgiving (70 days)
- Option F2: Finney plan except no classes on Labor Day (69 days)

Reading period/final exams:

Option A: Finney plan: Saturday and Sunday reading period; Exams M-F

Option B: Saturday – Monday reading period; Exams T-F

Option C: Saturday & Sunday reading period; Exams Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri; Wed as
“reading day”

Washburn reminded the committee that reading period rules would still hold true for the weekend between the end of the semester and the beginning of exam week (in the possibility of reducing the reading period to two days).

Livingston asked why in one case classes would end a week earlier. Anderson-Connolly replied that this would equalize the days between the semesters.

Wood pointed out that graduation would fall on Mother’s Day and raised the question of Mother’s Day (whether this should be the case in the new calendar).

Barry presented a “summary” of Chairs meeting in which there was resistance toward the possibility of not celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day when the rest of the nation celebrates the holiday and also similar opposition toward working on Labor Day.

Jasinski argued that including both days as workdays in the new calendar would “sink” the proposal. He also suggested labeling the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as “Thanksgiving travel day.”

Wood suggested that it was potentially unfair to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day when the University does not celebrate President’s Day. She argued that choosing to celebrate holidays should not be a political decision. She advocated having classes on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in order to integrate civil rights into class instruction and having classes on Labor Day with non-faculty staff having the day as a holiday.

The question was raised whether having Martin Luther King Jr. Day “off” was really a means of celebrating the day.

Barnett asked how she could be able to incorporate civil rights as a theme into her Japanese history course. She argued that celebrating the holiday with a day off was not just “politically correct” but allowed for a day for students to recognize the importance of civil rights.

Barry reminded the Committee that the idea comes from other schools (pushing Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations to Friday is not exceptional). Washburn also reminded the Committee that in consideration of any holiday proposal that 70 class days per semester is one of the highest values in determining the new calendar.

Livingston suggested that having Friday not Monday as a holiday is not workable from both a parental and an academic point of view.

Anderson-Connolly pointed to the “options handout” to outline the outcome of this restriction (namely, not changing the current Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday), namely not sending any plan to the Senate that would have school on Martin Luther King Jr. Day would remove two of the possible options.

Rousslang raised the issue of labs and equality of days (weekdays) across a semester (with regard to first week holidays). The lack of equal days in the first week would not necessarily affect the labs in the sciences.

Wood returned to the “political questions” stating that some people may feel that President’s Day is more important than Martin Luther King Jr. Day and that it is productive to have a day of class in order for the campus to celebrate together.

Barnett suggested that the difference is that in the case of Martin Luther King Jr. Day there is “a heavy investment of the broader community” and that a holiday reflects the University’s commitment to civic engagement.

Wood asked whether those members in the natural sciences would prefer longer summers or winters. Rousslang replied that extra time in the summer would be valuable. Armocido added that students would prefer a shortening of winter break.

Barnett asked what was wrong with option “S3” simply not having 70 days in the semester. Washburn replied that if Labor Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day are made holidays the in only 3 out of 7 years it would work for sciences (in terms of having equal weekdays across the semester).

Jasinski asked if changes to reading day and Thanksgiving created difficulties for the natural sciences. Tamashiro said that it depended on the class. The problem is that there is currently numerous of partial weeks in the fall.

Anderson-Connolly reminded the Committee that there would still be unequal weeks under any plan currently being considered.

Wood said that she would not support any option in which a parent’s holiday was a different date from their children’s (namely, any plan in which faculty members who had children would have a holiday on a day different from the day that was celebrated in local primary and secondary schools).

The conversation up to this point narrowed down the Committee’s options to two with regard to the first two questions:

Option S3: Start Tuesday after MLK; ending 1 week earlier (69 days)

Option F2: Finney plan except no classes on Labor Day (69 days)

The committee then returned to the question of changes to the reading period.

Both student representatives supported a reading period (if it were to remain more than two days) in a “chunk” of days (namely three in a row) rather than having a Wednesday in the middle of finals week.

Barnett argued that voting down reading period as a concept was not acceptable, but a chunk of days would be workable.

Tomhave said that he polled work-study students in his office and they supported the split format 2 to 1.

Tamashiro supported three days of reading period in a chunk versus the split format and that students she surveyed were “horrified” by losing two days of reading period. She also raised the question of “final deadlines” in the final week of classes

Barry argued for the advantage of the Wednesday break and transferring the four day reading period into three days.

Wood also supported a middle Wednesday break that would serve students better by allowing a reprieve in the middle of the week.

Anderson-Connolly said that the Committee could send both ideas to the Senate.

Barnett asked the Committee to reach an agreement on three days at least the reading period.

Barry reminded the Committee that the only issue that had not be raised so far was the potential of student exams being “crammed” (with the possibility that all exams for a single student could occur on one day.

Tomhave explained that the University would switch to a four exam a day schedule (8-10am, 11am-1pm, 2-4pm, 6-8pm with a break for dinner). His understanding of how exams are currently carried out was that about half of all classes have sit down final exams with other classes having final essays or other assignments due.

With regards to splitting exam week with a Wednesday break, Tamashiro argued that some students would end up with 3 exams first before the “split” and then a final exam on Friday.

The meeting adjourned with this final issue being placed on the agenda for the next Committee meeting.