

## **Educational Policy Committee (EPC)**

October 25, 2017

Present: Professors Desmond Cummins, Laura McClusky, and Katie Waugh (chair); Provost Cindy Speaker; and Student Representative Annie Vargas

Meeting called to order at 4:03 pm

1. October 18 minutes approved.
2. Review of feedback and progress on Academic Calendar:
  - a. Committee members acquainted Student Representative Vargas with progress on Academic Calendar revisions:
    - Student Rep. Vargas shared concerns about the necessity for two week-long breaks and the impact this may have on momentum through the semester, however also noted that some first-year students may appreciate the ability to alleviate home sickness during the first semester through more time off. The committee hypothesized that meeting this need may help with retention efforts.
    - The committee's previous questions about the function of "study periods" before finals week were clarified, as Student Rep. Vargas suggested these were crucial for student preparation.
  - b. Committee members shared and discussed feedback from colleagues:
    - Concerns were expressed about the campus's ability to comfortably function in late-August heat, should the start of the semester move earlier.
    - Other feedback suggested that some would be willing to start earlier if that meant either longer mid-semester breaks or avoiding moving the semester's end later in December.
    - General concerns over the length of Winter Break include faculty need for time to prepare Spring Semester classes, and student need for enough time to complete internships or alternative coursework.
    - Feedback from Prof. Levy, chair of ASAA, suggests that moving the semester's end later in December could be a significant challenge for ASAA members and students impacted by academic sanctions. Prof. Levy expressed willingness to reintroduce the issue of First Year Student Orientation to ASAA's agenda, as this was an initial inspiration for reviewing the schedule.
    - Continued concern over seat-time requirements, in light of the fact that the College needs to ensure compliance among faculty who conclude all course work prior to Finals Week.
3. Discussion of hypothetical solutions to various issues raised:
  - a. Alternate academic sanctions procedures could be established to alleviate urgency at end of Fall semester (However, this option would need to be reviewed by ASAA).
  - b. The committee identified the possibility of needing to review the Spring academic calendar to ensure a Winter Break of sufficient length. However, Spring Semester schedules were determined to need further reflection on Commencement, Senior Week, and Staff vacation days.

- c. Lengthening course times to produce fewer meeting times during the semester, thereby shortening the overall duration. Concerns arose, however, over the pedagogical impact of fewer class meetings, and the resulting decrease in student processing time between classes.
4. Identification of priorities, constituencies and variables. Committee members to review the following to produce viable proposals for Nov. 1 meeting:
  - a. Priorities:
    - Start on a slightly later date, on a Monday (Monday, Aug. 27, 2018)
    - Retain an equal number of days (without renaming days)
    - End no later in December than current calendar
    - Retain a study period
    - Minimize occurrence of partial-weeks
    - Lengthen mid-semester breaks: either one week for Fall Break and 1 week for Thanksgiving, or one week for Fall Break and a half-week for Thanksgiving.
  - b. Variables/Calendar Models:
    - Some faculty are indeed willing to start earlier than Aug. 27, while others feel the semester already begins too early
    - Fall and Thanksgiving Break length
    - Same semester length (or shorter) and longer class periods
    - Possibility of Labor Day off
    - Impact of removing final exams from seat time
  - c. Constituencies needed for special consultation (in addition to general faculty and student feedback)
    - ASAA (re: Academic Sanctions)
    - Student Life (Re: Orientation)
    - Athletics
    - International students/Off-Campus Studies
    - [If Spring Semester is adjusted]: Board of Trustees (Re: Commencement) and Staff (Re: Memorial Day staffing)
5. Review of proposal to change A+ GPA calculations
  1. Identification and discussion of eliminating ambiguity; language will be included in proposed changes to prevent possibility for grades of "F+".
  2. Committee Chair will amend language and present final draft of notice of motion for Nov. 1 meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:06

Respectfully Submitted,

Katie Waugh,  
Assistant Professor of Studio Art