

Teaching and Learning Center
Roundtable
April 27, 2017
Modification of the Current Semester System: NOTES

Moderator: Norah Kerr-McCurry, Director TLC

Lead Faculty Fellow: George Reklaitis

Attendees:

Blackburn, Cathy	Malpica-Proctor, Oly
Burns, Bill	McAuley, Mara
Calogero, Caroline	Mura, Debbie
Chudnick, Steve	Patterson, Julie
Clark, Amy	Qaissaunee, Mike
DeVoe, Bill	Reed, Matt
Edward, Katherine	Rudinski, Joan
Gingold, Amy	Russo, Denise
Gramer, Brandon	Scimeca, Jane
Hartzell, Larry	Shafer, Phyllis
Jackson, Dinneen	Shaloum, Jonathan
Latte, Ave	Wang, Linda
Macomber, Darlene	Wilson, Fidel
	Zampogna-Krug, Ashley

- I. Introductions
- II. Could We Go to Eight-Week Terms? How?
 - a. All Courses
 - b. Online Courses Only
 - c. Cohorts (i.e., Full-Time Students; Part-Time Students; Majors; General Education)
 - d. Hybrids
 - e. Student Services (i.e., Financial Aid; Testing; Advising; Registration; Orientation)
- III. Should We Go to Eight-Week Terms? Why?
- IV. CBE: Competency Based Education

Norah opened the meeting noting that this would be the final Roundtable of the term. She reviewed the agenda, introduced the attendees and turned the meeting over to George.

George thanked everyone for the “great turnout” and stressed that this roundtable would be a good place

- to begin the dialogue to identify the pros and cons of the 7.5/8 week term;
- to identify ideas and academic areas for potential change; and,
- to move forward to see if this new model is possible and how it would be implemented.

Dr. Reed said “we could kick him out” if the group was uncomfortable. He noted that this eight-week term consideration is not a “done deal” and the target date can be changed. He explained that he had been faculty and he doesn’t want to impose this new initiative on the faculty. He said that if they are not receptive, it won’t work. Ave added that the faculty have assumed that it is a done deal and Dr. Reed has the authority to make it happen.

The discussion continued:

- Oly attended Dr. Reed's earlier meeting with Department Chairs where Dr. Reed initially brought the idea of the shorter terms. She was concerned that the idea went to a plan in less than two weeks’ time without an analysis of the consequences. While she was initially "puzzled and interested" she feels that we need to start gathering and analyzing data this summer before we decide on the feasibility of this plan. She expressed her concern on the general lack of communication of the news coming from the administration.
- Phyllis felt that the Fall term would be a better time to organize focus groups or committees to begin gathering research on the compressed term.
- George would like to move on creating groups to work over the summer gathering concrete ideas to present in the fall. Firm deadlines should be set. Norah agreed that it is time to lay out something concrete, continue constructive conversations and suggested asking Nancy Kegelman to design a mock schedule. It is important to decide if it can work.
- Mike said that the RIF was poorly conceived and it’s important to get more evidence to support the success of the compressed term to determine how it affects retention and completion.
 - Later in the discussion, Mike said he researched Peirce, Trident Tech and Odessa. Peirce works on a six eight-week term schedule.
 - At Odessa, the Engineering and STEM courses remain at 16 weeks and the Gen Ed courses operate in the compressed term
 - Brookdale ENGI program requires 68-72 credits and it was “a nightmare” trying to lay out an eight-week term. Dr. Reed said exceptions would have to be made for certain programs.
- Mara questioned whether it would be possible to have some courses run on the compressed schedule and some on the long term schedule. She has had an excellent

experience with the compressed term working toward her masters as a full time worker, mom and wife.

- Dr. Reed answered a question concerning a pilot; he said that the time it would take to assess the results wouldn't give us sufficient scale to matter for many years.
 - A phasing-in process could be considered since it might take a year or so to phase in across departments.
- Amy said the library people have begun to assemble resources. She has been using the email chains to gather research information on compressed schedules. Oly added that there should be a place created with links to different topics with discussion forums available for further conversations.
- Katherine recommended investigating completion rates for the seven-week semester. The research would begin with a literature review and search of existing data on the courses previously offered in this format at the College. She also recommends gathering assessment data from any course offerings conducted in this format to understand what impact a shorter semester has on student learning and whether the shorter semester improves or hinders overall retention rates. Would the dropout rate decrease or increase?
- Fidel is concerned about the impact this change would have on students and their voices should be brought to the table. Students who work full time may not find this possible. Mara asked whether a student could register ahead for classes and Bill responded that "in theory" it could be done. Joan agreed.
- Phyllis is concerned with the all or nothing approach to the new initiative and feels it is unfair to some students who can't accelerate. She also feels this could adversely affect the economically disadvantaged because they need to come in to Brookdale several more times per week which would increase their commuting expenses. Some students do not have computers and rely on the library.
- Ave suggested having an eight-week volunteer cohort for a limited time frame as a sample to see how this could work. Dr. Reed added that we "teach six-week courses now in the summer."
- Amy pointed out that smaller retention ideas could be less disruptive.
- Dr. Reed agreed that there are other ways to improve retention and completion and they must make academic sense and be affordable. He is open to everyone bringing forth their ideas.
- Larry expressed pedagogical concerns including the fact that some faculty cannot teach a 15-week course in 6 weeks. There is not enough time to cover the course material in a compressed term. He feels this decision should be left to faculty to decide if they can teach in an 8-week term what they do in 15 weeks. He also added that whatever is decided upon, the decision must be based on evidence and data.

- Brandon offered ways to improve retention:
 - Make sure students come to class prepared because not all do that.
 - Follow CUNY’s program of cohort tutoring on a regular schedule throughout the year
 - Encourage taking summer classes
 - Rely on advisors and set up meetings on a consistent schedule
 - Monitor attendance, advising and tutoring
 - Provide an incentive
 - Norah added that a lot of these suggestions could be accomplished with technology.
- Bill added that this discussion shows how much we care for the students and that the issues we are facing, such as declining enrollment and diminishing financial support from the state and county, are not going away; in fact, they will most likely get worse. Meetings like this allow us to work out ideas and we may need to make tough decisions to avoid consolidating with other institutions, such as Rowan.

George closed the meeting encouraged by the “great” discussion and he and Norah look forward to receiving emails with ideas on this topic.

