



## A SENATE COMMITTEE MOTION

To: The Ohio State University Senate

From: Mark Rudoff, Chair CESP, Jim Rathman, CAA, Ken Lee, Steering

Date: October 2, 2014

### **A PROPOSAL FROM THE COUNCIL ON ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT PROGRESS TO ESTABLISH A MID AUTUMN SEMESTER BREAK**

WHEREAS both students and faculty have expressed the need for a break during autumn semester;

WHEREAS most of our peer institutions on semesters schedule a fall break;

WHEREAS the Council on Academic Affairs, the Council on Enrollment and Student Progress, the Council on Student Affairs and the Senate Steering Committee have all voted in support of the proposal;

WHEREAS the offices most affected by starting classes one day earlier and concluding one day later have expressed support for this proposal;

WHEREAS the proposed calendar retains the same number of instructional days as the current calendar for autumn semester and autumn session classes;

WHEREAS the proposal to position a break at the midpoint of the semester will benefit both the faculty and students involved in session 1 and session 2 classes;

WHEREAS an extended weekend consisting of Thursday/Friday, rather than Friday/Monday, more equitably distributes missed class days;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a four-day break—a Thursday and Friday added to a weekend at the end of the first autumn session, around mid-October—be included in the calendar for autumn semester; that this not diminish the current number of instructional days (70, for the full semester; 34 for first- and second-session classes); and that to accommodate this change, autumn semester start one day earlier (on Tuesday, rather than Wednesday), with classes extending one day later (ending on a Wednesday, rather than a Tuesday); and respectfully request approval by the Board of Trustees.

## Adding a Break to Autumn Semester

Most of our semester peer institutions have some kind of fall break, and since autumn semester 2012, both students and faculty have said that we need to add a break to our current autumn calendar, to provide some respite from the march of classes extending from Labor Day weekend, near the start of the semester, to the Veterans Day and Thanksgiving holidays, near its end. There has been developing consensus that, ideally, this be a four-day break—two weekdays added to a weekend—around mid-October, and that its creation not diminish the current number of instructional days (70, for the full semester; 34 for first- and second-session classes).

A small work group of the Council on Enrollment and Student Progress, the senate body charged with oversight of the university's calendar, considered various possible ways to recover the two instructional days lost in such a rearrangement. CESP has discussed and affirmed the following recommendations:

- Start classes for autumn semester one day earlier—on Tuesday, rather than Wednesday—and end classes one day later—on Wednesday, rather than Tuesday.
- Schedule the two weekdays on Thursday and Friday at the end of the eighth week of the semester, right after the repositioned final exams for first-session classes, timing that would provide instructors in those classes time to submit final grades and students the opportunity to confirm they had met the prerequisites for proceeding in sequenced classes.

The two weekdays would be days on which no classes met, not university holidays. (Had we followed the proposed pattern this year, the break would have been from Thursday, October 16 through Sunday, October 19; were we to follow the pattern next year, the break would fall over October 15-18.) The adjusted calendar retains the Reading Day between the last day of classes and the start of final exams.

These proposed changes have now been vetted with the Council on Academic Affairs and with a number of other groups representing those campus populations most affected.

- Starting on Tuesday would shorten Welcome Week by one day, and the proposal has been reviewed and supported by the Council on Student Affairs, as well as the Office of First Year Experience. The colleges are in favor of this arrangement, since the longer opening week will permit students to attend more of their classes and provide them more time to settle their schedules before the first-Friday deadline for adding and dropping without permission from the instructor.
- Extending classes by one day would result in final exams ending on the following Thursday, rather than Wednesday. This would most affect offices directly involved with commencement and the degree certification process—Special Events, OUR, and the colleges—which would lose one day in which to certify students graduating that semester. While not ideal (the additional day helped in chasing down missing grades), all parties have agreed that this seemed an acceptable arrangement in autumn, when there are fewer graduates than in the spring. The adjusted pattern returns those offices to the timing they had followed under quarters.