Implications of Moving to a Trimester System: Issues and Concerns

by Ray DeCarlo & Frank Dooley
OVERVIEW

• **Switching to Trimester** affects almost every academic policy including faculty contracts.

• **Growing Summer Program**
  – Why
  – Educational/Academic Concerns
  – Learning Concerns
  – Calendar Concerns
ACADEMIC REASONS FOR GROWING SUMMER PROGRAM?

1. Concern over delayed graduations: non-traditional students (co-op students, full time workers), Codo students, and students repeating core courses often delay graduation.

2. Concern over success of disadvantaged incoming freshmen—how to jump-start admitted HS students—Bridge?
COURSE CONSOLIDATION CONCERNS

Feasibility & effort in repackaging standard 16 wk courses & engineering-science labs into 6 wks

Feasibility of condensing engineering (senior) design labs into 6 wks????—universally required for accreditation

Senate Input:
**STUDENT LEANING CONCERNS**

Feasibility & effort in mastering and integrating a standard 16 wk course in 6 wks.

**Learning expectations** for 6 wk module vs 16 wk module; quality of student work; dumbing down of standards

Feasibility & effort in achieving experimental savvy 16 wk engineering/science labs in 6 wks
Feasibility of students achieving design project completion typically done in 16 weeks in 6 weeks?

Feasibility of reading 4000 pages of material, integrating, and writing say 7 term papers in 6 wks

Senate Input:
MENTAL HEALTH

Are there mental health effects on students and faculty surrounding the pressure of two 6-week modules?

Senate Input:
EPC recognizes concerns & is considering alternatives to two 6-week modules.
FINANCIAL AID CONCERNS

More Total Aid Needed/Year—President Sands has pointed to current aid challenges at last senate meeting—wherefrom the $$$$$$ ??

Committee is in place to study issue.

Senate Input:
**Trimester Concerns**

**Contractual Issues** for current 9 month faculty apts

**Fair compensation concerns**—increased health care premiums, reduction in retirement benefits, minimal to zero raises in the face of CPI based inflation (that does not account for energy for example) has forced a clear reduction in buying power

**Calendar Issues**—14 wk semesters?
Research Support Issues, e.g., NSF does not support academic year salaries

Concern over RECRUITING of new outstanding faculty

Concern over RETENTION of existing faculty
Without summers where is the time for reflective thought for

- idea generation,
- proposal writing (and incentives thereof),
- journal paper writing,
- increased graduate student meeting time,
- book writing,
- course note preparation and updating, and
- mental regeneration/recovery???
Concern over a manufacturing approach to higher education. See for example the following article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

http://chronicle.com/article/At-UNT-Dallas-Consultants/131736/

Senate Input:
**Proposed Process**

- **Create committees** that represent a cross-section of faculty, staff, administration, and students to consider the issues related to moving to trimesters.
- **The process will be iterative**
- Task 1 is to ensure that we’re considering the right questions.
  - Have the committees report on regular basis to campus leadership from: 1) the Senate, 2) Staff, 3) Deans, 4) students, and 5) the community.
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