

DATE: April 27, 2009
TO: Faculty and Staff
FROM: David Curtis
RE: Calendar Change

Good Afternoon,

I have recommended to the President, and she has concurred, that GSU should adopt a Semester calendar, and if possible, it should be effective in the Fall of 2010. Let me explain why I made the recommendation.

Provost Jane Hudak initially undertook the study of the calendar about a year ago after community college officials and potential students consistently reported that our trimester calendar was an unintended barrier to transfer and enrollment. We were simply out of sync with surrounding colleges; further, our Spring/Summer calendar made it very difficult for students enrolled in other colleges and universities who were "home for the summer" to enroll in our classes. Enrollments are very important for the health of the university, and it seemed that our trimester calendar was an obstacle to increasing enrollments.

As a result of her many conversations and inquiries, provost Hudak undertook the study of the calendar. She appointed a Calendar Options Task Force, chaired by Dean Linda Samson, to "... explore the issues surrounding the current GSU trimester calendar and to consider issues that would be involved if the University were to seek to change its current calendar." The committee made its findings and recommendations on July 23, 2008. A brief summary of that report would be that after considering several calendar options, and the advantages and disadvantages of each, the Task Force recommended that the University study in greater depth the potential difficulties of implementing a two semester calendar plus a summer term.

Provost Hudak then asked Dean Samson to chair a Calendar Implementation Task Force, composed of six faculty plus several persons very familiar with the technical issues related to implementing a new calendar. After meeting for several months, the Implementation Task Force found that "...the university is capable of implementing a change to a Semester System..." The Committee also made several specific recommendations for implementation.

Without going into all of the details in that set of recommendations, you are probably most interested in knowing that:

- If all the technical details can be worked out, the University will adopt a semester calendar for the Fall of 2010.
- The exact dates of beginning and ending of the semesters and summer sessions are yet to be determined, but each semester will remain as now, 15 weeks.
- The summer session will provide several options for instruction including 4-week sessions, 6 week sessions, 8 week sessions, and 12 week sessions. In fact you will have many options for scheduling your summer session classes; your choices will be limited only by your imagination and good academic practices.
- The Academic Deans, chairs, and most faculty who are familiar with the calendar proposal, believe that the new calendar should have no negative impact on academic quality.

As you can imagine, a university does not change its calendar simply by wishing it were so. A large number of talented and dedicated people devoted hundreds of hours to considering all of the advantages, disadvantages, and complications. There were open hearings, meetings with the Faculty Senate, and others, and the Senate designed, distributed, and analyzed the results of a faculty survey regarding the calendar. I recognize there is not unanimous agreement that a Semester calendar is either necessary or appropriate. Nevertheless, the majority of both faculty and others seem to favor the change. Additionally, those who have considered the issue most closely, and who are most familiar with all the various perspectives, are overwhelmingly in favor of the change to the Semester system.

As you can see, this was a very systematic and deliberative process. After reading the Task Force reports, attending the Faculty Senate meeting, and discussing the matter with numerous people, I made my recommendation to the President. I did so out of conviction that the change to a semester calendar system would enhance our vitality and make GSU more responsive to the educational needs of our region.

David Curtis