

The Report of the Educational Policy Committee on an Alternative Academic Calendar at The George Washington University

Prologue:

At the May 2003 meeting, the Faculty Senate passed a resolution (03/1) which requested that the administration take no action on an alternative academic calendar “until the Faculty Senate has had an opportunity to consider available data and provide its recommendations . . . to the administration.” Consequently, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate asked the Educational Policy Committee to consider the Report of the Study Group on “An Alternative Academic Calendar at The George Washington University” (June 2003). The Educational Policy Committee began its examination of the Alternative Academic Calendar report as soon as the school year began. It requested and received commentaries on the report from colleagues throughout the university.

Since the report sets forth two different proposals (which could be launched either separately or together), we have separated these possibilities for the sake of clarity and convenience. The first that we will examine is the 14-14-10 proposal, which includes a mandatory summer term for rising juniors (and corresponding mandatory semester off campus following that—possibly during the junior year). We will look at these proposals and their impact on students, faculty, and other entities within the university (e.g., departments, programs, and schools).

I. Mandatory Summer (10 week) Term for Rising Juniors (and corresponding mandatory semester off campus following).

Preliminary Remarks: As we understand this proposal, it is not driven by academic but rather by economic concerns. While the committee appreciates the fact that additional revenues need to be raised, ultimately, it opposes the implementation of any proposal to raise revenue that is detrimental to the academic environment of the university.

From the EPC’s discussions and from the material that the EPC received from GW faculty, it is clear that faculty overwhelmingly opposed the Mandatory summer term. It is the consensus of the faculty that the overall academic cost of this part of the proposal would be too high and that consequently the mandatory summer term should not be implemented. Despite the fact that the Alternative Academic Calendar report points to Dartmouth as a model where the mandatory summer term has been successful, the EPC believes that such a comparison was not apposite. One need hardly point out that Dartmouth is an Ivy League school with a different type of student, many more applicants per year, roughly half of the undergraduates as GW, a totally different configuration of classes (quarters instead of semesters), and is located in a small New England town with a pleasant summer climate. It is relevant that only Dartmouth, of the thousands of American colleges and universities, has mandated a summer term. Some of the compelling reasons are as follows

1. Impact on Students:

A. Recruitment: GW's Strategic Plan, "Sustaining Momentum, Maximizing Strength," points to specific goals focused on students, including recruitment of "highly qualified, academically talented students" (1A). Consequently, any action that might jeopardize our recruitment of the best possible students should be resisted. Both the faculty and the EPC fear that a mandatory summer term will have a chilling effect on admissions.¹ Will students stay away from GW if we institute a mandatory summer term? As the report itself points out, over 65% of the GW students who were polled said that they would not "be willing to attend a university that requires [them] to participate in a summer session" (of 190 students, 115 answered "no" to the above question while 75 answered "yes." See appendix F of the alternative calendar committee report). The Educational Policy Committee believes that the number of students who would have responded negatively would likely have been higher had the question indicated that students would be forced off campus for a semester following the mandatory summer. As an example of student opinion on this matter, we include the results of an informal poll conducted by an Economics faculty member, Robert Phillips, in his class on September 24, 2003. According to that faculty member, students were unanimous in their opposition to the mandatory summer.² Other faculty members have reported similar results in discussions with their classes.

B. Jeopardizing Student Financial Assistance and the eligibility of international students: The shorter summer term presents problems under the U. S. Department of Education regulations (34 C. F. R. 668.3), which require a minimum of thirty weeks of instruction time (including exam periods) per academic year. A year in which a student substituted a 10-week summer session for a normal spring or fall

¹ Given our commitment to recruiting as outlined in GW's strategic plan, dipping down into the waiting list (or those rejected) is not a desirable option.

² Communication to EPC from Professor Phillips: "I took [a poll] of my students in my undergraduate course. It was an attempt to elicit their views on the alternative academic calendar and 4x4 proposals. The poll was conducted in my undergraduate econometrics course on Wednesday, September 24th (I've already shared the results with members of the Economics Department).

I asked my class to indicate by a show of hands whether they favored or opposed a compulsory summer term (between the sophomore and junior years) accompanied with a compulsory fall or spring semester off, where a student can rank semesters indicating his or her preference about which semester s/he gets to take off. I also informed them that a student is not guaranteed to get his/her first choice (my understanding is that that's the alternative calendar proposal). I told them that the summer session was supposed to involve a special program related to one's major (though I had to confess I was not certain what that meant).

The outcome of the vote: 0 in favor of the alternative academic calendar proposal, 23 against, and 6 abstained. It was the compulsory aspect of the proposal that I think students found most objectionable. Also, they noted that the summer between the sophomore and junior years was a critical one for internships. I countered with the argument we have been given that a student could participate in internships during his/her semester off without competition from students at other institutions. But my students responded that there were no comparable internships during the academic year."

semester would not meet this requirement (junior year under the proposal).³ The result may be ineligibility for federal financial assistance programs. The same problem is presented by the mandatory semester off, during which students are not permitted to study elsewhere. The admission of international students might also be put at risk. If GW moves to a 10 week mandatory summer term, international students may be ineligible for student immigration visas, as the State Department follows the Education Department guidelines.⁴

C. Student Experience at GW: GW's strategic plan also points to "enhancing student engagement" as an important objective (1A). The committee is concerned that the mandatory semester off campus following the mandatory summer will have a deleterious effect on student engagement for the following reasons:⁵

- 1) Junior year is typically the period of initial immersion in critical mid-level coursework in a major. As a result, the importance of junior-year studies in the major cannot be overstated. In nearly all disciplines, the junior year marks a critical academic transition from basic-level ability to senior-level proficiency. The term away from coursework, faculty, and student cohorts—for some students one term, for another the next—would seriously disrupt intellectual continuity.
- 2) The mandatory term off campus during the junior year would likely disrupt the informal cohorts of students who share similar intellectual experiences. This is an important part of undergraduate academic life at GWU and most other universities. The mandatory subdivision of the junior class would have serious detrimental effects on students, especially those in smaller departments, by breaking up the cohort groups formed during the early part of their academic careers. The mutually beneficial effects on individuals of student cohorts during this critical period is well documented and is a particularly important aspect of the educational offerings at a high-priced,

³ Dartmouth's alternative calendar avoids this problem because Dartmouth is on the quarter system. A student who attends the mandatory summer session (10 weeks) and two of the other quarters (at 10 weeks each) will have attended school for 30 weeks his/her junior year.

⁴ These problems were not addressed by the Alternative Calendar Committee. Nor were they addressed by the University Counsel's office, which responded only to President Trachtenberg's original proposal with its 14-week summer semester. An attorney at Hogan and Hartson is presently addressing the first of these issues.

⁵ The study suggests that engagement could be indirectly affected in a positive way. But, given the great number of caveats that accompany the report's statement as well as its tenuous link to a student survey, it is difficult to take this possibility seriously. Specifically, the report suggests that giving students more course choices could result in an increase in student engagement. How would students obtain more choices? "If GW introduced a required summer term and increased the size of the faculty, *but changed neither* the average teaching load, *nor* the average class size, *nor* the average number of sections, this would increase the number of courses offered in a year" (p. 9, emphases mine). After this statement comes another rosy scenario involving reduced class size and this scenario is followed by the conclusion: "the thicker catalogue would mean more curricular choices for students and more chance of finding courses that matched their particular interests, which would likely improve engagement" (p. 10). Student engagement could also be increased, the report maintains, *if* the revenues generated from the summer program were used to increase student aid and *if* the students worked fewer hours at outside jobs as a result (p. 10).

- tuition-dependent institution such as GWU (in addition, the related moving around of students in the dormitories—at Dartmouth, they move after each quarter—would surely also have a negative effect on social relationships).
- 3) Junior year, especially the spring term, is the seedtime for the senior thesis. As it has at Dartmouth, (see “The Dartmouth Online,” Feb 1, 1999 at www.thedartmouth.com/article.php?aid=1999020101032), this proposal would almost certainly adversely affect the number of senior theses or result in an overall reduction in the quality and scope of projects undertaken.
 - 4) Some (perhaps most) programs will be unable to provide an adequate number of courses over three terms and so students (in the summer and possibly in the other terms) may be “forced” into courses that do not match their interests. While some students might find those courses interesting, it is also possible that students in these courses will be dissatisfied. If, as the Alternative Calendar report contends, students’ ability to find courses that match their particular interests “would likely improve engagement” (10), then their inability to find such could also negatively impact engagement.
 - 5) The subdivision of the junior class would likely result in the loss of critical mass for effective classes required for the major in smaller departments, likewise resulting in a negative impact on student engagement.
 - 6) In addition, highly-structured programs would be hard-pressed to maintain the required sequences of courses. A program or department’s inability to offer sequence courses would certainly harm the pedagogical integrity of a given program/department/school. It should be noted that Dartmouth has abolished sequence courses except in the sciences. Such destructuring of the curriculum would likely decrease student engagement and possibly have a detrimental effect on the preparation of student in those programs.
 - 7) As a result of the mandatory summer term (assuming that regular faculty teach courses offered then), course enrollments will rise in the fall and spring semesters. This is because the number of students on campus fall and spring will remain at present levels (assuming we are able admit the same number of students), while faculty numbers will shrink (unless new faculty are hired). The impact would be greatest on small departments/programs (even if new faculty are hired, it is unlikely that they would be hired in small departments/programs). This projected increase in the size of classes runs counter to the strategic plan’s objective of increasing faculty-student contact in order to increase engagement (1A).
 - 8) As the report itself points out, a 10-week term is pedagogically less desirable than a longer term (see appendix D of the report).
 - 9) The compressed class time of the summer term (10 weeks) would make unavoidable class absences (e.g., in cases of family emergencies, illness, etc.) much more serious (see appendix D).
 - 10) There is the possibility of student burnout. Half of the students in their Sophomore/Junior year will be in school an entire calendar year, September through August, while the other half will attend 16 months without a break, September through the following December (see the comments of focus group in appendix E).

- 11) Student research could suffer. Since the strategic plan also points to such research as an important objective (1A), jeopardizing student research opportunities makes this strategic objective more difficult to realize.
- a. Many students in most science-oriented departments at GWU, ranging from Chemistry and Biological Sciences to Anthropology, use the summer months to acquire first-hand, practical experience in scientific research either by participating in faculty-sponsored research projects or by obtaining direct funding to undertake their own projects. In nearly all cases, such summer research experience serves to greatly enhance student education, often leading to senior research projects and not uncommonly resulting in definition of career goals. In recent years, many students have taken advantage of opportunities to participate in such projects during 2-3 consecutive years and, in doing so, have greatly augmented their educational experience and improved their qualifications securing admission to graduate school or securing career-related employment. Such one-on-one involvement with faculty researchers, often involving substantial stipends for the students, is viewed by students as an important benefit of their decision to attend GWU. The mandatory summer term will make securing such opportunities impossible during the summer of the students' rising junior year.
 - b. Students in many undergraduate departments at GW participate in internships and programs at other institutions that are available only during the summer months. This is especially true in the sciences. In most cases, such experiences form an important part of the academic background, add significantly to our graduates' qualification, and help to provide our students with an important competitive edge in their post-graduate years. As a result, our students would be seriously hindered by the necessity to forgo such experiences in order to attend class during their mandatory summer session. It is likely that numerous such students, who typically include many of our most talented and highly motivated degree candidates, would choose to transfer to other institutions or, perhaps, not attend GWU in the first place.

D. Graduate Studies at GW: Although the report implies that graduate studies would not be affected by a calendar change, it is apparent that there will be some ramifications for graduate students.

- 1) Graduate students enrolled in independent study courses, taking exams or writing theses/dissertations would have trouble receiving timely feedback or assembling committees because there would be no assurance that all the involved faculty will be on campus during any given term. In fact, it is possible that the whole committee of relevant faculty would never be on campus during the same term.
- 2) Another possible problem could arise with a faculty member who teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses. If that individual were to teach

undergraduate courses in the summer, he/she would be unable to teach graduate courses during either fall or spring semester. Consequently, graduate students may have fewer course choices.

- 3) The majority of graduate students are employed during the summer months. The completion of their studies is dependent on the availability of courses in the fall and spring.

2. Impact on Faculty:

Faculty will be strongly affected by the proposed mandatory summer term.

- A. Teaching the Summer Term:** Many faculty have expressed the belief that they would be compelled to teach the summer term. While there is nothing in the Alternative Calendar report to suggest that this would necessarily happen, departments and programs would need to find faculty to teach these terms. Since the report suggests that the current summer program would continue (appendix D), those faculty disposed to teach in the summer might well choose to teach in the traditional summer program in order to receive the extra compensation.⁶ In such a case, departments and programs will have limited options. They can hire part-time faculty to fill the summer slots or they can coerce regular faculty (likely junior faculty) to teach during this period. Compulsory summer teaching could be a hardship for some (e. g., those with small children or those with external funding and summer research commitments).
- B.** The fact that faculty will be teaching during different semesters would create logistical problems for faculty engaged in collaborative research (either with colleagues at GW or elsewhere).
- C.** Faculty involved in field-based scientific research (e. g., anthropology, botany, geology, among others) will be adversely affected because, in many cases, their work cannot be conducted in the fall or winter. Faculty in these disciplines who have to teach in the summer might be unable to do as much research as they currently do. This will, in turn, have a detrimental affect on total research output as well as on student-centered participation in such projects.

3. Impact on Department/Program Administration:

Because departments/programs will have to staff their courses every summer, there will be need for sufficient faculty to teach those courses. As mentioned above, unless we resort to staffing summer courses with part-time faculty, departments/programs will have

⁶ The EPC is skeptical that the current summer program will be able to survive the imposition of the mandatory summer term. In our view, it stands to reason that the present summer program could not continue as a robust program. As it currently stands, faculty who opt to teach in the summer cannot be assured that there will be sufficient enrollment so that a proposed course will actually be taught. With a mandatory summer term, this will be worse. GW will be reducing its student pool by roughly one third. In addition, faced with a mandatory summer term, it is questionable that students will want to devote other summer to study at GW. With the shrinking pool of students it is likely that the summer program as it stands would not be able to survive long. The effect might be to force many faculty to teach year round for economic reasons.

either to convince or compel a significant percentage of their faculty to teach in the summer. Other specific problems that departments/programs might encounter include:

- A. Small departments with relatively few majors (e.g., 10-15 students which would yield 5-7 rising juniors) might not be able to justify a body of classes designed for so few students in the summer term.
- B. Unless departments/programs compel faculty to teach, it will be hard to offer enough courses in the summer to give students a significant choice of courses. This will be a particular problem for departments/programs that give students a wide variety of course choices for their degree.
- C. Departments such as music will be unable to hire the faculty they need to teach many of their courses because summer is a season when these musicians typically perform.
- D. Since departments will have to staff all of their major courses every semester (due to the fact that their majors will be on campus at different times following the mandatory summer), there will be an increased demand on faculty courses during the fall and summer terms (because fewer faculty will be on campus). This could result in a greater number of part-time faculty teaching classes either in the summer or in the fall and spring.
- E. It is questionable that music and dance ensembles will be able to continue (because of the number of students absent each term). If ensembles are able to be maintained, the quality is certain to suffer from the loss of students. One music faculty member predicts a loss of ensemble quality of anywhere between 10% and 50%.
- F. It would be more difficult to carry on departmental business. For instance, hiring decisions should be made by those who have personally participated in the process, including attending candidate lectures, interviews, and group deliberations. Curricular decisions also require group discussions and judgments. If, as seems likely, most of the business of departments is still conducted during the September-May portion of the year, then there will be an additional administrative burden placed on faculty who do not teach in the summer.
- G. In some fields, summer is a time for important conferences. Consequently, the need for faculty involvement in coursework will place enormous strains on those faculty who also need to participate in research-related summer conferences, making it difficult for some departments to convince faculty to teach during that term.
- H. Department chairs will be forced to become full-time administrators. Currently, chairs can do some research during the summer because there are fewer courses taught and fewer students and faculty on campus. With a mandatory summer term, summer will not slow down. This will make it difficult to recruit chairs (even if the stipends are increased to reflect their increased responsibilities).

4. Impact on Other Parts of the University.

- A. **Shared governance:** Faculty committees, the Faculty Senate, and Faculty Senate committees would also be affected negatively, for, if most of the university business is still conducted from September to May (as seems likely) many faculty

would be off campus during the fall or spring semester and so unable to participate.

- B. Library services:** If the University adopts the mandatory summer calendar framework, the Gelman Library System would require significant additional funding to maintain the same level of service. In addition to funding considerations, certain essential tasks that may disrupt services are currently scheduled for summers. These include software and equipment upgrades and changes, collections shifts, and building maintenance and renovations. Under a revised calendar, these tasks would have a larger impact on student and faculty research. Also, the Library System's membership in WRLC has been a great advantage to students and faculty. Since other WRLC member libraries would maintain the traditional semester calendar, these libraries have reduced services and hours during the summer. GW students and faculty would not benefit to the same extent from these libraries during the summer.

II. The 4X4 Configuration

Preliminary remarks: The 4X4 proposal is presented as a possible solution to the problem of student engagement. The hope is that GW students would engage more seriously with their studies and spend more time on their courses, if they were to take four rather than five courses.

There are institutions that adhere to the 4X4 (with the same number of contact minutes as the report recommends for GW), so the possibility exists that it could work at GW as well. But, will the 4X4 work better than the 3X5 system that we currently employ? The Alternative Calendar report points to Oglethorpe University as a model where the 4X4 was introduced and (after a failed attempt to lengthen classes correspondingly) the class time was kept at 150 minutes per week. The EPC wondered at the Alternative Calendar Committee's use of Oglethorpe as a model since it is very unlike GW. The EPC also wondered why the committee did not look to American University's experiment with 4X4 in the 1970s, an experiment that failed and was subsequently abandoned.

In general, faculty members have responded negatively to the 4X4 proposal. They have pointed to, among other things, the following:

- We do not know if the 4X4 system would increase student engagement,
- There have been no significant complaints by faculty or students about the 3X5,
- GW has a unique set of circumstances that suggest that the 4X4 system could cause serious problems in (or even undermine) some of the programs at GW.

1. Potential Negative Impact on Students:

- A. Increased credit without increased contact time.** The biggest pedagogical issue for many of the faculty who have commented on the proposed 4X4 is the increased credit without an increase in class time. More specifically, faculty have suggested that:

- 1) Students would be “cheated” of the full instruction they are entitled to and that the change would foster student cynicism.
 - 2) Extra assignments do not make up for the “interchange of a group of students and a faculty member with each other, as they collectively wrestle with the meaning and implications of what they are studying” (comment in a memo to EPC from a humanities professor).
 - 3) There is no evidence that a 4x4 program would do anything to create a culture of greater student engagement. It is just as plausible to argue that such a program would enable students to spend even more time on their outside interests. In fact, this latter possibility is quite likely, in view of the extra-curricular perspective inherent in most GWU students living within the resource-rich greater Washington D. C. environment.
- B. Course inequities:** Raising credit hours per course on a University-wide basis to 4 will undoubtedly create severe and obvious inequities between courses offered both within and between academic disciplines. Such inequities could result in students preferentially selecting, whenever possible, courses that meet for less class time but provide the same credit. In the Columbian College, for instance, current introductory language courses offer 4 credits because of the extra class time that is involved. If all courses were made 4-hour courses, students would, in effect, be discouraged from taking any courses that demanded more contact time. In addition, many 3-hour courses would probably not be revised significantly. According to the estimate of one Tufts administrator, roughly 70% of the faculty did not change their syllabi when that University switched from 3X5 to 4X4 (see the report’s appendix D).
- C. Double Majoring and 4X4.** The 4X4 system will make double majoring more difficult. Oftentimes, students major in one field for career purposes and major in another simply because they are interested in that field. The current 3X5 system allows students to focus on a career choice and, at the same time, pursue an intellectual interest. Such possibilities seem likely to increase student engagement. A 4X4 will obviously limit such possibilities.
- D. A narrower education:** The 3X5 system requires 40 courses for graduation while the 4X4 requires 32. As a result, the 4X4 provides a narrower education. For students in programs demanding a significant number of requirements, students will have fewer chances to study outside of their major fields. In addition to narrowing the educational scope for all GWU undergraduates, this situation seems strangely inconsistent with the stated liberal education perspective of the University’s undergraduate flagship, the Columbian College.
- E. The possibility of the loss of depth in education.** While the argument has been made that a 4X4 could provide more depth of education than a 3X5, the opposite could also occur since, in some cases, depth can be increased by taking additional courses rather than more hours per course.⁷

⁷ A member of the Economics Department has put forth the following scenarios: “Consider, for example, introductory statistics, mathematics, or economics courses. Presently, some students are required to take two 3-hour courses as part of an introductory sequence in a subject. Under the 4x4 curriculum, students may not have adequate time to take two 4-hour courses. For example, in the current curriculum economics

F. Graduate Studies and 4X4: The 4X4 system will have some significant ramifications both for graduate students and undergraduates taking graduate courses. Assuming that the graduate programs retain the 3X5 structure, the following potential issues emerge:

- 1) Currently some graduate programs require (or allow) some undergraduate courses to be taken by graduate students. It is not clear if the switch to 4 X 4 will present a problem to such students. Perhaps a more noteworthy problem will be with undergraduates who take graduate courses. For instance, we currently encourage some of our undergraduates to continue at GW through combination bachelor's/master's programs (5 year programs). In such programs, students take graduate courses while still undergraduates. We also sometimes encourage our best undergraduate students to take graduate courses. If an undergraduate (who normally takes 4 hour undergraduate courses) takes a graduate course, he/she will only receive 3 hours credit for that course (assuming that the graduate courses remain at 3 credits). Besides the logistical problems that this raises in BA/MA programs, it also, in effect, discourages the bright and enterprising undergraduates from taking more challenging graduate courses.
- 2) Scheduling for a campus with both 3 and 4 credit programs will present significant administrative challenges.

2. Impact on Faculty:

The faculty could be impacted negatively by the proposed 4X4 in a number of ways:

- A.** The 4X4 might lead to a substantial decrease in the number of faculty at GW, since there would be 20% fewer courses.
- B.** Faculty might also be forced to teach all three semesters (thus reducing research time).
- C.** All faculty would have to revise their 3-hour courses in order to create 4 hour courses. This would be a significant undertaking.
- D.** Some courses would have to be redeveloped. If, for instance, programs combined the content of their courses, say from six 3-hour courses into five 4-hour courses,

majors are required to take 6 hours of statistics (STAT 111-112) or 2 out of a total of 40 courses. Under a 4x4 curriculum, the price of two courses of statistics would become 8 hours or 2 out of 32 courses, a higher share of all courses they would take. A possible response would be for Departments to reduce the requirement to 1 course rather than 2. It is unlikely that students in 1 statistics course (with 4 credits) but meeting for the same number of hours could possibly cover as much material as 2 courses of 3 hours each. As a result, students would end up with less knowledge of statistics under a 4x4 than a 5x3 curriculum.”

“The same arguments apply more generally to courses in the major. In economics, students must currently take 13 courses of economics (out of a total of 40 courses). Under a 4x4, if students were to take the same number of courses (which would be required if students did not have increased contact time), then nearly ½ of all courses (13/32) taken by a student would be in his/her major. If one were to add two statistics and 1 math course (which are also required for BA majors), this would add up to 16 out of 32 courses that would be required for a major in economics. A BS (which requires even more math and statistics) would be even more difficult.”

all of those courses will have to be redeveloped. Such a scenario, obviously, could involve significant work for the faculty.

- E. The proposed 4X4 might also lead to an increased teaching load. Even though the contact time would not increase, faculty would be expected to provide a more intensive educational experience in the allotted time. One way of doing this, the report suggests, is to increase the amount of writing for students. Of course, more writing for students means more grading for faculty. In sum, unless teaching loads were reduced, the added work could be significant. Even if teaching loads were reduced, the net effect of such a reduction would be lessened by the increased demands of the more intensive courses.

3. Impact on Departments, Programs, and Schools:

- A. **Contact time and the sciences.** The issue of contact time is particularly problematic in the sciences. Adoption of the proposal would create potential inequities in the course structure for most science departments. At present, the number of credit hours assigned to a course in most departments is a direct function of contact hours. Upper division courses are typically divided into courses with lectures only and those that have lectures and regularly scheduled laboratories. In most departments, lecture-only courses meet for about 150 minutes per week and are generally assigned 3 credit hours. A course that meets weekly for 150 minutes for lecture plus an additional 120–160 minutes of laboratory is typically assigned 4 credits. Variations on this credit scheme exist among science departments but, in all fields, a distinction is made between courses involving only lectures and those that include both lecture and laboratory or laboratory only. What would science departments do with such courses if GW moves to a 4X4 system? Would they all be 4 credits? It is hard to imagine that a department could, for instance, make a 1 or 2-hour lab course into a 4 hour course. On the other hand, incorporating such lab courses into lecture courses would weaken both the lab and lecture courses.
- B. **Accrediting and requirements:** Some programs (notably Engineering) are circumscribed by their professional accrediting agencies and would have great difficulty accommodating their requirements to a four-year program. Indeed, some in Engineering say flatly that a 4x4 system is impossible.
- C. **Department/Program revisions:** Departments and programs would have to revise all of the requirements for their major and minor. This could result in difficulties for students caught in the transition period.
- D. **Schools revisions:** Schools would have to revise their General Curriculum Requirements. Once again, there will be difficulties for students caught in the transition period.

Recommendations:

Mandatory Summer:

Overall the EPC is convinced that the mandatory summer term would have a highly negative impact on the quality of education at GW. In our view, the alternative academic calendar report does not fully consider the risks involved in launching such a program. The EPC is not convinced that such a drastic plan would increase revenues sufficiently to justify its implementation.⁸

On the other hand, we concur that a well-planned, non-mandatory summer program might greatly benefit the university without incurring the risks that the mandatory summer term entails. Consequently, we strongly recommend the careful development of a plan to continue exploring the possibility of more robust voluntary summer programming at GW. We encourage the administration to provide incentives for schools, programs, and departments to develop plans for innovative programs during the summer that would attract either GW students or students from other colleges and universities. This might include summer institutes, specially designed summer programs for area secondary school teachers, and interdisciplinary programs centered around local museum collections.

4X4:

Since the 4X4 was suggested as a possible solution to the problem of student engagement, any recommendations by this committee should be based upon the likelihood that student engagement will increase if GW changes from a 3X5 to a 4X4. Unfortunately, at this time, there is no compelling reason to believe that a 4X4 would, by itself, increase student engagement.⁹ There is just as much reason to believe that students would fill their newfound time with non-academic activities. In light of this and, in light of the significant problems that the implementation of a 4X4 would cause for some programs (such as Engineering) and the unknown impact that a 4X4 would have on graduate studies, the EPC also recommends against moving to a 4X4 calendar at this time.

Concluding Comment:

We conclude this report by pointing to a comment from the report (found in appendix D). According to this comment, “it is likely that a change to either 4X4 or 14-14-10 (or both), if undertaken without proper planning and consensus in the community, could result in a worse situation” (appendix D, see also the response of Deans as noted in the report’s appendix G, p. 2)

As things currently stand, consensus in the community, in support of the 4X4 plan, the mandatory summer term, or a combination of the two, seems unlikely. Of the 190 current students polled, over 65% stated they would not have accepted a mandatory summer term

⁸ The estimates of possible revenue gains listed in the report are unrealistic because the report does not factor in the many hidden costs of implementing the program (e.g., the additional funding required to maintain the campus, the increased funds needed for campus services, the loss of revenue that currently comes from the rental of dorm space in the summer, to name a few).

⁹ The report itself says that shape of calendar is external to academic engagement (p. 8 and appendix D). Consequently, it concludes that simply changing the calendar will likely not increase student engagement

(see appendix F of the report). If the faculty responses to the EPC's request for such is any indication, there is something close to consensus *against* the mandatory summer term. In addition, there seems to be strong, although less consistent, resistance to the 4X4 proposal among the faculty. It is our feeling that, so long as these calendar changes are seen as impositions from the top driven primarily by financial considerations with little regard for the serious pedagogical and administrative issues and problems that such changes will involve, nothing resembling support will ever emerge from the faculty. In our view, the most important litmus test for any such far-reaching proposal is whether it will ultimately improve the overall quality of education at this university. In considering the proposal and the response from the faculty and students, we are compelled to state emphatically that the answer is "no."

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul B. Duff
Chair

Appendix A

A RESOLUTION ON THE PROPOSALS

FOR AN ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

WHEREAS, the University administration has requested Faculty feedback concerning the Report of the Study Group on An Alternative Academic Calendar at the George Washington University ("the Report"); and

WHEREAS, the Faculty of the School of Business and Public Management ("the Faculty") views the proposed increase to four credit hour courses without a commensurate increase in seat time as inconsistent with the educational mission of the University; and

WHEREAS, the proposed ten-week program would have the effect of mandating that courses which are not suited to a 10-week compression be taught in 10 weeks nevertheless, requiring Faculty and students to rush academic delivery, coverage, and learning of material; and

WHEREAS, adoption of the proposed "4x4" alternative would greatly diminish the opportunities for breadth and number of required and elective courses students can take; and

WHEREAS, the Report does not speak to the important corollary issues involving the impact of these options upon graduate education, upon research, and upon service; and

WHEREAS, the Report lacks any sort of Business Plan upon which the economic viability of the proposals could be discussed and evaluated; and

WHEREAS, the Report summarily dismisses potentially viable economic alternatives which would be far more consistent with the academic mission of the University than those alternatives upon which the Report focuses; and

WHEREAS, the four-credit course proposals addressed in the Report would be inconsistent with the accreditation requirements presently mandated by some states, and the impact of the proposals addressed in the Report on other accrediting agencies (such as the AACSB) is

presently unknown and would require much further investigation;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

- (1) That the specific proposals contained in the Report are not in the best academic interests of the University; and
- (2) That these particular proposals do not carry the endorsement of the Faculty and must not be implemented; and
- (3) That the Faculty stands ready and willing to develop with the administration other alternatives which meet financial exigencies while maintaining academic integrity; and
- (4) That any further discussion of the topics of alternative academic calendar and/or summer session restructuring more fully involve the Faculty so as to remove the severe academic limitations and ambiguities of the set of proposals in the Report.

Adopted by unanimous vote at October 3, 2003, regularly-scheduled meeting of the Faculty of the School of Business and Public Management

Appendix B

Comments on the Alternative Calendar and 4x4 Proposals

Department of History
October 3, 2003

The Study Group's report provides a thoughtful analysis of many of the pros and cons of the proposed changes. In doing so, it raises further questions about the practical consequences of implementing those changes. The Department's comments will not repeat the points already considered in the Report. Instead, we will discuss additional issues which pertain to the proposals. We, like everyone in the GW community, have a stake in seeing that whatever reforms are made are chosen and implemented in ways that address the University's needs most effectively.

Alternate calendar (14-14-10)

One of the intended consequences of the change to the 14-14-10 calendar is the admission, in stages, of 1,000 additional undergraduate students. These would be people whom we would not have admitted under our current standards. This raises a concern that the quality of our undergraduates would decline as their number increases. Furthermore, the substantial expansion of the student body works at cross purposes with another objective of the University: to promote more writing-intensive courses. In order to be effective, their class size must be smaller than that of the typical undergraduate course. How will that be possible with another substantial increase in the number of undergraduate students (on top of the years of increases which have already occurred)?

Courses taught during the 10-week summer semester would not be available for students other than juniors, which clearly is not in the interest of non-juniors. To compensate for that, we would have to teach those courses both in the summer and either the fall or spring semester. Such duplication of effort would reduce even further the range of courses we could teach. That, in turn, would reduce the attractiveness of a GW education. In the specific case of History, if we were to turn two courses we currently require of our majors (historiography and the research seminar), which now are usually taken by seniors, into offerings for the junior summer term, that would not constitute a full-time course load and therefore would undercut the logic of the summer term balanced by a fall or spring semester away. Furthermore, the research seminar in particular is ill-suited to compression into a ten-week term.

Staffing the 10-week summer semester courses poses problems. The Study Group's Report notes that having to teach during the summer could impede the research (or vacation) plans of faculty members who have school-age children and therefore could only leave the Washington area during the summer, while their children are out of school. The Report speculates that the problem could be resolved by allowing faculty members to "opt in or out of availability for summer teaching for a period of several years" (p. 10.) Given that each child must be in school for thirteen years (K-12) and that a faculty member may have more than one child, each of whom reaches school age in a different year, we are talking about a period much longer than "several years" during which

professors' schedules will be tied to those of their children's conventional school year. Furthermore, is it even legal to base job requirements on non-professional criteria, such as the number and age of one's children?

Dartmouth's example, though often cited, does not look encouraging when it comes to staffing the summer courses. This past summer, Dartmouth's History Department, for example, offered six courses taught by three full-time faculty members and one other person. Dartmouth's History Department consists of 24 full-time faculty members. If GW were to follow Dartmouth's pattern and only one-eighth of its full-time faculty taught during the summer semester, could that semester offer enough courses to be successful? If we rely too heavily on part-time instructors, we risk damaging the quality of GW's academic reputation.

Under the 14-14-10 calendar, more faculty members will be away during the fall or spring semesters to balance their summer teaching. That has the potential to cause serious problems for departmental and school governance. Even now, when a few professors are away in any given year on sabbatical or research grants, it can be difficult to find enough faculty members to staff all the necessary committees. Job searches, promotion and tenure recommendations, graduate admissions, etc. must be conducted with great care. That will be harder to do when fewer faculty members are available during the fall and spring semesters and they are overextended by having to shoulder more committee responsibilities. The Report proposes solving this problem through such measures as using e-mail as a link to absent colleagues or requiring that "all faculty should be present on campus during a certain period each year, regardless of whether it is the summer, fall, or spring term that is being taken off" (p. 11.) That is contrary to the spirit of the current arrangement, in which many faculty members count on a substantial block of time when they are not teaching to do research and writing, without being required to divert their attention to administrative and governance matters as they do during the regular semesters. In addition, faculty doing research in some parts of the world may not have such easy access to e-mail or the Web. Especially in the case of hiring, meeting candidates in person and seeing how they present their work to a department meeting are vital in assessing candidate and may rule out someone whose vita looked good on paper. Internet communications will not enable absent department members to participate in the direct observation of potential department members or in the give-and-take of department meetings in which candidates are ranked. The absence during the fall or spring semester of faculty members who teach during the summer term will also have an adverse effect on mentoring graduate students, supervising dissertations, and coordinating schedules for the dissertation defense. Such absences would also impede the exchange of ideas and research cooperation among faculty members within and among departments and schools of the University.

Apparently, the two existing summer sessions would continue to run along with the proposed summer semester for rising juniors. That would create a situation in which some faculty members choose to teach in the existing 6-week summer sessions and receive additional salary, while others would have to teach in the new 10-week summer semester at no additional salary, albeit with some other semester off. Those teaching the existing, *shorter*, summer sessions would have at least a

block of time left for research during the summer as well as the additional salary. This raises serious problems of inequitable treatment of faculty members.

The Report calls for the creation of "exciting" new courses "to attract students" and warns that, without this, the summer semester will not succeed (p. 12.) That implies that the courses we now teach have little to recommend them and that any much improved courses that we might create should be offered only to juniors. If this is true, GW has problems far more serious than something a new summer semester could solve.

Similarly, there is talk of gearing summer semester courses to take advantage of Washington's special attractions. That is fine, but it is important to keep in mind that there are many subjects well worth studying that have no particular connection to this city. Furthermore, if we cross a certain line in marketing the GW-DC connection, we will end up sending a message that GW is an institution of limited horizons which has little to offer besides its DC location.

The Report of the Subcommittee on Academic Issues makes the point that such studies as exist (few and limited though they be) indicate that a full-length term is preferable academically to one of ten-weeks, as is proposed for the summer, because it offers "the comparative advantage of longer periods to absorb and synthesis [sic] material, to complete greater research, and to write more extensively." The learning process is not the same in a ten-week term, even though the pace of work is more intense. This issue did not appear in the Study Group's final Report, but the members of the History Department share this concern.

Will requiring rising juniors to attend a summer semester drive away more students than it will attract? The comparison with Dartmouth is not persuasive. That college is located in a part of the country people choose to go to for summer vacations to enjoy the outdoors and where people complain of a heat wave when the temperature reaches 85 degrees. The same cannot be said of Washington. Besides, Dartmouth is a relatively small liberal arts college, where class size is much smaller; that, too, makes it different from GW. Prospective students who are attracted to the Washington location would have the alternative of other universities here which do not require a summer term in residence. Moreover, students may not welcome having a fall or spring semester off to balance the required summer term. The Report argues that the trade-off could be made attractive by conveying the message that students could do internships or work at jobs in potential career fields in their semester away without having to compete for such opportunities with undergraduates from other institutions during the summer. Many internships and jobs only exist in the summer because they are geared to the conventional academic schedule. Thus the purported advantage may be illusory.

The Subcommittee for Student and Parent Issues conducted focus groups on the proposed new calendar in which 75 to 80 students participated. Given that the total number of undergraduates at GW is nearly 9,000, that is a small sampling of opinion. The Subcommittee's report of views expressed in the focus groups indicates substantially more negative than positive comments on the two points for which these were reported. The general tone of *The Hatchet's* coverage of the proposed calendar has also been negative. None of this is conclusive by itself, but should be grounds for further reflection on whether to implement the proposed new calendar and, if so, how.

Four-Credit Courses

Would the 4x4 system really bring about the predicted 10 percent reduction in class size? Even though students would be required to take fewer courses, there could still be heavy demand for courses that are either required or especially popular. The Report anticipates a decrease in the number of courses offered in any given semester (p. 20.) That is another reason to be concerned about how large classes will be under the proposed system. Even if the 10 percent reduction does indeed occur, our many large courses will still be large even after the anticipated decrease. Once again, *substantially* smaller class sizes will greatly assist the University in reaching such stated goals as the expansion of writing-intensive courses and the promotion of student engagement.

A switch to four-credit courses and consequent reduction in the number of courses offered by a department or program raises two other problems. The change could be harmful in disciplines where the national professional association specifies in detail the curriculum for an acceptable major in that field. The Study Group's Report is optimistic about the ease with which material from deleted courses could be transposed into the courses which remain. However, the transfer could often be impossible. For example, one could not introduce material from a course in Chinese history into a course on American history.

Just how existing three-credit courses will be transformed into four-credit ones remains uncertain. One particularly unwelcome possibility would be that some committee from outside our department would be looking over our shoulders to tell us how to teach our courses and what we should do to justify counting them for four credits. Given that our students routinely complain that we now ask them to do too much work, perhaps we would not even need to add more required work to make our courses appropriate for four credits; we could just enforce our existing requirements with the expectation that students taking fewer courses at a time would really do what we ask of them.

The adoption of four credit courses appears to apply only to undergraduate offerings. Many graduate programs currently have master's students who take some 100-level courses for graduate credit. Under the proposed system, graduate students would take some four-credit courses for which they would receive three credits as graduate students. Although the undergraduate courses will in some sense ask more of students than the existing three-credit courses, the kind of work we ask of undergraduates is not likely to be the same as what we ask of graduate students, even in the form of the supplementary assignments graduate students do when taking 100-level courses. A similar problem would arise when undergraduates take graduate seminars, as seniors occasionally do. How will faculty members' teaching responsibilities be calculated if some of the courses they teach are for four credits and others are for three?

What will happen to the consortium system when GW, alone among the member institutions, switches to four credits for its undergraduate courses?

Conclusion

We in the History Department support measures which will promote GW's reputation as an admirable institution of higher learning and ensure that it has the financial resources to reach its objectives. The proposed changes to the academic calendar and system of course credits may indeed facilitate that. Before the University launches such major changes, it would do well not only to identify the initiatives but also to work out the practical aspects of their implementation. We hope that the observations offered in this memo will contribute to the discussion within the GW community of how to enhance the well being of this university.

Appendix C

September 25, 2003

TO: Members of the Department of Economics

FROM: M. Bradley, J. Cordes, and A. Yezer

RE: Comments on the Report of the Study Group on an Alternative Academic Calendar and the George Washington University

I. Comments on the problems with the current calendar

The Report argues that an alternative calendar might better utilize the University's costly plant and equipment of the University, which are currently underutilized. This is an interesting economic problem but the report does not provide estimates of the magnitude of the problem. Before solutions are proposed, it would be prudent to measure the size of the problem. The Report also argues that special programs could be developed around a "summer in Washington" theme that could be attractive to students. We agree but note that this does not require a revision of the calendar or imposition of mandatory summer enrollment.

We share the Report's concern about low utilization of university facilities between May and September and agree that summer curriculum development could be part of the answer. We are concerned that the report has not been sufficiently thorough. Some important concerns have been overlooked and some viable alternatives have either not been considered or dismissed too quickly. If nothing else, we are concerned about the viability of a plan that requires mandatory summer enrollment. The necessity for compulsion raises questions about the advantages of the proposal for the undergraduate student experience.

Although not explicitly stated, there appears to be another implicit issue in the Report - the need to grow the undergraduate population. Because it does not directly address this concern, the Report does not provide evidence to support the proposition that the undergraduate student body is too small. The optimal number of undergraduates (and graduate students for that matter) deserves open and direct investigation. If nothing else, the experience of recent years in which the undergraduate population has increased along with budget problems raises important questions about the economics of a larger student body.

In the next two sections, we highlight some of the important omissions from the Report and propose some alternatives that merit serious, detailed consideration.

Overall, we believe that the Report has begun an investigation into some interesting educational and economic problems. However, we suggest that the analysis contained in the Report is insufficient to justify its conclusions and that the issue of revisions in the academic calendar and summer educational experience requires more thorough analysis. We are willing to help pursue such an inquiry.

II. Omissions in discussion of the proposal

The Report recommends a required 10-week summer semester for rising juniors. Given that, to our knowledge, no other institution of higher education has such a scheme, there should be a detailed consideration of issues raised by this academic calendar. Why have other universities on a semester system failed to adopt a calendar with a mandatory summer session? What costs will be imposed on GW for being the "first mover" in this area? Surprisingly, the Report either ignores or considers in cursory terms these and other major issues. Some conspicuous omissions are listed below.

1. What would happen to the current summer school under the 14-14-10 plan and what revenue implications would follow? It seems difficult to maintain the 10-week semester for rising juniors in parallel with two 6 week summer terms. Declines in summer school revenue should be included in the analysis.

2. What are the implications for graduate programs? Presumably graduate students would be needed to serve as teaching assistants and sometimes as instructors in the summer semester. Would graduate courses also be squeezed into the 10 week semester?

Switching to a 4x4 schedule has major implications for graduate programs. The number of courses required for all graduate programs would fall by 25%. Thus 36 credit hour Master's degree program would shrink from 12 to 9 courses etc. Alternatively, keeping graduate courses at 3 credits and undergraduates at 4 poses problems for teaching loads and academically advanced undergraduates who take graduate courses. Scheduling problems for a campus with a mixture of 3 and 4 credit courses could also be significant.

3. Substitution of a 10 week summer semester for one 14 week semester reduces both classroom contact time and total time available for study. The result would be less time for learning. Is this consistent with an enhanced undergraduate academic experience? Will students be able to carry a full load during the 10 week semester? The report does not seem to recognize this issue and appears to assume that students would pay the same tuition for 10 weeks as for 14 weeks.

4. While the Report finds that some special summer in DC experience would be necessary to interest students in a required summer semester, the details of this educational innovation are omitted. In addition, the cost implications of developing the new attractive summer program are ignored and there seems to be an implicit assumption that teaching costs would be the same as during the 14 week semester.

5. The Report does not address the curricular nature of the 10 week session. There appears to be an implicit assumption that course offerings during the summer would be as diverse and class sizes during the summer would be comparable to those during the 14 week semesters. Given that the number of students would be approximately 30% of fall or spring enrollment, this is unlikely. Either there will be a very substantial reduction in the diversity of offerings or class sizes will be smaller. There will not be enough summer enrollment to populate the range of courses offered in the fall or spring. This is a special case of Adam Smith's more general postulate that the degree of specialization is limited by the size of the market.

6. The report lacks a business plan. The table containing cost analysis on page 23 is not a business plan and the computations behind it appear doubtful. For example, comparison of option 1a with 1b, i.e. adding 9 more full-time faculty, simultaneously lowers BOTH class size and teaching load by 10%. We were not able to locate a formal definition of teaching load but it seems impossible for 9 instructors to have such a dramatic effect on class size and teaching load. A proper business plan should include careful definition of terms. It should document and justify computations underlying cost and benefit estimates

7. The Report does not fully consider the workload effects on students and faculty of calendar changes. For example, discussion of the 4x4 class system suggests that meeting time per credit hour will be lowered from 2.5/.3 to 2.5/4 and hence teaching loads will be lower. But it argues that academic quality will be maintained by assigning papers and extra office hours. However these additional papers and extra office hours are NOT counted as an increase in faculty workload. Thus it appears that the fall in teaching load is based on the extremely narrow definition of contact hours as the only measure of faculty effort. Certainly a much wider definition of faculty effort is appropriate at GW!

III. Failure to consider alternatives

The Report dismisses alternative approaches to the problem of underutilization of the physical plant, including alternative academic calendars, that have proved successful elsewhere.

1. There is no discussion of the potential for gaining summer enrollment by improving the current summer school operation. Changes that would be needed to make summer in DC attractive to rising GW juniors could also make summer sessions more attractive for all GW students without imposing a mandatory attendance requirement.

2. The quarter system is dismissed by noting that it would make the GW calendar inconsistent with other Consortium universities and that the current system results in net revenue gains to GWU. However, there is no discussion of the size of these net revenue flows (are they large or trivial?). Also the quarter system might limit the ability of GW students to take courses outside GW but students on the semester system should find the quarter system attractive. Thus the net revenue implication of switching to the quarter system might even be positive.

3. The trimester system is also dismissed without detailed analysis. There is a claim that it would require more class time per week but this argument also holds for both the 10 week semester or when the 4x4 system and yet they were analyzed. Either of these proposals would reduce class time per course well below that in a trimester system where classes meet 2.5 hours for 3 credits.

4. As economists, we should also note the absence of any discussion of price reductions in tuition or dormitory fees for summer school as a way to encourage voluntary summer attendance. If off-peak enrollment and the underutilization of facilities in summer is the issue, price reductions would be the first response that we would recommend to any organization that lacks the market power to force consumers to buy anything. Should we not apply sound economic principles to our own practice?

We also emphasize the large implementation costs associated with the proposed changes. In particular, movement to a 4x4 system would require complete revision of the undergraduate requirements for all degree programs. Undergraduates seeking double majors or complex major-minor combinations will also have serious difficulties. Because students would be taking fewer courses, we can invoke the principle of Adam Smith again and note that the diversity of the curriculum would again necessarily be reduced. Major curriculum revision, loss of diversity, and other implementation costs, although they are one-time costs, are very large and can easily overwhelm modest levels of annual benefit associated with change. The "devil in the details" of implementation must be confronted before recommending changes.

We believe that decisions to change the academic calendar can have major benefits but they could also impose significant costs. Success in such an innovation is not guaranteed. It is important to: (1) give thorough consideration to all feasible alternatives; (2) consider both intended and unintended consequences, particularly when imposing mandatory changes on students and faculty; and (3) identify the opportunity that has the best chance of making GW a better and more attractive place to teach and learn.

Appendix D

Part A Alternative Calendar

The summer period is traditionally a time of focus on research in the chemistry department. This focus includes both faculty and graduate students who might ordinarily be teaching laboratory sections. It is also a period when scientific meetings are held drawing faculty and graduate students away from the campus. Faculty want to preserve the period of concentration on research that the summer months provide.

We currently offer a minimum of courses in the summer reflecting the needs of 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students. These are courses with limited enrollments, because we do not have the personnel to cover more students or classes. As it is, we often have to hire part-time faculty to cover several of these courses. This is not a desirable arrangement for a department that takes pride in the quality of its teaching faculty. As a whole, this department would not likely be disposed to teaching in the summer. Many faculty supplement their salaries at that time with funds from grants. How would they do so for the four months of fall or the five of spring? Clearly, they cannot. In addition, how would such an arrangement work with the agencies that support their research?

The only upper level undergraduate course we offer in the summer is Undergraduate Research. This is a period when undergraduates are engaged in research projects for which they receive a stipend to support that research activity. Undergraduates will not forego the stipend to pay for credits. They will go to other institutions that have stipends for summer supported research.

In order to offer more courses, we would need faculty and TA's to teach these courses. It is difficult enough to find part-time instructors for the lower level courses for the academic year, it would be more difficult in the summer. Thus, we would need someone to recruit faculty for these courses and the higher salaries needed to attract such faculty.

Part B 4X4

One of the considerations that seems to have been neglected in the discussion of a 4x4 curriculum is the fact that we do not have a separate graduate and undergraduate faculty or that all courses are either solely for undergraduates or graduates. The mixing of faculty teaching at both levels and integration of courses is healthy and valuable. Were a 4x4 undergraduate program to be adopted, it would cause severe problems for the operations of the laboratory programs for our undergraduates and the proficiency courses for our graduate students.

Faculty in chemistry teach both graduate students and undergraduates. This mix brings the latest in scholarship in our disciplines into our upper level (junior/senior) courses; concurrently it provides faculty the opportunity to interact with graduate students and give courses that reflect their area of scholarship. Rather than proliferate advanced courses with limited enrollments for upper level undergraduates, we encourage some of

our undergraduates to take introductory graduate level courses. A number of such students have done so for the past year. Likewise, graduate students who have lower proficiency in some areas of the discipline take upper level undergraduate courses for graduate credit (a higher work load is assigned.) Thus, it is a fallacy to suggest that four credit courses will affect only undergraduates. Additionally, the teaching portfolios of faculty will be of concern because of the mix of three and four credit courses in the “workload” planning.

Science majors require experiential learning in the laboratory. Our current lab courses are a mix of one and two credits. All, except Introductory Chemistry, are separately credited courses. Fitting those courses into the rigidity of the 4x4 will create severe problems by requiring that they no longer stand on their own with their own grading scales. Tacking them onto lecture classes will dilute both lecture and lab. Further, not all of our major tracks require all of the lab courses. This will complicate the process of building courses of even workload for the major.

It seems to me that if a 4X4 is adopted, the whole of graduate education will have to be revised as well. Since many programs have 30 credit hours, they will have to be shortened (reducing revenue) or lengthened (losing market share to 30 hr programs.) For these and other reasons, continued discussion of the 4x4 is wasteful of resources.

Michael King, Chair
Department of Chemistry

Appendix E

THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE

Response to Proposed Alternative Academic Calendar and 4X4 Curriculum

. The George Washington University theatre and dance program, situated as it is in the College of Arts and Sciences, has been attracting top talent in theatre and dance, students who are also in the highest tier of academic achievement. They choose GW because they can pursue both. Theatre and Dance at GW represent one of the truly finest features of undergraduate education – intellects who are also artists. We have been able to achieve extremely high artistic standards with students engaged deeply in various sciences and humanities. Most of our students are double majors including the marriage of physics/dance, dance/English, pre-medicine/dance, international affairs/dance, business/dance, theatre/English, theatre/psychology, theatre/electronic media, theatre/communications. It is quite amazing. GW stands out nationally.

Research with our undergraduates is deeply embedded in our theatre and dance program. Students work with faculty, guest artists, and each other through choreography for sites, stage, and video and performance, a natural result of research and creative process.

As a relatively small department in CCAS, and one using mainly non-traditional teaching spaces, *the faculty believe that the following aspects of the proposed changes present challenges (viewed either as opportunities or problems) to what we currently do*

RE: 4X4 Curriculum

1. 20% reduction in number of required courses. Many of our majors are double majors, and it seems that it will be difficult under a 4X4 curriculum for students to double major unless the course requirements for majors in all departments and the GCR requirements are also reduced by 20%. We cannot project whether our major would be the one chosen if it becomes impossible to have two majors.
2. Will the GCR requirement for course(s) in the creative and performing arts be maintained? While the college faculty has embraced for almost 20 years the inclusion of such a requirement, will the faculty continue to do so if the GCR is impacted by the 20% course reduction in a student's load?
3. Larger Class Sizes. If the number of students remains the same, class sizes will necessarily be larger as fewer classes are offered. Our non-traditional teachings spaces cannot accommodate larger class sizes, nor can the kinds of studio classes we teach accommodate larger class sizes.

4. Class period length. Under the 4X4 curriculum class periods should increase proportionally from what they are now to justify the additional credit hour and to accommodate (for our studio classes) the additional contact time required.

RE: Alternative Calendar

1. Staffing. Under the current calendar the department should have two additional staff members (a technical director and a costume shop supervisor) and one additional full-time faculty member in dance. These needs would be exacerbated under a required summer semester, not to mention faculty needs in theatre under the alternative calendar.
2. Graduate Assistants. The department's productions are made possible, in part, by the support of GTAs. A required summer session would necessitate that GTAs be available during this period of time with a corresponding increase in their number and compensation.
3. Teaching Facilities. A required summer semester would necessitate the use of The Marvin Center Theatre which is now otherwise used during the summer (CI, conferences). The air handlers in the theatre would have to be replaced to provide quiet operation so that they can provide AC during the hot summer months. At present these air-handlers cannot be on during performances because of their noise. Additionally, central AC would have to be provided to Bldg J, our dance studio, for summer classes.

A. Meeting These Challenges

Though students expect our programs in theatre and dance to support their interests in performance and production, and though the faculty's pedagogical approach to an understanding of the arts of theatre and dance is experiential, a philosophical "sea-change" may be one of the ways for the department to meet the challenges of the proposed alternative calendar and 4X4 curriculum. The department might move from an "arts" department to a "humanities" department, traditionally conceived, where knowledge and understanding are communicated and validated primarily through writing, discussion, and oral presentation. The department might then change its name to "Theatre and Dance Studies" or "Performance Studies" to represent its role in a larger "cultural studies" curriculum. Whether or not this would satisfy student interest and be at all competitive with other institutions is something that only detailed study would reveal.

Short of such a drastic change the department might offer more courses carrying 2 credits. For a required summer semester, if facilities are not available, the department might require a study abroad semester if appropriate programs are available during the summer. Or students might fulfill department requirements in non-production/performances courses (dramatic literature, theatre and dance history, play analysis). Perhaps students could take all of their summer semester course

requirements as an internship. This, of course, would reduce by one semester opportunities available to students in performance and production since there is no way to guarantee such experiences in internships or study-abroad programs.

Appendix F

Required Summer / 4x4 – Issues for the Performing Arts at GW

RJG/9 Oct. 2003

[Note: The comments below include input and feedback from several faculty of the Music and Theatre and Dance Departments; however, I take full responsibility for the language and content below, which has not been formally approved by either group of faculty. – Roy Guenther, Chair, Dept. of Music]

◆We already experience difficulties in our group activities (ensembles, theatre productions, etc.) because of semesters and years abroad; however, we recognize and encourage this as an important aspect of a liberal arts education. But requiring the entire junior class to take one of their junior semesters off will exacerbate this problem exponentially, and just at the time when, with their majors declared, they should be making great strides in their development. The experience of the remaining students (during “junior off” semesters) may very well be impoverished also, due to the absence of potentially key performers/actors/dancers during a fall or spring semester. For example, a survey of large music ensembles this fall shows that 32% of their members are current juniors. While the absence of half of them, 16%, for the entire year (i.e., 16% each semester), might not seem huge, ensembles are not dependent on raw numbers as much as they are on distribution. (After all, you can’t do a Sousa march without a cymbal player any more than you can produce *Othello* without someone to play Iago.)

In addition, Fall is audition time for the year’s productions, which would leave many “absent” juniors out of the running and ultimately shorter on experience. The performing arts are essentially community activities and depend on all (or nearly all) members of the community to be successful. Each member of the community has an important role to play; upperclass students in particular serve as role models for freshmen and sophomores. Both academically and philosophically, the arts communities at GW would be seriously weakened by enacting these proposals.

◆What about the Presidential Arts Scholarship Program? These awards require participation. If we cannot provide participation activities in the summer, how do the students “earn” their awards? And if they are subsequently away (as required) during the regular term, at the very time we need them (and that’s what the whole PAS program has been about), how are they “earning” their awards then?? (Of course, this isn’t about the students’ wanting to continue to “earn” their awards, but rather whether “we” will continue to provide the opportunities for them to do so.)

◆We do what we do, especially in light of our limited resources, at an extremely high level. In order for that to be true, one of the crucial ingredients is our ability to attract students to GW who come in part because they can major in one of the “flagship” areas and continue their artistic growth and involvement, unencumbered by their non-arts-major status (cf. the many institutions which restrict such involvement to majors in the arts). As a result, more well-rounded students wind up at GW, exerting their leavening influence in the classroom, in ensembles and productions, and in their residential communities. Because they contribute to the strength and quality of the arts programs at GW, they also help exert a profound cultural influence on the life of the campus generally. It is by no means clear that recruitment could continue at its currently successful level in this regard under the proposed changes.

◆Totally aside from the complex issues of FT faculty loads, assignments, etc. (and this is particularly hard on small departments where there are not overlapping specialties and where there simply are not sufficient FT faculty to offer year-around programs), there is the issue of PT

faculty, where they currently play a lead role in teaching (e.g., applied music). Summers are as important to them as they are to FT faculty, and for similar reasons: mental retooling, attending workshops, making recordings, performing/teaching in summer-related venues not open the rest of the year, vacations, etc. With only one class of students (Juniors) on campus in the summer, there is little likelihood of offering enough employment to attract them to stay on campus and give up any of the above activities. This raises a serious question about student “engagement” and maintaining students’ continued educational progress.

◆The proposals seem to emphasize the summer semester as a time, not only for normal-term course work to continue, but also for a unique array of courses and for more engagement with faculty (in research, etc.). Even if these are achievable goals, what about the impoverishment of community? An intellectual community depends on a complete spectrum of personalities, interests, and levels of engagement for its wholeness. Are the advantages of the required summer really great enough to outweigh the damage in the loss of community? Even for a couple of months? And when it’s lost again, or at least seriously diminished, during the “required absence” semester?

◆The summer itself will not provide juniors with a continuation of their artistic engagement due to insufficient other students available for ensembles, theatre productions, etc. 12.5% of their college experience and growth in their art will be lost; does that mean we owe them a refund?? (Far from allowing for a unique “introduction” to the major, the required summer would most likely find our juniors taking only non-music courses, hardly a substitute for a fall or spring experience.)

Additional points, related to more general curricular concerns:

◆In order to maintain the possibility for students to elect music performance study (which is primarily in 1- and 2-credit courses) at current levels, given the change to a basic 16-credit rather than 15-credit load, as proposed, the point at which overload tuition should be charged in a 4x4 scheme is at the 19th hour, not at the 18th hour as currently. To my knowledge, this has been neither addressed nor proposed.

◆The National Association of Schools of Music (our accreditation agency since 1979) requires that “one hour of credit *shall* [emphasis mine] be given for one period of recitation (50 minutes) plus two hours of preparation each week of the term.” (*Handbook*, 2003-2004, p. 75.) Whether this can be interpreted to allow for a 4-credit course to continue the current amount of seat-time (150’) remains unclear.

A counter-proposal: Given that the basis for the Required Summer / 4x4 proposals seem to be fiscal, various academic groups are considering alternative means for addressing fiscal needs in other, less drastic ways. In the performing arts, for example, we are well-positioned to plan a summer theatre institute that would attract our own and other students, that could involve one or more professional guest artists, and that would culminate in a public theatre or music theatre production. We would limit participants by audition so that all would have a defined role: production staff, design and tech staff, and actors/singers/dancers. Credit would be offered which could count as GCR and/or toward the major in either Theatre and Dance or in Music.

Appendix G

Department of Romance Languages

Effects of proposed changes in Academic Calendar and the 4x4 course load

4x4 course load

We are concerned about the effects on the quality of education that the new proposal will have.

4/4 means drastic reduction in numbers of Majors and Minor

Under the proposed 4x4 program, if the GCR's were to remain the same, they would account for 64 credit hours out of 128 needed for graduation. If we were not to change our requirements for the major, they would account for 40 credit hours. This, combined with the GCRs would account for 104 credit hours, leaving only 24 credit hours (or 6 courses) for double majors and minors. Given that about 75% of our majors are double majors, the proposed changes would drastically reduce the number of our majors and minors.

Concerning the teaching of language, **contact hours do count**. They are crucial for successful second language acquisition and cannot be replaced by extra homework assignments. Under the new proposal, our current 4-credit first-year language sequence courses will be reduced from 4 to 3 contact hours which is pedagogically unsound.

We also wonder how this proposal will affect the remuneration for part-time faculty who teach the majority of our language courses, given that many of them would be teaching 8 credits per semester instead of 6.

We appreciate that the 4x4 course load might lead to smaller classes and better student/instructor interaction, and might allow faculty more time for research.

In general the Department is opposed to the 4/4 system because the 4 credit system does not correspond to the number of contact hours per class.

Alternative academic calendar.

Many of the same concerns listed above apply to the alternative academic calendar as well.

Our major concern is over the staffing of the three proposed semesters. As a small department we will find it impractical to offer the required courses for majors and minors over three consecutive semesters.

Administratively, the absence of some faculty during a given semester will also adversely affect decisions regarding hiring, promotion and tenure.

On the positive side, the summer semester could be used to offer capstone courses for beginning majors. We would encourage the students to use the following Fall semester for study abroad.

The proposed system will affect the Department's ability to offer language course offerings given the fact that it is difficult to find part-time faculty to teach during the summer, as many of them return to their native countries during this period.

Appendix H

A Selection of Individual Faculty Comments Received by the Educational Policy Committee:

I don't know to what extent my reaction to this matters, because I'm 65 and a half years old and don't know how much longer I will be around, but this whole proposal sounds to me like a solution in search of a problem, rather than the reverse. As long as I have been here (30 years, now), "no one" has ever expressed, to me, dissatisfaction with the calendar as it presently exists.

I am on the faculty in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development. I can understand the proposed change for undergraduates, but I do not see how it would work for graduate students. We work mostly with working professionals. Some are teaching in schools and some are not. The ability to take 9 credits in the summer is important to our programs. This is possible because of the two six week sessions intermixed with either a summer long course or an intensive one week course.

I am also concerned about what it would mean for faculty governance and responsibility. At this point since we are 9 month employees there are few meetings called in the summer and faculty have the opportunity to divest of many of the extra responsibilities and devote time to research and writing.

In summary, this plan does not work for graduate faculty.

I don't mind the new proposed calendar as long as summer school is not mandatory for anyone. If some faculty teach in the summer and have either spring or fall off, how will those summer faculty be able to participate in department meetings or serve on committees? It's hard enough to get people to do administrative work now as it is. It will be much harder if a portion of the faculty is exempt from committees because they are not on campus half the academic year.

Also, if the purpose of this proposal is to enable us to fit more students on campus without needing new dorms or classrooms, who will teach these students? If the number of students on campus from September to May stays the same, but a portion of the faculty does not teach in those months, the workload of those of us who cannot teach in the summer would have to go up. Certainly the number of students we teach would have to increase. I see there are vague references to the possibility of hiring more faculty in the report, but I don't buy it. Where would we put the new faculty anyway?

So all in all, I oppose this plan. Going to a four course per student teaching load would

accomplish the same thing with many fewer headaches.

I have two comments on the draft report.

1. It says nothing (at least as far as I could tell) about how the change would affect GRADUATE education (i.e. Masters degree students/teaching). Since in the Elliott School, where I teach, most of our teaching is at the graduate level, we necessarily need to explore the implications for grad students/teaching.

2. As far as I could make out, there is no discussion of how faculty would be financially compensated if the university shifts to this new system. Presumably, we would all be put on a 12 month pay-scale, prorated from the present 9 month basis?

My view, based on more than 3 decades at GW, is that the existing calendar works quite well and the changes proposed seem to have little academic merit (and may cause much confusion) while they may be of value to the economic enterprise. Better use of facilities, I believe, can be accomplished by better planning and administrative control and not by academic disruption.

Clearly supporting arguments could go on forever, but they do not seem, necessary at this time.

* * *

There is a major problem with the possibility of being asked to teach during the summer. I run an externally funded research lab where I train both graduate students and undergraduates for future careers in research. It is during the summer that both students and I have the freedom of full-time, uninterrupted research to interact and work together. I commonly admit undergraduates into my lab for the summer, and I choose from both GW students and students from elsewhere. It is during the summer when they have time for this. I can foresee, that if I am required to teach during the summer, when my lab is full of people eager to learn, it will be a serious problem and I will be left with two bad choices. I will either have to leave the students to flounder without significant direction (which is required for neophytes), or I will not admit students into the lab during the summer when I am teaching. For both of these choices, it is bad for students and it is bad for my research program.

Having one of the current academic calendar semesters off from teaching does not substitute for the summer "research season" when so many students from GW and elsewhere search for research opportunities.

I am sure that there are many arguments pro and con for this proposed change, but I predict that this change will be a major problem for faculty who are expected to teach and use the summer months to conduct research.

Here's some brief feedback about the new plan. I've looked at the plan (per the distributed booklet), and I also read the Hatchet briefs featuring Bill Griffith and Craig Linebaugh. If you're responsible for "counting" - who's for and who's against - my heart lies more with the Bill G. point of view. The 4x4 plan seems more grounded in accounting than in quality of education, and the full-time [department] members (most of whom have families that still take family trips in the summer) would not be interested in having to do a summer term. If the summer term has to rely on part-timers, that's a bad deal (particularly with respect to grade inflation issues, and the like). Regards,

I direct an off-campus program, so my first concern with the alternative schedule is whether or not it applies to such programs. If it does not, I would be thrilled, except that many on-campus MA candidates takes classes with us as electives, and two different schedules might make that difficult.

If it does apply to us even though we do not place any demands on campus facilities, then I am deeply suspicious of the plan. We run two full semesters on the same fall-spring schedule as the main campus, but we have a different summer plan.

Since most of my students are professionals working in the legislative/policy world, they work on Congress's schedule. Some of them therefore like to be able to take a class in the last half of the summer, when Congress is in recess. Others prefer to take a class in the first part of summer so they can travel in August (either on vacation or to go visit congressional districts around the country). Given this, we operate two summer session for the students, and this has been a great success -- since adopting the two-session plan last summer, we have doubled our summer term enrollments -- the split-session plan is significantly more useful to our MA candidates.

I would be concerned about moving to a third full term because it will conflict with the working realities of my students -- we used to run such a summer term, and it was not useful to many of our students.

Here's my response, as a faculty member, to the Report of the Study Group on an Alternative Academic Calendar. In a nutshell, I am in favor of Option #3: Move to 4X4 and require no summer enrollment:

1. I am convinced that moving to a 4X4 standard schedule would have generally beneficial effects on student engagement at GW by decreasing the raw number of activities that students are engaged in at any one time, a number that is particularly high at this university, where the students tend to have both internships and part-time jobs on top of five courses a semester.

In the implementation of this model, however, I think it would be important to bear in mind the general tendency it may have to work to the detriment of small departments or perceived "marginal" disciplines. Having fewer courses overall might work against students' taking chances with electives. There will be, I'm sure, ways to work against this tendency. We need to explore those ways.

2

. I am not convinced by any of the arguments for requiring a summer enrollment. The primary reasoning for this suggested requirement appears to be economic, and I'm not convinced that this drastic a measure is necessary to address the University's apparent economic weakness. Rather, the administration should be looking much harder at the differential allocation of funds.

Furthermore, I feel strongly that this requirement will have a detrimental effect on our drawing power and hence the quality of the student body. While it is true that our applications are up and there's a waiting list to get into GW, I can't accept that as a valid reason to take a step that will have a chilling effect on our pool of potential applicants. The fact that this requirement won't be attractive to students I believe is quite apparent. The idea that Dartmouth has encountered no problem with its drawing power as a result of this requirement has everything to do with Dartmouth's location and its status as an Ivy League university. Basically, at the point where we're competing directly with Dartmouth for students, we might be in a position to try this, but not now.

I have read the proposals on the new academic calendar, and I appreciate many of the opportunities and concerns that the report aims to address. My brief responses are these:

- Going to a 4-credit 4-course system seems an excellent option: we need our students to work harder on their courses, and I believe this will help that. Right now, they are just overloaded.

- While I personally might very much enjoy the chance to have a spring or fall semester off by teaching a summer course, I am deeply concerned about the proposed required summer for three reasons:

: The report SERIOUSLY underestimates the impact of this proposal on the administration of departments, and likely on the university as a whole. In our small department, with 8 full-time faculty, we might well have 1-2 faculty on non-teaching duties each semester, in addition to regular leaves. Will those faculty be expected to come

to faculty meetings, do graduate recruitment, advise undergraduates, or sit in on PhD defenses when they are supposed to have the semester to do research and perhaps travel? Right now, by common understanding, we don't have faculty meetings or much in the way of undergraduate advising, etc. in the summer. But if we do have to offer that in the summer, and a certain number of faculty get compensatory time in the fall or spring, then what we have is effectively a speed up: the same number of faculty are required to run a department, hold office hours, etc. for 3 semesters a year instead of two. And with a percentage of faculty gone each semester, how will our department run during the year without enough faculty to do the work of running it? What about the university committees we serve on? In [our department], our faculty all work very hard on administrative and advising tasks, so I can easily imagine that we will, in fact, find ourselves doing a great deal of committee work on our "research" time. In fact, I can imagine little alternative, thus making it likely that those who teach in the summer will also advise undergraduates, go to meetings, read graduate admissions files, do dissertation defenses, and generally destroy the precious months of productivity that summers are supposed to provide.

: At one point, the report mentions that teaching in the summer might be very hard for faculty who have children in school and thus really can't go on vacation during the school year. This is indeed a genuine problem, and I am quite worried that it will be resolved by putting pressure on faculty "without" children to teach the bulk of summer courses. This would be absolutely discriminatory, and all the worse for the fact that will be quite likely to happen in all sorts of subtle ways, unless full measures are taken to prevent it.

: The requirement that all students do a summer semester will, I strongly believe, make GW LESS appealing to students rather than more so. For a variety of reasons -- students want to travel with friends or family, or they are looking for the summer internships that don't exist in the same way in the fall, or they just don't like to be told they have to do this -- I am very concerned that this will hurt our recruitment and our reputation.

[This proposal will] not work for the Engineering School. . . . My concerns [are] based on the fact that we have a fixed curriculum which, [in my field] has 40 required technical courses and 6 humanity/social science electives (128 credit hours). We have 1, 2, 3, and 4 credit courses in the current curriculum and fitting everything into 4 credit slots would require huge revisions of the program. [Our] situation . . . is similar to all of the other engineering programs. This is nothing like exchanging 40 three credit courses with 30 four credit courses as the alternative calendar is sometimes described.

If you would like more information about this, please let me know.

I'm writing to offer input on the possible alternatives to GW's current academic calendar. Actually, I'm not writing so much to respond to specific possibilities as to register my discomfort with the pace at which this process is proceeding. As I see it, there has been

very little time for faculty collectively--in schools, departments, or otherwise--to consider the specific merits of particular models. Indeed, I hesitate to weigh in here as an individual faculty member, since the effects of changes to the current calendar are so far-reaching in their implications. In such a context, whether I would prefer--or not--to teach a course during summer semester is less to the point than what a summer semester means for the education we offer.

That said, I'd like to go on record as arguing that any decision should be driven by academic concerns first and foremost. Or, in the case that decisions about changing the calendar are being driven by other exigencies (e.g., the urgent need to house 80% of our students), it should be clear to all concerned that such issues are taking priority.

In general, I'm open to aspects of all 4 of the plans, especially a 4x4 plan that really gives us the chance to promote a culture of learning and critical inquiry at GW. However, in the case that we do end up adopting one of the four, I'd like to see more opportunities to discuss the potential implications of the plan in question for the kinds of learning environments we can provide students.

Again, however, I don't think schools or depts. are being given adequate time to imagine, let alone address, these implications.

Finally--and I know this is beyond the committee's purview--let me register my discomfort with the way the discussion has been conducted thus far from the President's office. To my mind, the pamphlet mailed to faculty late this summer (mine arrived in August), together with President Trachtenberg's op-ed piece in the Washington Post, convey an impression of trying to "lobby" faculty to assent to what has essentially already been decided. Of course my information is anecdotal, but this may be one reason my colleagues have been so reticent to email comments to your committee.

I certainly know that in a period of economic austerity that includes a freeze on faculty and staff merit wage increases, it was jarring to receive a mailing from the President's office that duplicated (presumably at great cost) what was already available online!

My greatest concern is faculty workload. Will there be money -- connected to course relief-- allocated to support faculty work associated with changing of curriculum and programs?

Will the university use this opportunity to increase faculty teaching loads? We, the faculty, need specific details on this.

I am writing to you to register my concerns regarding the alternate calendar. Quite simply, I think that it is a horrendous idea. It represents a transparently obvious attempt to gain more money from students, without any

pedagogical value. I think that it is outrageous to propose to increase course credit hours without increasing contact time with students. It simply reflects "paying more for getting less". I also think that for many students requiring a summer session would also be too burdensome. Many students work full time during the summer in order save money to come to GWU. Over time this strategy may make GWU a less desirable institution for undergrads, reducing admissions and funds, rather than increasing them.

In addition, I think that adding a summer session will also cause substantial problems for the faculty. The summary report does not present plans for staffing summer courses. In fact, the proposed plan is so vague on details regarding implementation that to support it now would essentially be giving the University "carte blanche" when it comes to its implementation. For example, will it also be mandatory for Professors to teach during the summer session? The plan paints a rosy picture of a summer semester staffed by faculty who elect to teach during the summer. But, realistically, how many faculty will volunteer for summer sessions? Also, realistically, for some faculty summer sessions will be essentially mandatory because courses required for the major will have to be taught. What will the university do to cover the costs of hiring extra faculty to cover all three semester in the case that a specific required course has to be taught every semester?? In addition, what about TA's for intensive laboratory courses? Will the university allot additional funds? Could the summer sessions ever become mandatory for all faculty in order to full staff them - e.g., a professor's teaching load becomes 2-1-1 (thereby turning our 9 months salaries into 12 months of work?). These are just a few of the questions that arise.

A final concern regards faculty recruitment. In the long run I believe that this will actually be a deterrent to hiring talented young faculty who will have more flexibility and freedom at other institutions.

In summary, I cannot fathom why the alternate calendar is being seriously concerned as an option. Although it might solve some immediate financial problems, it appears that it will only create greater dissatisfaction amongst students and faculty, perhaps damaging the reputation and vitality of the University.

I am writing in light of your involvement with the proposed Alternative Calendar. I admit I have not read the full proposal in detail. Nor have I discussed it with my department. But I have engaged in several informal discussions with various people around the university, and I would like to share some thoughts with you.

As was indicated at the Council of Chairs meeting today, we are far more likely to influence the outcome if we have positive recommendations to make than if we just point out what we do not like about the proposal.

Given that the overriding (if not sole) concern seems to be to make more efficient use of university resources in the summer, it seems to me this can be accomplished with much less disruption to virtually all phases of campus life throughout the year. We could expand our summer program, develop "Summer in Washington DC" programs that would involve a combination of classes, internships, and community service, and no doubt invent several other initiatives that would attract students from other universities and communities. . . One target audience would be students who live in Washington DC and come home for the summer but attend school elsewhere during the academic year. Other students would come from other schools and communities and, therefore, would reside in our dorms. We could have programs of varying lengths, just as we do with our summer school program now. I admit I do not have the numbers on how many dorms or classrooms stand vacant in the summer, or what the revenue loss is from such inactivity. But it seems to me we could thoroughly explore these "voluntary" approaches before mandating that students spend at least one summer on campus and requiring departments to offer a full range of courses that would necessitate "encouraging" faculty to teach more in that time period.

Here are some of the problems I see, many if not all of which you may have already heard. I suspect requiring all students to attend at least one summer on campus will be a significant disincentive to apply to GW. Many need their summers to work, travel, serve in internships, or meet other responsibilities. The progress we have made in recent years in increasing the number and academic quality of our students will likely come to an end.

Particularly for small departments, scheduling required classes throughout three semesters rather than two will make it difficult to provide them in a sequence that will be compatible with the time frames of many students. And getting faculty to teach the required courses that will become necessary to offer in the summer will also be problematic. Having departmental meetings and conducting other normal departmental business will also become logistically difficult when presumably one-third of the faculty is not on campus at any given time. Perhaps as department chair I am a bit more sensitive to these matters than most. But there are real costs the university will pay even if not everyone is as sensitive to them.

Related to this is the proposal to convert classes from three-credit to four-credit offerings. If more contact hours are not part of the package, there may be accrediting problems. If more contact hours are added, it works against the objective of being able to deliver more credit hours in a finite amount of space. I also suspect this will result in a work speed-up for the faculty. Dean Frawley has suggested

one outcome could be that faculty currently teaching four three-credit courses in a given year will now teach three four-credit courses and have more time for research. I certainly hope this would be the case. But at this point I am not sure that this would necessarily be the result.

For a variety of reasons, I do hope we can thoroughly explore a range of options before adopting a plan that will be very disruptive of the university community, and in the long run (and perhaps not so long run) may well undermine the intended objectives.

* * *

In a time were everyone is searching for a global education and the Renaissance person, the proposed changes will create a more local education and a less educated person. The proposed 4 by 4 will guarantee less breadth and less exposure to different subjects (courses) and different thoughts (professors). Students will be unable to sample different subjects not mandated by their specified curriculum; thereby creating an even more single-minded graduate; experts in a field but unable to relate to others in different fields or even understanding the importance of different subjects. Students now take many courses in the liberal arts; enabling them to taste many different aspects of life. The proposal would limit this experience; students might have to declare majors earlier in their college career – with limited knowledge of opportunities

Practical reasons include – AACSB accreditation standards will be impossible to meet with a 4 by 4. There will be great difficulty with students transferring in and out of GW – GW will be out of sync with the rest of the universities. A required Junior summer will eliminate student leadership on campus for a semester. Juniors often hold position in student organizations and are the backbone of those organizations.

Ok, I for one am on research travel more than I am at home. I spend the entire summer doing research and put in long days and nights getting papers out. Sorry to waste away my summers but I think research is important. If you want another person who needs to go, he can be found at the Ashburn Campus!

I would like to offer a reasoned response to the academic calendar debate. My problem is that we have a debate going on, what we do not have is a proposal. In other words, there a number of possible changes being offered but the administration has not offered a cogent statement regarding what it proposes to do.

In my view the Senate should decline to participate in further discussion about the academic calendar until there is a proposal on the table.

I would like your committee to offer as soon as possible a resolution calling for the Administration to present a proposed new academic calendar - a study of alternatives in not a proposal. Perhaps you know more than I do, if so, I wish [you would] share the administrations "proposed academic calendar" with SBPM faculty.

I want to go on record as being opposed to the proposed schedule change. I am particularly concerned that faculty are being asked to approve a plan that is dangerously lacking in specifics.

I wanted to let you know that I am vehemently opposed to the proposed academic calendar; I will write another email explaining in detail why I believe it is a terrible idea.

In addition, I want you to know, that as requested, I sent several emails to altcal early in the summer and never received an acknowledgement or response. Below is one example.

I trust that you have heard the extent of negativity about this proposal from the colleagues that you represent. I have heard discussion of faculty "going on strike" or "voting no confidence" in Trachtenberg. At the same time, many of our faculty are beaten down and depressed and are not sure what to do to stop this proposal.

Reports from today's CCAS Deans Council (which I am on) and Council of Chairs suggest that faculty are upset but not sure how to make a difference. In my department, we continue to encourage faculty to write Paul Duff and their other faculty senate representatives.

Please let me know if you have any other suggestions.

While the booklet sent to the faculty certainly demonstrates that a substantial amount of thought has been given to the suggestion, there are several relevant aspects that may not have been adequately studied. In particular:

1. A careful "market survey" of potential students and their high school counselors does not appear to have been conducted.

This is important as we should make sure that any changes will NOT negatively impact our potential student base or have a negative effect on the advice counselors will give. For example, people may be concerned about the effect of not working during a summer in which most students do so on the hireability of students when they apply for post-college jobs. Naturally, I

can't guess what students and counselors will think of ---this is why a careful survey should be conducted by an independent group (who will not be affected by the results).

2. Similarly, what will be the effect of a calendar change on recruiting new faculty. Will faculty with school age children prefer to have their summers free? While one can survey recent hires----they may not be fully representative of the potential pool of new hires and they may hesitate to tell the whole story as they will be up for renewal or promo/tenure etc.

3. It wasn't clear as to the effect a change would have on our faculty accepting visiting appointments, especially during sabbatical years (for half salary). One advantage of the current system is that a faculty member going to California or abroad, can leave at the end of May and return in August of the following year. I am confident that such schedules could be set up with the proposed system but then it would probably affect other faculty members in the Department---perhaps some faculty members would prefer teaching in the summer--then their might not be a problem. In any case, this issue needs to be examined.

4. Finally, what will the effect of a change be on the University and its prestige? It will now be different from other Universities---will this be perceived as a strength or a weakness?

Until these issues are clarified it is difficult to assess the merits of the proposed change.

I imagine that you have already received other comments along these lines but perhaps I have added one or two thoughts to the pile on your desk. With best wishes for success in your analysis and thanks for taking this task on for the benefit of the faculty and student body—

This is my response to the proposed calendar changes:

1. I think that a mandatory summer session would negatively affect our enrollment.

2. The same goes for the requirement that a student not attend GW for one fall or spring semester; that also breaks up the continuity of the educational experience and the college years. If we were primarily a commuter school with a high percentage of older adult students the case would be different, but we are apparently in the process of increasing our on-campus residential facilities.

3. However, the truly serious problem with the proposal has to do with contact hours in the four classes taken in the fall and spring semesters. If four credit hours are given without an increase in class time (and it is not entirely apparent that this is the case with the proposals offered), students are cheated of the full instruction they are entitled to. Education is not a just a matter of reading and writing on one's own (which is done in any case) but of the interchange of a group of students and a faculty member with each other, as they collectively wrestle with the meaning and implications of what they are studying. And although we allow advanced undergraduates as an occasional possibility to get credit through independent reading courses, it strikes me as bordering on the fraudulent to establish as a general pattern that one can receive four credit hours for courses which meet only for three class hours. "Hours" as a measure of undergraduate academic credit would apparently no longer mean "hours." (Graduate education is a different case, in which a few select students work closely with faculty in the joint project of advancing knowledge.)

Here is a copy of what I sent to the alternative calendar remarks site

Concerns about the Alternative Calendar

First, I want to say that an open discussion about education, whether it is about the structure in which the content is delivered or the content itself is refreshing. Open dialog always helps me to consider the problem from new vantage points.

The following are my thoughts and concerns about the alternative calendar. They represent my ideas and not, necessarily, my department or school. While the suggested calendar may offer a path to a good, year-round use of physical resources, a university is more than tables, chairs and rooms. It is faculty, students and staff, the human capital of the institution that needs to be considered in the plan. The alternative calendar would make it difficult for the human capital to:

1. Provide courses for programs with small enrollments,
2. Provide sequences of courses for highly-structured programs
3. Provide enough contact hours in the summer for high-credit hour programs
4. Provide the support for double majors
5. Provide research contacts for research-oriented faculty
6. Provide sufficient and sustained student club leadership
7. Provide a total redesign of the current curriculum into a 4 by 4 plan in less than 3 full years of planning.

Let me explain, one by one.

1. If rising juniors are required to enroll on one 12-credit summer and either a fall or spring term as well, how we will be able to offer the classes to small numbers. Say all the juniors in a program (20 or fewer) enroll in the summer but 16 choose the fall option and 4 choose the spring. How we will run classes for only 4 students within the faculty assignments and still also accommodate the needs of the program for the rest of the students
2. If the program is highly structured, say requiring course A and B in sequence, and if all juniors enroll in the summer taking course A, we then have to offer two sessions of course B, one for fall and one for spring. To my mind this is a duplication of resource, not a streamline
3. Most engineering programs require many more than 120 hours (i.e. Biomedical is 134 hours, Civil is 129, computer engineering 128, etc). With only 12 hours in one junior session, how will students be able to take the sufficient courses to complete their junior year on time and be ready to continue to the senior year without a lost of time toward graduation?
4. How will we provide the course offerings for double majors and which courses will be taken in the summer? If we say only some majors have to use the summer calendar, how will students maintain themselves in these two majors. Who would pay for the additional tuition required to add the missing courses in the fall or spring to a student's course list?
5. Many research active faculty plan their summers to go to other institutions that are engaged in research (not classes) during the summer. These same institutions may very well not be doing extensive research in the fall or spring as their faculty turn their attention to teaching. Moreover, many agencies such as NSF and NIH, fund teaching and research workshops specifically in the summer months to attract such faculty. The alternative calendar will not enable our faculty to take advantage of the timings.
6. For programs that especially small enrollments, it would very hard to sustain the student clubs with leadership. Most programs rely on the rising juniors to be the class leaders. This flow enables programs to have mature leaders who do not have 'one foot out of the door' as many seniors might. With the summer calendar, juniors would be disadvantaged to positions of leadership. Moreover, programming that requires a full compliment of members (i.e. productions) would suffer in the fall and spring for lack of student registrants.
7. Consideration of the 4by4 is worthwhile BUT the process needs to be done carefully and over a realistic amount of time. For a highly structured program such as engineering to even consider moving to a 4 by 4 curriculum, the entire set of programs would have to be redesigned and our accrediting agencies require us to set our goals, benchmarks and collect data to demonstrate that we have achieved our outcomes. This requires time.

. . . I am very concerned that the issue of an alternative academic calendar has NOT been framed as an issue of academic excellence and I fear that much of our good work in trying to raise the academic visibility of the university is in jeopardy. I want to suggest that we reframe our discussion about an alternative academic calendar in terms of a slightly different rubric: that of alternative academic experiences. I think we should ask faculty to bring forward suggestions about how they might imagine improving our curriculum if they were able to create programs that took place beyond the traditional academic year and/or beyond the traditional academic campus. We might include summer programs as one possibility (that would probably work better for some departments/schools than others), but we could also begin to think about other options. GW could create several types of alternative academic experiences that would enhance the educations of undergraduates

To give you an example of another kind of alternative academic experience besides summer school, I would like to suggest that we seriously consider expanding our commitment to study abroad. In [our] Department, for example, we strongly encourage our students to study abroad if they can manage it because we feel that they will better understand United States culture if they have the chance to place it in a comparative perspective and because we feel that it is important they understand how people outside our borders understand the United States. In speaking with my colleagues, it is clear that faculty in other departments also feel that study abroad can and should be a vital part of our students' educational experiences. Steve Trachtenberg has done a terrific job bringing support for diversity and tolerance to the GW campus; I think he would be ideally suited to bring the message of study abroad to students in today's world. He's very sensitive to the way American students now, more than ever, need to visit other countries and engage in a dialogue with others about the United States and the world. Now, more than ever, they need to understand how other cultures operate. Finally, study abroad would not only respond to academic goals that many of us feel would be important for our students, it might also have the practical result of moving more students off campus during the year, one of the concerns that has been raised by the administration.

I have put study abroad forward as one possibility that we might seriously explore as an alternative academic experience. I am not arguing that it should be the only one we champion. Other departments and schools might have other needs and other ideas. What I am suggesting, however, is that we need to engage this issue as one of exploring alternative education experiences, not simply an alternative academic calendar. Getting students off campus or having them spend a semester (or a summer) being educated in a different format is a reasonable and desirable possibility for us to explore. But we should explore it in the context of academic excellence. I know that the alternative calendar committee has tried to encourage faculty to think

creatively about the possibility of summer school, but I think our current rubric (i.e. summer school on the GW campus) is too restrictive and unnecessary. If we are going to continue our drive for academic excellence, then academic excellence must be our framework for exploring this issue.

I would like to suggest, therefore, that Paul Duff's Educational Policies Committee be given a broader charge to query schools/departments/faculty about other kinds of academic experiences the university might investigate. I strongly recommend that they investigate study abroad options as a serious part of that charge. If we move in this direction, I think we might find some exciting ideas that will allow us to continue moving GW into the top ranks of universities in the United States.

Another issue which was not brought up (and which is a salient one for me) is the impact that this would have on faculty (particularly female faculty) with children who have off from school during the summer months. I was hesitant to post this to the listserv, being one of only 3 females in our dept., but GW is not a terribly female-friendly place -this would make matters considerably worse.

I apologize for not having brought this up earlier - I was actually under the impression that faculty would elect to teach in the summer, rather than the academic year.

has anyone mentioned the adverse impact on research if the Alternative Academic Calendar is adopted? Mandatory summer teaching might impact those who schedule summer research, where it might be inconvenient or impossible to reschedule. Seems like an identity problem as we appear to be pushing research and thinking of ourselves as a research university while setting policies in place that might act as a roadblock in terms of making the research goals more difficult to obtain.

Based on the discussion yesterday in [our] department I wrote down the following reasons (I certainly missed some) why the switches would be disasters for GW.

It makes it hard to have continuity in on campus activities and organizations such as the newspaper and clubs because juniors and seniors who tend to have leadership roles will be away for their required semester off.

For students who want to go abroad for a semester, they might be away from GW for their entire junior year.

Parents, students, guidance counselors as well as administrators at other schools whose impressions of GW influence GW's ratings will notice the shift from 3 to 4 credit courses and

will recognize that it reflects a reduction in contact hours and will almost certainly result in a less rigorous academic environment. That will damage GW's reputation and could make it a less attractive place for students to apply to when they are considering colleges.

The new proposal might eliminate the option for students to take and faculty to teach five week summer courses. For many students and faculty who want time for other summer plans that will make summer school at GW impossible.

The four by four and required summer attendance only allow for additional revenues if GW is able to attract that many additional students. Since students may not like the summer school requirement it may be harder to attract students.

Students can take summer school classes now and could take a semester off if they chose to do so. The fact that they elect not to do so indicates that requiring them to do so would make GW a less attractive place to apply to so applications might decline. Requiring students to do something that they are not doing voluntarily it not a solution it is a way to create a bigger problem. It might make more sense to offer students a financial incentive to take summer courses and to take a semester off.

GW has been very successful in recent years attracting additional undergraduate applicants. Why would GW want to do anything that would risk that momentum? Switching to required summer enrollment is a highly risky strategy that will risk all of the recent momentum.

How could a 10 week summer session fully replace a 14 week semester?

It is disruptive to have roommates who are only at GW for one semester in their junior year.

Textbooks in most areas are written for a 3 credit course.

For programs with a lot of required classes, the fact that students might take off the spring or the fall semester means that courses would have to be offered in both semesters that might currently (especially in small programs) be offered in only one semester. This would require scheduling additional small classes.

GW students come to GW largely because they like the idea of being at a good school in an urban location. Many are attracted to the idea of being in Washington DC. If they are faced with the option of coming here or going elsewhere when GW has a less attractive schedule including a mandatory summer term, they might opt to go elsewhere.

For accounting students where students must meet requirements based on state laws, the reduction in the number of courses offered could be a major problem. New York law requires 6 credit hours in several specific subject areas and meeting that requirement with 4 credit courses would be difficult.

The proposal to move to four classes instead of five per semester while maintaining the same number of classroom hours would do a disservice to the students. Many instructors, especially adjuncts, would not adjust the course material at all. In those cases, the students would learn less because they would take fewer courses.

Many professors would be tempted to increase the amount of material that their course covers. This would be hard without additional contact time since the main way that material is introduced in most courses is in class. The only real option would be to assign more work out of class. That would generally involve additional graded assignments. Grading assignments is very time consuming and faculty will be reluctant to require additional assignments unless there is some adjustment to normal teaching loads for faculty. If this proposal passes some adjustment in terms of reduced loads would be necessary.

For more structured programs [in SBPM] having only 32 courses instead of 40 would be a disaster. Students have very little flexibility in the current program and almost all of the business courses they take are required core classes or courses in their field of concentration. A reduction in the number of courses would mean that some of the courses that have been identified as being important would be eliminated from their programs. In most arts and sciences programs there is greater flexibility this is less of an issue but it is important to make the faculty in those areas aware that it is a concern in the business school.

For Accountancy there is an additional drawback of reducing the number of courses in their program. Most accountancy students are planning to take the CPA exam and having fewer courses would be a problem for these students. It would no longer be possible to cover all of the topics that the CPA exam covers. Some states require that specific courses be taken prior to taking the CPA exam and an accountancy program with fewer courses would probably not meet all of these requirements.

Getting more students to come during the summer could more sensibly be achieved by offering them a discount if they attend courses during the summer. That way students would voluntarily elect that option. To require it might lead to fewer rather than more students attending GW.

Being at GW for a summer instead of a regular semester will be a significant drawback for students since the social aspects of college are one the the most important attributes for many students. Students will not like having to take a regular term off and having to

attend school during a summer. Students that could graduate early often elect not to do so because they want to spend time with their friends. Having this requirement will discourage some students from applying to GW. Even if it reduces applications by 20% that would make it impossible to expand enrollments (the advantage of requiring summer courses) unless admission requirements were greatly altered.

The proposed schedule with four four unit courses instead of five three unit courses for undergraduates has a number of important disadvantages.

1. Professor Berman made the argument that an advantage of a 4x4 curriculum is that it would increase depth of knowledge in particular subjects albeit at the expense of breadth. It is not apparent that this is necessarily true, since depth can be increased by taking additional courses rather than more hours per course.

Consider, for example, introductory statistics, mathematics, or economics courses. Presently, some students are required to take two 3 hour courses as part of an introductory sequence in a subject. Under the 4x4 curriculum, students may not have adequate time to take two 4 hour courses. For example, in the current curriculum economics majors are required to take 6 hours of statistics (STAT 111-112) or 2 out of a total of 40 courses. Under a 4x4 curriculum, the price of two courses of statistics would become 8 hours or 2 out of 32 courses, a higher share of all courses they would take. A possible response would be for Departments to reduce the requirement to 1 course rather than 2. It is unlikely that students in 1 statistics course (with 4 credits) but meeting for the same number of hours could possibly cover as much material as 2 courses of 3 hours each. As a result, students would end up with less knowledge of statistics under a 4x4 than a 5x3 curriculum.

The same arguments apply more generally to courses in the major. In economics, students must currently take 13 courses of economics (out of a total of 40 courses). Under a 4x4, if students were to take the same number of courses (which would be required if students did not have increased contact time), then nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of all courses (13/32) taken by a student would be in his/her major. If one were to add two statistics and 1 math course (which are also required for BA majors), this would add up to 16 out of 32 courses that would be required for a major in economics. A BS (which requires even more math and statistics) would be even more difficult.

2. It is quite possible that retention would be lower with a required summer semester. My guess is that students would be deterred from applying to GWU if we implemented a required summer term with enforced absence in the following fall or spring. Students who are not dissuaded from applying may feel quite differently when they are here and

are actually faced with the requirement. Thus, transfers may go up. In addition, we are sending them off for a term, possibly to sample courses at another institution, which would make transfer easier.

I have a positive comment to make about implementing the Alternative Academic Calendar at GW.

A Summer Biology Institute could utilize our strengths in the Department of Biological Sciences in organismal biology much better than the current organization of the academic year. The summer is the ideal time of year for many courses in biology that use field work and tutorial workshops. By field work, I mean class trips into forests, marshes, streams, and other natural and disturbed habitats, where organisms can be observed and collected. These trips and experiences are most effective during the height of the growing season, that is, during the summer. Field work enhances the courses in our organismal section, where the content focuses on collecting and learning the biology of organisms such as plants and invertebrates, which are the organismal strengths in our department at the undergraduate level.

I can count 9 courses that would fit into the Summer Institute I am proposing. I have taught BiSc 142, The Flora of the Mid-Atlantic States, in the summer for many years. I now teach BiSc 158, Field Botany, in the fall of even years, and BiSc 159, Plant Ecology, in the fall of odd years, but both would fit well into the summer. Bob Knowlton teaches BiSc 130, Invertebrate Zoology, in the fall semester, and BiSc 167, Marine Biology, in the spring semester. These would work well in the summer. He used to teach BiSc 168, Tropical Marine Biology, in the Bahamas in the summer of even years and BiSc 169, Applied Marine Ecology, in Maine in the summer of odd years. He has moved the lecture part of those courses into the Spring semester to save tuition for the students, but his field work in those courses is still in the summer. John Lill, our newest member of the department, could teach Entomology in the summer, when insects are abundant. We used to teach Ornithology during the Spring, but dropped it some years ago when the professor moved to another university. It would be a perfect course to teach in the summer. The selection of possible field courses is large enough that they could be taught in alternate summers, attracting students to GW for more than one summer.

To teach field-based, organismal summer courses, the length of class time per day needs to be long enough to allow classes extended field time of several hours (half-day to whole day), to permit travel time and field time. These courses might require scheduling that worked best with other courses within the proposed Summer Biology Institute; for example, Monday and Wednesday might be for one course, and Tuesday and Thursday might be for another. Other permutations might be envisioned. These courses might be run as 4-week modules of an 8- or 12-week semester, giving students a total immersion to various subdisciplines of organismal biology.

Biology majors are required to take one organismal course for a B.A. or B.S. degree in Biology, making these courses an integral part of our department's offering. They may take as many as time permits.

A Biology Summer Institute would strengthen our role in educating students in organismal biology. Knowledge in organismal biology is an essential requirement for preparing for professions in marine biology, conservation biology, environmental

sciences, and systematics.

Appendix I

Department of Political Science – reactions to alternative calendar proposals

Susan Sell, Faculty Senator, Associate Professor of Political Science

On October 3rd, 2003 the Department of Political Science met and discussed the alternative calendar proposals. This memo is to convey my impressions from our meeting and discussion.

- Cannot support the proposal as is at this time

Overall, there was unanimous agreement that the Department of Political Science is generally concerned about the proposals, and would oppose the proposals in the short term until various concerns are addressed. The Department further noted the ambiguity of the proposed alternatives. Since so much is still unclear the department agreed that we cannot rush into it.

The following comments were not unanimously shared, but are meant to convey the range of issues that political science faculty members raised.

- Overall coherence of plan(s) a problem

Many faculty shared concern over the fact that it was not clear how all the pieces of the proposals fit together. For example, how would the proposed changes affect graduate programs? Furthermore, introducing changes such as 4x4 must be examined in the context of other recently introduced changes such as the small writing classes. These changes require more personnel.

Re: Mandatory Summer Session:

Would mandatory summer sessions be held alongside the traditional two-session summer school? How might mandatory summer sessions affect recruitment and student quality? How central is the *mandatory* summer session to the goals of the plan? Might mandatory summer sessions overwhelmingly be taught by adjuncts? What about alternatives to increase summer enrollment, such as high quality summer offerings such as summer institutes and programs?

- Less education for the money?

Re: 4x4 Proposal:

Several faculty members expressed concern that the proposals appeared to be “fraudulent” and that people would see through the wording of the proposals to conclude that the educational value of a G.W. degree would be reduced. Several mentioned that the end result – fewer classes without additional contact hours for the same price – is a thinly disguised tuition hike. A number of faculty members were concerned that we would be giving students less for the money. As presented the

plan's primary goal appears to be revenue enhancement. How will reduced numbers of courses affect accreditation standards (particularly for graduate programs)? Would the plan put many departments or schools out of compliance with accreditation standards?

The details of converting 3-credit courses to 4-credit courses remain unclear. While the plan is not to increase teaching loads, in practice it might have this effect. While increased contact hours could be a plus, the practical details remain murky. Three or four faculty members felt that a shift to 4x4 could be appealing as a pedagogical change, but only if it meant somewhat longer classes to match the change. What effects would the 4x4 plan have on double majors? Despite potential pedagogical attractions, the practical and likely outcomes appear to be negative.

- Additional faculty required

As presented, the plan aims to utilize resources more efficiently. However, it appears that we would be teaching the same number of students over 12 months instead of 9 months. The efficiency gains are not apparent. Instead many suspect that the plan is to increase enrollments overall. If this is the case in fact, the plan needs to include new faculty lines to accommodate an increased student body. While the plan acknowledges the need to hire more faculty, it is unclear on the number of new lines required. Furthermore, if more students are enrolled, student quality might be reduced. If student quality declines, this would hurt the university's rankings.

- More information about Dartmouth and Colgate needed

Further study of the Dartmouth and Colgate experiences is warranted. For instance, to what extent is the Dartmouth summer session staffed by adjuncts? Why did the Colgate plan fail? What were the administrative costs of implementing the plan, and then dismantling it?

Changing the Academic Calendar

Setting the Stage

A move to change the academic calendar was initiated by President Trachtenberg in his address to the faculty on 11 November 2002. Specifically, he proposed a change to a trimester system intending to achieve full utilization of facilities and time in order to improve the institution's financial condition. As he noted many higher education institutions are facing serious financial problems. Based on Faculty Senate reports, GW is no exception given its huge and increasing debt, its related debt servicing requirement, and other matters such as a weak history of attracting major donors. It is not a rosy picture.

Seeking ways to obtain better uses of resources is desirable and probably necessary. Looking at alternative calendars may be one of these ways, and the proposed direction is to assess the net benefits of a trimester system. The affinity for this system by the Administration has been registered within and outside the University. In appealing to the public for a trimester system, President Trachtenberg wrote an article for the Washington Post dated August 15, 2003 with the compelling title, "Why Not Full-Time Education?" In this piece he extols the benefits of trimesters and, while he makes no such claim, a reader may believe this is a brand new idea. In fact, this is hardly new and not only the idea but also its implementation have been around for decades. Currently, a very tiny number of institutions employ the system and large numbers of institutions where the system was executed have since abandoned it.

In his article President Trachtenberg cites benefits of trimesters to include three-year degrees and providing combined bachelor's and master's degrees in certain areas of study. These have already been offered by the University without the use of trimesters. What must be appealing to the public is the allegation that trimesters result in lower prices for students and the saving of a great deal of money for students and families. This is extremely doubtful since, for example, tuition is based on credit hours and not calendar time. It would be important to discover an instance where student prices were reduced as a result of implementing trimesters.

The stage has been set and the direction taken to change the academic calendar. In many organizations when the administrators adduce the benefits of a proposed change odds are the change will occur. In this case it may not be a fait accompli.

1. The Study Committee's Activities and the Report

A University Committee was appointed in January 2003 to study the probable impacts of a trimester system on the operations and goals of the institution. Their task was to identify the pros and cons of a changed calendar, but was not to offer recommendations.

In his charge to the Committee Vice President Lehman provided a copious list of relevant issues and questions to be examined which related to students, faculty, staff, general academic and operational matters, and finance. The Committee organized itself into several Sub-Committees, reflecting the subjects identified by Dr. Lehman. These groups issued reports containing some valuable information which were designated as "Appendices" to the "Final Report." Unfortunately --and for some unknown reason -- these appendices did not appear within the covers of the report. Of greater consequence much of the information should have been integrated into the report rather than being ignored. This would have included some amount of detail but at times, and this is one of them, "the devil is in the details."

The report misses the mark and does not provide any schema for evaluating alternative calendars. In a more narrow vein it accomplishes little or nothing for the assessment of a trimester system requested by the President or for the resolution of the numerous issues cited by Dr. Lehman. What is enunciated is maintaining a semester system and adding a required ten week summer session for rising juniors. This is proposed as a form of a trimester calendar, which is quite a stretch.

The slightly modified semester system is put forth by the Committee believing that it will not impose "needless changes in the fall and spring schedules of thousands of faculty and ongoing students." Another reason is that it "allows for more logistical downtime between semester for staff and for more psychological downtime for continuing students and faculty ." Referring to the logistical problems the report noted that the "downtime problem may help explain the fact that whole-year equalized trimester calendars are almost unknown in U.S. higher education today."

The Committee also looked at the quarter calendar and concluded it would impose needless changes and further would prevent GW from participation in the Consortium.

The assertions noted above could have been made without the benefit of the Committee's efforts. Nevertheless, the Committee was charged to develop some kind of conceptual framework and analytical capability to assess the pros and cons of alternative calendars. However, the conclusions by the committee do not flow from such an effort. Instead they provide a modified semester system that does not offer any future basis for evaluating alternative calendars and is tantamount to a recommendation, which was not their task.

The committee seems enamored with Dartmouth College's use of a required summer term while recognizing "significant disanalogies" between Dartmouth and GW. The institutions are sufficiently different so as to question any direct transference of programs. They differ markedly in their size, structure, goals and location. Further, Dartmouth is on the quarter system and employs different kinds of emphases (i.e., placing a high priority on numerous off-campus options and encouraging community outreach by the students). However, it would be of some interest to learn more about Dartmouth's experience. For example, do the students find the required summer term to be useful and productive? What are the views of the faculty? How are faculty chosen to teach in the

summer term? What is the mix of senior, junior and adjunct faculty engaged in the summer term?

There is a view by the Committee that requiring a whole class (i.e., the junior class) to attend the required summer term will enable/focus on the curricular offering. The degree of focus which can be attained this way is far from clear. Our students are not in a lock-step curriculum where, for example, juniors take only 'junior courses." In fact, we do not have "junior courses" and juniors majoring in one field may wish to take an introductory course in another field. The offering of summer courses to satisfy student needs will call for considerable guess work and will probably depend on which faculty are available.

2. Graduate Education and Research

It is extraordinary that issues pertaining to graduate education and research are totally ignored by the Committee although included in their charge. It is as if GW is an undergraduate college denying the presence of over 9,000 on-campus graduate and professional students and participation by hundreds of faculty in graduate education and research. There are strong interdependencies between undergraduate and graduate education and research. Many graduate students are part-time, which places special demands on the academic calendar. Research activities include individually and externally sponsored research committing students and faculty .To disregard these activities in assessing or establishing academic calendars can only lead to failure. A notable and important feature of our faculty is that many teach both undergraduate and graduate courses and all are expected to engage in research or equivalent scholarly activity .

In the article by the President cited earlier, he refers to the benefits "we can derive from our faculty and physical plant by not letting them lie fallow a good part of the year." This is probably an unintended but still misleading remark that some in the public may consider to be true. In fact, graduate education and research are not seasonal. Graduate student advising and examinations are year-round activities as are thesis and dissertation endeavors. Individual faculty research does not stop for the summer session; in fact in most instances the level of research activity increases due to fewer class work activities. Most sponsored research projects involving millions of dollars of support are year-round efforts.

Since the Committee did not consider graduate education and research, there is an implicit assumption that these activities were independent of the undergraduate offerings and calendar. Perhaps because they looked only at a slightly modified semester system it was posited that all other activities will proceed as in the past. This is erroneous even in this limited case and would certainly be incorrect if all units engaged in a changed calendar.

A serious situation is the rescheduling of faculty to cover the additional summer courses. Those that do might not be available during the academic year, negatively impacting full-academic year courses and proving very troublesome for students. Several years ago the University adopted a phase-out retirement policy permitting half-time appointments resulting in faculty being absent in the fall or spring semester. This caused havoc among a number of graduate students. Additionally, year-long graduate course instruction and/or sponsored research commitments will preclude many faculty from a teaching assignment during the summer. Faculty funded by external sponsored research will almost always be expected to be actively engaged throughout the academic year, if not the fiscal year. This would certainly place severe constraints on summer teaching, and the absence of faculty during a fall or spring semester would be almost impossible. It is also extremely likely to interfere with research colleagues and place graduate research assistants in a difficult, if not impossible, position. Further, having sponsored research faculty teach in the proposed summer term would likely raise fiscal difficulties in assessing the level of effort to be charged to the research grant or contract during the summer and the rest of the year. All these factors would obviously place the success of the research effort in jeopardy .

In summary, the Committee's report is not responsive to the issues raised by the President and Dr. Lehman. It did not provide a basis for evaluating the pros and cons of alternative calendars. Of at least equal importance, it ignored major related activities such as graduate education and research.

Submitted by,

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