UNDERGRADUATE SURVEY RESULTS: WINTER FLEX TERM

November-December 2021 Survey
Winter Flex Undergraduate Survey

Survey purpose was to gauge undergraduate students’ interest in potential Winter Flex term.

- Survey was conducted in November - December 2021.
- Seven questions were asked—six closed-ended questions and one open-ended question.
- 2,368 students participated—2,010 (84.9%) finished and 358 (15.1%) did not finish the survey.
Question #1

What would make you interested in participating in a Winter Flex term?

Opportunities to get ahead by taking a Winter Flex course

More access to required, asynchronous, online classes

More access to interesting, asynchronous, online classes

Opportunities to retake a course in which you may have struggled

Study abroad opportunities

Opportunities to explore a new area by taking a Winter Flex course

Other

n=2,010
Why may you choose NOT to participate in a Winter Flex term?

- Want to take a break: 82% (1,643)
- Concern about the accelerated pace of Winter Flex courses: 46% (930)
- Financial challenges: 45% (909)
- Already on track for intended graduation: 34% (681)
- Winter job/internship: 29% (584)
- Concerns about the quality of courses offered in Winter Flex: 27% (548)
- Concerns about professor availability: 26% (513)
- Other: 6% (112)

n=2,010
Question #3

As of now, how likely would you participate in Winter Flex?

- Extremely Likely: 26% (530)
- Somewhat Likely: 38% (766)
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely: 13% (255)
- Somewhat Unlikely: 9% (173)
- Extremely Unlikely: 14% (286)

n=2,010
Question #4

If you participated in Winter Flex, what would you like to pursue during this term?

- **Major/Minor/Elective courses for credit**: 87% (1,747 students)
- **Study abroad programs**: 31% (619 students)
- **Professional Development courses (ex. Coding, design, excel courses, etc.)**: 31% (618 students)
- **Other**: 6% (130 students)

*n=2,010*
If you participated in Winter Flex, what types of courses would you want to take?

- **Major Requirement**: 48% (955)
- **Elective**: 27% (533)
- **Core Curriculum**: 21% (419)
- **Other**: 5% (103)

$n=2,010$

Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.
Question #6

How would you feel if the Spring and Fall semesters were shortened to 15 weeks to accommodate a Winter Flex term?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Agreeable</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agreeable</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither Agreeable nor Disagreeable</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagreeable</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Disagreeable</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=2,010

Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.
What other questions or concerns do you have about the potential Winter Flex term? (Open-Ended Question) - Summary Analysis

- **142** of the 394 responses were **questions** regarding these main issues: course availability/options (46), cost/financing (42), impact on academic calendar/summer internships (24), implementation start (20), shortening of traditional semesters (8), housing (7), grading/difficulty (7), and quality of courses (6).

- **48** of the responses were **positive/interested** comments. Generally, these were brief (average of 105 characters), supportive comments with little additional information. Key positives mentioned: catching up (6), course options (5), and getting ahead (4).

- **144** of the responses were **negative/concerned** comments. The negative comments tended to be longer (average of 270 characters) and constructed as an argument against Winter Flex. Key concerns included: shortening of fall semester (74), burnout (32), additional impact on academic calendar/summer internships (27), quality of courses (26), cost/financing (5) and pressure to participate (3).

- **62** of the responses were “**None”, “N/A,”** etc.
Question #7

Positive/Interested Comment Examples

“Would love to see this implemented, it would allow me to take courses here that I am having to take elsewhere in the winter months. Especially if Purdue-specific courses were offered that I cannot get elsewhere I would be able to open up classes with those prerequisites and continue on track.”

“…I will say that I’ve been hoping for the opportunity to be able to take classes over winter break, and I am a HUGE advocate for the winter flex term. I think it’s an absolutely perfect way for students to catch up, get ahead, or, spread out their classes if needed. It would also provide more opportunities for co-op students to take their classes, which would encourage much more co-op motivation, and encouragement. Whenever students can have more options for their study plan, the more encouraged and inspired we can be!”
Question #7

Negative/Concerned Comment Examples

“1. Student burnout is a serious issue at Purdue. Focus on mental health is important, and adding more opportunities to take classes during what is typically a break is equivalent to pressuring students into never taking a break and worsening mental health issues.

2. It is unlikely that the quality of 4-week condensed classes would ever meet that of a full-termed class. This gives students who take a 4-week class a distinct disadvantage due to the fast pace. I have taken a 4-week summer class, and barely found it manageable since the material was not difficult, and I had time because of a flexible work schedule at my summer job. However, students who fail a class in the fall will feel pressure to use the winter as a chance to retake it, and it is highly unlikely that they will do better in 4 weeks than in 16 weeks. Students who work at the same time will suffer.

3. If terms are made shortened to 15 weeks, material that is already rushed will have to be rushed further, as no professor is going to want to cut material and restructure their class to fit the new time frame. There are already a number of courses that routinely fall behind every semester, and shortening the term will only increase the difficulties for the students. The winter flex term might be a good idea for a few students, but the costs outweigh the benefits for Purdue and the student body at large unless significant changes are made to make mental health and student success a priority, (which they are not under the current system). Thank you for reading this and taking student opinions into account.”
Question #7

Negative/Concerned Comment Examples

“After reading the full new Winter Flex Plan, thank you for considering feedback from last semester as the plan for a J-term highlighted some serious concerns that I believe have been better addressed in this plan. However, I do not believe the Winter Flex term will bring benefit to any student’s academic experience. While it is optional, the pressure to take classes over a time that should be used as a break to rest I believe is irresponsible with regard to student’s mental health. Classes of consequence that are major requirements cannot be taught in such a condensed time frame for most majors reducing the benefit of being able to catch up on classes and even for classes that could be offered the quality of an asynchronous course is significantly less than the quality of an in-person course, at least in my experience and could lead to severe discrepancies in education consistency. Furthermore, opting to participate in Winter Flex would lead students to have almost 36 weeks of straight instruction (Fall-Winter-Spring) with no break and any pressure to participate would prevent student from having considerable time to recover from semester stresses. I believe it is also extremely unfair to expect any professor to give up time during their holiday to moderate a class and while asynchronous I believe would either lead to professors giving up deserved time with their own loved ones over break or in professors being difficult to contact. Overall, I believe implying to students that they can/should be enrolled in classes over winter break would not be in students or professors’ best interests and resources could go to offering and improving other campus programs over enacting short 4 week classes during this time. As a final note, I also wanted to voice full support for a 16 week semester especially if costs for the semester are remaining the same as after last year the increased pressure to finish course material in a shorter time made the semester harder, more stressful and many topics were skipped.”
Question #7

Negative/Concerned Comment Examples

“I have no interest anyways regarding a Winter Flex term, but I extremely oppose making the semesters shorter for this proposal. My concern is that our experience during the Fall and Spring semesters must not be altered and made objectively worse-off for this proposal. For those interested in using off-times for coursework and development, Maymesters and Summer Semesters are great options. My firm opinion is that reducing the number of weeks in our Fall and Spring schedules to accommodate this only makes those semesters worse, since we'll either cover less in portions at classes or receive more coursework during the semester as a result. To reiterate, I'm completely against shortening the Spring and Fall semesters, and think it's an incredibly inappropriate thing to do. The only way this becomes justified is if the tuition is correspondingly decreased to 15/16ths of the current tuition for everyone, since we simply do have 1 fewer weeks of education and an experience at Purdue University. There are some ways to use the current limited time in winter, without expanding it. For example, it could be used as a way to prime students less familiar with course materials for notoriously hard subjects, similar to CS Bridge currently. I could see how in three weeks we can feasibly teach students the core ideas which Calculus II, for example, wishes to establish. Instead of fitting an entire course, usually meant for 16 weeks over 3-4 weeks, I'd rather it covers 5-6 weeks of course material more in depth, and help students who would usually struggle with this material to have a better foundation before the course actually begins. To reiterate for the third time though, I'm extremely, steadfastly, and firmly opposed to making the Fall and Spring semesters shorter for any Winter Flex term. If this proposal goes through, my respect for Purdue University as an institution would irreconcilably drop, and I'll be much more certain to look at other alternatives for further studies, like Graduate and Doctorate programs. I've always held Purdue in high regards, and think this is a massive step backwards: it clearly comes off as a quick way to sacrifice the current experience of students to bring in more revenue for the university, and I don't think anybody truly benefits from the ideas brought up in this proposal.”