

Compressed Calendar Study - Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Compressed Calendar Task Force was initiated in the fall 2005 semester, composed of four co-chairs and members from each of the four constituencies. The charge of the task force, as directed by Dr. Helen Benjamin, was:

To conduct a feasibility study looking at the possibility of instituting a compressed calendar at CCCCD. This includes reviewing various models (such as different number of weeks, trimester systems, block schedules) and identifying issues (union contracts, FTES impact, facility issues, staffing, cost, instructional challenges, technology challenges, etc.). Sub-groups may be tasked to work on the identified issues and possible remedies. A detailed analysis of pros and cons should be conducted.

Using the information from the report, CCCCD will determine whether or not to move forward on an entire package of the compressed calendar. This would be a constituency-based policy discussion with the Board eventually making a final decision.

If the decision is to implement, a detailed implementation and operation plan (including specific tasks and timelines) will need to be put together, carried out, monitored, and adjusted as necessary.

The task force convened its first meeting in December. At the initial meeting, the team created eight work groups to address issues related to a compressed calendar. Each work group was given a specific scope. The work groups were:

1. Scheduling
2. Financial
3. Student Learning and Success
4. Instructional Programs
5. Student Services
6. Instructional Support
7. Local 1 Contract
8. United Faculty Contract

The remainder of this document provides a summary of findings from each work group.

CALENDAR/SCHEDULING

The Calendar/Scheduling Work Group was charged with determining optimal course and session scheduling that maximizes room utilization and state apportionment. This group focused its review on a 16-week semester conversion with three flex days.

A review of room scheduling options considered state apportionment formulas, the extension of the day schedule and its effect on the evening program, and the number of flex days used. Session scheduling considered the impact to student course progression, reasonable intersession or summer length, and the availability of down time for facilities maintenance.

This review indicated the following:

- The District can maximize course apportionment if an even number of hours are scheduled over an odd number of days and courses with an odd number of hours are scheduled over an even number of days. Therefore three-hour classes would be scheduled over two days, four-hour classes over three days and five-hour classes over four days.

- A predetermined block schedule must be confirmed and all courses must be scheduled within this format to avoid conflicts that would impede student enrollment. This would create unscheduled small blocks of time within the schedule that could be minimized with careful scheduling.
- The goal is to schedule courses so the District reaches the maximum apportionment allowed for each course and on most occasions this means slightly exceeding the maximum.
- A winter intersession would provide students an opportunity to complete an additional course before a fall transfer. A summer intersession course would not provide this same opportunity.
- The District currently offers a 17-week fall semester and an 18-week spring semester. A 16-week compressed calendar with three flex days would represent a 16.6-week semester.
- Saturdays, with a minimum of three hours of scheduled offerings, can be counted toward the 175-day STRS requirement.
- Certain programs, because of limited facilities or external agency constraints (i.e. nursing, athletics, and dental), may need to continue functioning in a traditional semester.
- A proposed set of two 16-week semesters can be combined with either a winter intersession (four- or six-week sessions) and a regular summer session, or two consecutive six-week summer sessions.
- Course scheduling blocks in the compressed calendar will be longer so the school day must start earlier and end later so the same number of courses can be scheduled in the same room.

Next Steps

- Schedule an entire semester in the compressed calendar format to fully assess the impact on facilities and apportionment.
- Compare the advantages (cost, FTES) of block scheduling under the current calendar with that of the compressed calendar.
- Verify that the System Office will fund the additional hours generated in the 85-minute block format.
- Estimate the number of sections that could be offered in the compressed format (assuming a specified number of additional minutes) as compared with current offerings.
- Assess the impact on the evening program if day classes run later.
- The District should compare the advantages of the two session scheduling options.
- The District should review decisions made by other area community colleges regarding a compressed calendar schedule.
- Then the District should select its best option regarding the options for session scheduling.

FINANCIAL

The Financial Work Group was given the charge to determine the impact the compressed calendar would have on the District's revenue and expenditures. This work group focused its review on a conversion to a 16-week calendar since it is the compressed calendar used by most of the districts in California.

Colleges can increase revenues by converting to a compressed calendar the following two ways:

1. Using the state FTES formula to maximize FTES during the fall and spring semesters.
2. Increasing intersession course offerings by using the extra weeks gained in the conversion to a compressed calendar.

How the compressed calendar impacts a District's FTES depends greatly on developing an academic calendar and course schedule that will take advantage of the opportunities for FTES growth provided by a compressed calendar. Accordingly, if a goal of converting to a compressed calendar is FTES growth then the District needs to take great care to develop an academic calendar and course schedules that maximize FTES.

This work group's review indicates the following:

- Most districts converting to a compressed calendar experienced FTES growth rates greater than the state average. These districts grew approximately 3.89 percent more than the state average.
- The Scheduling Work Group estimates that the District could increase its FTES for fall and spring by approximately one percent.
- In the long run the District could increase its FTES by as much as 5 percent by increasing course offerings in a winter or summer intersession.
- The District receives approximately \$1 million from the state for a one percent increase in FTES.

Measuring the impact on expenditures is very difficult. While several work groups identified areas where people said they would need additional resources, the Financial Work Group could not develop generalizations about district-wide cost increases due to the following factors:

- Whether costs increase due to the implementation of a compressed calendar will depend on the unique circumstances in each department and many vary widely between locations. Also, the circumstances can change dramatically depending on how the compressed calendar is implemented, including intersessions.
- The District has endured several years of significant budget reductions. It was difficult to determine whether people's request for additional resources was related directly to the conversion to a compressed calendar or the general need for additional resources.

As the issue of going to a compressed calendar moves forward, developing a list of needed resources is critical. This project would be the next step in the fiscal area.

The Financial Work Group did note one area of potential expenditure savings. Section 20.4.5.2 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with United Faculty states that for all semester length AC and C course sections, instructors are compensated for an 18-week semester. This results in compensating instructors for 36 weeks per academic year. However, the state only funds the District for a 35-week academic year. If the District aligned its compensation formula to the actual weeks in an academic year it would save approximately \$440,000 based on information provided by District IT.

STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS OUTCOMES

The Student Learning Outcomes Work Group was charged with looking at issues related to student success, persistence, and retention. The work group looked at general research findings and surveyed other community colleges throughout the state who have converted to a compressed calendar. The group found that many of the community colleges surveyed did not statistically analyze success, retention, and/or persistence before and after the change to a compressed calendar. Of those that did, only a slight improvement was seen in these areas. In addition, very few colleges evaluated performance by students before and after adopting a compressed calendar. Those that did found that retention improved, especially in terms of withdrawals. However that impact depended on the course. This was also found to be true in terms of the faculty observations of student learning outcomes. They found that students in the math and sciences had a much more difficult time than those in other courses. Most of the institutional research departments reported that there was some change to course syllabi. Of

these, some reported that instructors simply had to split up classes into A and B series or drop parts of the curriculum all together.

Several faculty groups from different colleges found that the curriculum did change. They reported that the curriculum had to be manipulated to meet the shorter time constraints and to get through all of the course materials. This seemed to be particularly true not only in the math and sciences, but also in vocational courses. Of note is that two colleges reported a cut in lab hours for students. Most faculty groups reported that students generally like the compressed calendar schedule and did well in it. The population of students that suffered includes vocational students, students who are parents, and students who tend to be weaker students. Most faculty groups noted that they did not see a great difference in student motivation, but those who did report a change were almost all positive, indicating an increase in student motivation. Almost all participants reported greater difficulty in meeting their committee responsibilities and other outside obligations.

Next Steps

- Perform statistical analysis of student academic records for several sample schools to determine if student learning outcomes were increased or decreased.
- Determine any budgetary constraints in increasing lab hours and/or staffing associated with labs and tutoring.
- Determine what possible changes could be made, if any, for math and science courses in order for students have an easier time with their studies.
- Determine how faculty will be able to meet the time demands for other non-teaching faculty obligations in a shorter semester.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

The Instructional Program Work Group researched the effects of a compressed calendar on instructional programs. Its research was two-fold. The group gathered internal and external data that included both general questions regarding moving to a compressed calendar and more specific questions to determine issues, problems, and/or benefits of adapting instructional programs to a compressed calendar.

The internal data was gathered by sending e-mail and/or voice messages to faculty at each of the three colleges in the District (see Appendix A). The work group requested that faculty state specific concerns they have about placing the content of their instructional programs into a 16-week compressed calendar format (e.g. fitting in lab hours, state licensing exams, off-site internships, etc). The internal e-mail responses may be found in Appendix B. The work group's external data was gathered by dividing up the list of all 37 California Community Colleges that have converted to a compressed calendar. Each member in the group was responsible for contacting faculty in the programs listed above via telephone and/or e-mail. They were asked to share positive and negative impacts the compressed calendar schedule has had on their department or instructional program. In particular, they were asked to share any challenges they may have experienced. Group members also asked for any suggestions that might make the transition to a compressed calendar as smooth as possible. See Appendix C for the external e-mail survey and Appendix D for the responses received.

Below is a list of some of the most common issues and concerns expressed by the various programs contacted:

- Students' ability to retain information.
- Span of time between classes each week (ex. Wednesday to Monday).
- Scheduling of external internships.
- Amount of time for instructors to review work and provide feedback.

- Difficulty of lab scheduling and time.
- Long lab hours.
- Fewer course offerings due to longer class periods.
- Faculty load and class assignment.
- Cost of classroom materials (especially labs) for intersessions.
- Intersessions too short for courses with labs.
- Choosing not to have a designated finals week can be overwhelming for students and faculty.
- Lack of additional time for faculty and students to participate in committees, clubs and extra-curricular activities.

Next Steps

- There should be continued discussions with districts and problematic disciplines that have changed to alternative schedules to identify strategies that they used to adjust their schedules.
- A block schedule is an additional alternative and another opportunity to think outside the box and consider more creative scheduling.
- Further analysis should be considered to determine the impact on the education of the District's students and educational mission. The following questions need clarification: What does the Chancellor mean by recovery; by fiscal stability; by educational quality; by reorganization? There needs to be a clear mission and direction before considering change.
- There should be continued discussion about the financial impact of offering more courses and the benefit to the student and the District. There should be more of an advantage to change than just a one-time boost in money. More discussion is needed to discuss the permanent and long lasting benefits.
- Dialogue should continue among all parties to answer the many questions that remain about the working conditions in an alternative system. Will faculty work a full year (no summer) with only two- or three-week vacation time? Is the extra trimester going to be optional (i.e. teaching AC)? There may be the potential of significant pay increase opportunity. However, will management insist that faculty pay more for benefits in view of increased income?
- Continued dialogue is needed to address other issues. Currently faculty members are required to work 175 days a year. How will this be reconciled with two 16-week semesters? Some districts count Saturdays and Sundays. Should the District be counting those days now and should they be counted if the District goes to a compressed calendar?
- Additional review of Community Colleges, such as Modesto Junior College, should be done to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a compressed calendar system.
- The District must continue to solicit feedback to determine the impact of an alternative schedule on the high school students and the four-year university students that the District services during the summer session.
- Some courses and programs may benefit from a change and others would be adversely affected. The district should continue to solicit input from all stakeholders before a decision is made.
- Further discussion needs to take place to address the following issues: hours of work, units to teach, impact on counselors and librarians, access to library and other student services, student orientation schedules.
- Additional time is needed to review some of the research available on the impact of student participation in activities/service learning/volunteering on retention, persistence and success.
- The District should begin to look at course curricula of intensive short-term models. Also, District colleges could create a sequence of ESL courses where students are learning the

language (or area of study) with limited breaks in order to achieve outcomes more quickly.

STUDENT SERVICES

The Student Services Work Group found an array of responses to the surveys that were sent out over a month-long period. The responses ranged from positive comments including students liking the change, to negative comments that spoke of little time for maintenance of equipment and down time. There were also neutral comments saying there was no change at all. There were a great variety of departments surveyed within the California Community College system which seems to have led, at least in part, to these differences in responses. Departments such as admissions and records, library, financial aid, EOPS, and other were surveyed. As each of these departments have different functions and impacts on their campuses, the change to a compressed calendar had different effects on them all. This executive summary and following issue discussion will attempt to consolidate and explore the assortment of issues that came up for different departments, as well as the differences between colleges within the same department.

Within admissions and records departments that were contacted, the overwhelming data demonstrated that most of them found it difficult to obtain final grades from instructors and verify prerequisites in such a short period of time. A few colleges reported a need to tighten timelines for grade submission and impose penalties for not submitting grades on time. Another issue for most of the departments was the increased workload for staff and the reduction of down time. Finally, most reported that there was a positive impact on students who are able to complete their education faster. It was generally reported that the students liked the change when the move was made to a compressed calendar model.

Within academic affairs departments, it was reported, anecdotally, that FTES increased and again that students like the change. One challenge was to assist department chairpersons in calculating instructional hours. It was also found that the longer school day also conflicted at times with student work hours.

Within college bookstores, most reported there was a reduction in the amount of time available for preparation for upcoming terms, which necessitated an increase in overtime use. Additionally, more buy back periods were needed to address the increased number of terms. Some also reported an increase in sales. Finally, some reported that there was confusion for students as to which books applied to which term.

Within CalWORKS, an overwhelming number reported that the change was positive due to the fact that CalWORKS students are required to participate in a certain number of activity hours and the increased number of terms made it easier for students to fill these hours. The only negative reported was that it reduced the amount of time for studying.

Within childcare/children services, most reported a positive effect such as anecdotal higher retention rates and less burn out. There were some reports of difficulty for instruction and budgeting.

Within counseling departments, most reported that the compressed calendar was beneficial for students, especially in getting their education completed faster. Most also reported that additional hours were needed to meet the needs of counseling students.

Within disabled student services departments, it was reported that overall there was little impact for students in the program once they got used to the new timelines. Some DSS students like the shortened semester because it is easier for them to retain information when there is less time between tests. However, for other students who learn at a slower pace, mastering the course material is more challenging.

Within EOPS departments, responses ranged from additional time to complete projects in between terms to less time and increased strain on staff. Most reported that the change was beneficial for students giving them more options.

Within financial aid departments, most reported an increase in workload with less down time. Also, some policies required change, especially in terms of Return to Title IV Funds to the federal government. Most reported that the change was beneficial for students allowing them more options and to finish sooner.

Within job placement, it was reported that the operation may not change due to the fact that job placement tends to operate all year. It was stated that additional student staff was required to deal with the increased workload. Down time and planning time was also an issue.

Within library/instructional – media services, similar to other departments, it was reported that the students tended to like the change but that staffing was a challenge and there was less down time to attend to maintenance of equipment, cleaning, etc.

Within police services, responses were consistent for all of the colleges that were contacted. They reported that increased staffing is needed in order to extend coverage during the winter intersession and longer summer sessions, with an expected increase in calls for service.

Within student life/student services it was reported that most students liked the change allowing them to complete their education faster and stay focused. It was also reported that there was little down time and that planning of events was more difficult as well as participation in these events.

Next Steps

- Research how new policies may be enacted to ensure grades are in on time and what faculty contract issues may be involved for increased penalties based on late submission or missing final grades.
- Determine the required budgetary and financial changes/increases necessary to hire additional staff to deal with the increased workload.
- Convene student focus groups to determine any student concerns.
- Determine the cost of a media campaign and the changes that will be necessary to print and post on the Web.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

The instructional support work group collected information across the district concerning the impact of the compressed calendar on instructional support services. The primary concern was the lack of “down time” between semesters.

LOCAL 1 CONTRACT

No concerns were raised when soliciting input from all classified staff via email and speaking with Local 1 executive officers at their meeting. A review of the contract also uncovered no issues.

UF CONTRACT

There are many contractual issues that would need to be negotiated between the United Faculty and the CCCCD before a compressed calendar can be negotiated. Included in those issues are the following:

1. Faculty need to be compensated for changing all of their syllabuses to accommodate the changes in class meeting times.

2. Issues related to allocation and use of sick leave days need to be clarified:
 - a) Definition of “day” versus “evening” in a compressed calendar as compared to a traditional calendar day
 - b) Clarification of Friday as part of regular week or weekend
 - c) Interpretation of a “partial day”
 - d) Calculation for use of sick leave when an instructor is ill for an extended period of time, including most of a semester
3. Calculation of STRS credit for a compressed calendar
4. Impact on the scheduling of office hours
5. Impact on assignments for non-instructional faculty
6. Impact on the amount of prep time associated with each class
7. Impact on the arrangements for finals
8. Issues related to FLEX requirements:
 - a) Impact on the number of required FLEX days in a compressed calendar
 - b) Number of hours that constitute a FLEX day in a compressed calendar
9. Required numbers for each day that classes meet in a compressed calendar
10. Impact on holidays or other paid time off, for example, Spring Break
11. Changes in the maximum number of consecutive hours an instructor might teach or be scheduled for
12. Impact on reassigned time
13. Impact on department chair reassigned time
14. Impact on the evaluation process
15. Impact on teaching load
16. Impact on time available to complete and submit final grades