FACULTY SURVEY RESULTS: WINTER FLEX TERM

November-December 2021 Survey
Winter Flex Faculty Survey

Survey purpose was to gauge faculty members’ interest in potential Winter Flex term.

- Survey was conducted in November - December 2021.

- Nine questions were asked—seven closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions.

- 511 faculty members participated—452 (88.5%) finished and 59 (11.5%) did not finish the survey.
Question #1

As of now, how likely are you to teach a course during Winter Flex?

- Extremely Likely: 5% (23)
- Somewhat Likely: 11% (51)
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely: 12% (54)
- Somewhat Unlikely: 17% (78)
- Extremely Unlikely: 54% (246)

n=452

Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.
If you offered courses during Winter Flex, what would you like to offer? (Open-Ended Question – Summary Analysis):

452 respondents answered this question. Summary of their answers/times mentioned:

- None or N/A: 185
- Named specific, area-specific, or goal-specific courses: 138
- Study Abroad: 47
- Elective: 28
- Unsure: 28
- Online: 15
- Major Requirement: 7
- Independent Study/Research: 6
- Anything I’m asked: 3
Comment Examples

"I am unlikely to offer courses, as I dedicate so much of my time and effort to teaching during the fall and spring semesters. I really need a break to be the best teacher I can."

"None of the course I teach would be suitable for a 4 week session."

"I would not teach a course that overlaps the holidays."

"Directed reading, courses bringing students up to speed with tools and methodologies they urgently need to continue with their programs, in general, whatever my programs consider to be necessary and urgent."

"Likely some form of advanced methods at undergrad or grad level or a career-focused course. Longer term, something on research/research internship/field school related."
Question #3

If you participated in Winter Flex, what types of course would you want to teach? (Choose all that apply):

- Elective: 63% (284)
- Other: 31% (138)
- Major Requirement: 17% (77)
- Core Curriculum: 15% (70)

n=452
Why might you choose NOT to offer a class during Winter Flex? (Choose all that apply):

- Want to take a break: 76% (344)
- Not interested in teaching during that time frame: 64% (291)
- Concerns about adequate compensation for my time developing and/or implementing the course: 47% (213)
- Concerns about the quality of courses offered in Winter Flex: 34% (154)
- Concerns about adequate instructional support while implementing the course: 27% (123)
- Other: 16% (71)

n=452
Question #5

Are any of the following options concerns that you would have with Winter Flex?

- Effects of a shortened winter break for those who participate (46% or 208 respondents)
- Issues regarding course quality due to the shortness of the term (18% or 83 respondents)
- Effects of possibly shortened Fall/Spring semesters (16% or 72 respondents)
- Difficulty of courses due to accelerated schedule (15% or 69 respondents)
- No concerns (8% or 38 respondents)
- Prefer to remain with 16 week terms (7% or 33 respondents)

n=452
Question #6

How likely would you be to lead a Study Abroad trip during a Winter Flex Term?

- Extremely Likely: 6% (27 respondents)
- Somewhat Likely: 13% (57 respondents)
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely: 15% (67 respondents)
- Somewhat Unlikely: 11% (48 respondents)
- Extremely Unlikely: 56% (253 respondents)

n=452
Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.
Question #7

Why might you choose NOT to lead a Study Abroad trip during Winter Flex? (Choose all that apply):

- Want to take a break: 61% (275)
- Not interested in leading a student trip during that time frame: 56% (255)
- Concerns about adequate compensation for my time developing and/or implementing the trip: 27% (123)
- Concerns about adequate university support while leading the trip: 26% (119)
- Other: 19% (86)
- Concerns about the options for Study Abroad in a Winter Flex term: 18% (80)

n=452
How would you feel if the Spring and Fall semesters were shortened to 15 weeks to accommodate a Winter Flex term?
Question #9

What other questions or concerns do you have about a potential Winter Flex term?

212 respondents answered this question. Summary of key answers/times mentioned:

- Positive Comments (22; 6 of these also had concerns): Making other Semesters Shorter (19) and Research/Study Abroad Possibility (2)

- Concerns (114): Burnout—Faculty/Students (29), Quality (27), Making other Semesters Shorter (26), Timing (25), Family (12), Compensation (11), Research Time (11), and Pressure to Participate (4)

- Questions (37): Compensation (18), Timing (8), and Course Options (3)

- N/A or None: 15
Positive/Interested Comment Examples

“A reduction from 16 to 15 week semesters is tempting for faculty, but it would reduce what our students would learn (that would not be made up in Winter Flex term). A reduction to 15 weeks would very likely result in an increase to research productivity.”

“I think the Winter Flex term is a great idea, but above all else, I would appreciate and support a shorter regular semester. 16 weeks is neither sacrosanct nor typical, and faculty should be able to reduce required content to accommodate this. Many faculty need a longer January break to prep, recover, and write.”

“I think this proposal gives flexibility to students and faculty to develop courses and work on research during the Winter break. I am very supportive of it.”

“I am in favor of having the Winter Flex term for Experiential learning or study abroad, but not for regular courses.”
Question #9

Negative/Concerned Comment Examples

“(1) Students and faculty need a break between semesters to avoid burnout and prepare for the next semester. (2) For engineering courses, 3 weeks does not give students sufficient time to let things sink in and practice the concepts. (3) Shortening the semester to accommodate a flawed winter term creates additional problem where none existed. (4) Students already have the majority of these opportunities in the Maymester and through other methods. (5) Staff that support classes also need a break and for instance use the time to repair/replace/improve lab facilities between terms.”

“Breaks are critical - it will not be sustainable to teach in this way (or learn). The cost-benefit argument is not clear—I'm not seeing sufficient benefits to radically changing schedules to accommodate a relatively small number of students.”

“The trade off will be (i) adequate compensation vs (ii) time away from my family and down time. I’ve taught in J-term before at another institution, and compensation was something like $8k I think, which was worth the effort. $1500 is not worth the effort.”