MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

To: Shannon Bellum, University Senate President

From: Jonathan Koppell, President

Date: June 5, 2025

Re: Response to Recommendation for Changes to the Academic Calendar and/or Course Grid and Recommendation for Year-Round Academic Calendar

President Bellum:

We have reviewed the policy recommendations for Changes to the Academic Calendar and/or Course Grid and Recommendation for Year-Round Academic Calendar.

In the year that has passed since these recommendations were put forth, there have been several conversations between the Administration and the University Senate focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the new academic calendar. A notable recent development involves my recommendation that the Senate establish a Working Group, which should include representatives from various University constituencies, to study the calendar and issue a report with findings. I believe that it is prudent for all parties to await the proposed findings and recommendations of the Working Group before continuing conversations regarding the calendar.

I look forward to collaboration with the Senate in the best interests of the University.

Thank you for your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Koppell
President

Recommendation on a Year-Round Academic Calendar

As Recommended, 8 May 2024

The University Senate recommends that the University adopt an academic calendar with Fall and Spring terms of sixteen (16) calendar weeks and two overlapping summer terms, each of eight (8) weeks.

Moreover, the Fall and Spring Terms should each comprise two, non-overlapping, eight-week (8-week) terms, while the summer should include three (3) non-overlapping four-week (4-week) terms.

One version of the scheme is illustrated below. Variations are possible, including a later or earlier start of the spring term, with concomitant shifts in the other terms.[1]

This recommendation is contingent on a due diligence review as delineated in the Recommendation regarding Consideration of Changes to the Academic Calendar and/or Course Grid

Rationale

The scheme included in this Recommendation realizes the goal of the President of the University to provide robust academic opportunities for students on a 'year-round' basis.

The recent standardization of eight-week "partial term" courses makes it possible to offer summer-term courses with a format equivalent to courses offered during the fall and spring terms.

The proposed scheme would allow the completion of a typical bachelor's degree program (120 semester-credit-hours) in three academic years, including two intervening summer terms.

In contrast to other schemes (including the separately proposed three, fourteen-week terms, each comprising two, seven-week partial terms), the scheme included in this Recommendation minimizes the need to reorganize and redevelop existing courses to match an adjusted academic calendar and weekly class-meeting grid (AKA course block or matrix). Among other considerations, the scheme in this recommendation would therefore avoid adverse impact on the ability of the University to recruit and retain adjunct faculty.

Adoption of the scheme proposed in this Recommendation neither prevents nor precludes adjustment and improvement of the class-meeting grid. Indeed, because the eight and sixteen week terms are both (i) consistent with the requirements of the NJ State Administrative Code regarding the course meetings that constitute a Semester Credit Hour[2], as well as (ii) evenly divisible (as powers of two), these terms increase the flexibility and possibility of improvements in the weekly class-meeting grid.

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[1] cf. Academic Calendar Alternatives (URL)
[2] NJ Administrative Code § 9A:1-1.2 - Definitions

University Senate

Recommendation regarding Consideration of Changes to the Academic Calendar and/or Course Grid

As Approved, 8 May 2024

The University Senate recommends that, prior to a final decision to implement significant changes to the academic calendar and/or the weekly course grid (AKA course block or matrix), the following steps be taken as part of the deliberation and analysis:

1. determination of whether, and how, the totality of course sections offered in recent terms would fit into the proposed scheme;

2. comprehensive survey of the time and scheduling needs for laboratory, studio, performance and other class meetings that require non-standard time periods;

3. determination of the number and type of sections that would be 'off-grid' due to the specific needs of the related courses, as well as the likely effects of such courses on the ability of students to register for other courses in the same term;

4. development and dissemination of any significant changes to policies and procedures related to implementation of a new scheme (e.g., assignment of courses that meet three times per week).

5. systematic estimation of the times and quantity of maximum entrance/exit, traffic and the capacity of the relevant campus to accommodate such;

6. the maximum expected demand for parking, for students and employees, in relation to parking capacity on the relevant campus;

7. identification of additional impacts on adjunct-faculty instructors (e.g., irregularities in the schedule and/or schedule alignment with other local institutions), especially those that might affect the ability of the University to recruit and retain adjunct faculty, as well as possibilities for mitigation of such impacts;

8. effects on other operations of the University that depend on periods of reduced occupancy or operational intensity, including facilities maintenance and administrative work, as well as inter-term support, advising, and orientation for students.

In the event that the University Administration does not have the capacity to address any of the above considerations, the Senate recommends that outside expert consultation be retained.

Moreover, the Senate recommends that study results regarding the above considerations, as well as other related matters considered as part of the preparation and deliberation process be shared to the fullest extent possible with the broader University Community.