

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Committee on Strategic Planning and Priorities

RE: Final Recommendation on Academic Calendar and Winter Term

DATE: January 28, 2013

Background:

In the winter of 2012, the college ran a pilot winter term program that enrolled 83 students in nine course sections, including some short-term travel courses. One course travelled to London, another to the Quaker archives in Swarthmore, PA. Student and faculty feedback was solicited. As might be expected, responses indicated that the compressed term was appropriate for some courses and less so for others. These results were brought to CPP. CPP endorsed running another winter term. The committee's guidance was to include blended coursework and to encourage short-term travel courses that could allow students whose fall-spring academic program does not readily fit study away to have this experience. In the winter of 2013, 24 course sections ran with a total of 184 students. Again, it was reported that the compressed format worked well for many of the courses. Blended coursework was the most popular among students during this time period. All travel courses, including new offerings in New Orleans and New York City, enrolled enough students to run. The tuition generated during both terms far exceeded the cost of running the programs. In winter term 2013, the college netted an estimated \$200,000 from winter term.

While the general consensus among participants is that winter term is a useful and viable time to schedule classes, there seems to be equal consensus that a slightly longer term would be useful in that it would allow for more, slightly shorter class meetings. A longer term would also build in some flexibility in case of inclement weather.

Charge:

CSPP will examine the academic calendar with an eye towards altering the calendar to allow for a longer winter term.

Among the questions that might be useful to consider are:

1. What are the potential effects of an expanded winter term on fall and spring term calendars?
2. Does the campus community view winter term as a viable and useful academic period? If so, is the benefit of expanding the number of potential class meetings worth the potential disruption caused by a calendar change to expand winter term?
3. What is the cost involved in an expanded winter term? Do these costs outweigh the potential financial benefit? For example, what are the incremental costs, if any, of keeping the dorms open a week later in the spring? To what extent do these costs eat into

the revenue from winter term? How much (if at all) would winter term have to expand in order to overcome these costs?

4. Does CSPP have a recommended course grid for winter term, or should this decision be left to program staff working with individual faculty to best accommodate the needs of each class? Note: Since students do not typically take more than one winter term class, course conflict issues are not relevant.

Testimony:

Vice Provost Behre has shared data with the committee regarding the revenue generated by the winter term as well as feedback from faculty and students who have participated in winter term. Treasurer Rickets shared data regarding the additional dorm costs. The Faculty Senate shared concerns with then Interim Provost Bakewell-Sachs and Interim Vice Provost Behre in September, 2011. Additional concerns have been brought from individual faculty members via the Faculty Senate leadership.

In Fall 2013 (on 13 and 18 November) , CSPP held two open forums on the proposed changes to the academic calendar. In addition, we received valuable testimony from faculty, staff and students by email. Some concern was raised about potential issues and problems resulting from the later starting dates for Maymester and the summer sessions. In this context, CSPP urges flexibility and creativity in developing and/or revising summer classes and programs.

Rationale:

CSPP feels that the winter term holds significant potential for the campus both pedagogically and from a revenue standpoint. Like the Maymester, it seems to be an ideal time to provide short study away opportunities for students in particular. However the current 9-day schedule for on-campus courses may not be in keeping with our expectations for our curriculum.

CSPP notes that the success of the winter term from a revenue perspective is contingent upon faculty willingness to teach in overload, potentially detracting from faculty scholarly work. While revenue generation is important to the financial health of the college, so are the scholarly endeavors of the faculty. Therefore, all winter-term teaching must remain voluntary.

Recommendation:

CSPP recommends that, beginning with academic year 2014-2015, academic calendars be amended to accommodate a longer winter term by shifting the starting date of the spring semester to one week later than the current starting date. This will also mean that the starting dates of the Maymester and summer terms will also shift to one week later. Faculty and student participation in the winter term is on a voluntary basis.

