

Final Report of the 2016-17 Valparaiso University Academic Calendar Task Force

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1. Charge

The Academic Calendar Task Force (ACTF) was constituted in the summer of 2016. Our charge from Provost Biermann read:

“The academic calendar task force (ACTF) is charged to review the university’s academic calendar (when courses begin and end, significant events, and holidays occur) and corresponding system of academic terms (when terms begin and end for federal reporting purposes.) The task force is to identify the various pressures operating on that system, to gather external data about alternative systems of academic calendars, and to ultimately propose at least two calendar models for consideration by the strategic planning committee.”

Provost Biermann gave the ACTF the following tasks:

1. Recommend an administrative approval process for setting annual academic calendars and academic terms.
2. Develop procedures for future evaluation of the academic calendar and of academic terms.
3. Articulate the assumptions and desired characteristics of an academic year (i.e. the guiding principles) based on input from the community and best practice among our peers.
4. Develop at least two alternative models for academic years (not calendars), based on guiding principles. Gather feedback about these models from the campus community.
- 5 Present the models to the strategic planning committee with pros/cons.

2. Executive Summary

The Academic Calendar Task Force (ACTF) submits this report in response to the charge it received from Provost Biermann. Section 3 describes the scope and schedule of our work, while Section 4 lists the resources we identified and used. Section 5 presents the results of our work in two parts. First (Section 5.1), we crafted a set of processes for (a) annual construction and approval of the academic calendar; (b) review of the calendar every five years; and (c) approval of proposed calendar changes. Our proposed processes were approved by the University Steering Committee and confirmed by President Heckler. Second (Section 5.2), we studied various alternate academic calendar models and universities that employ them. Along with the current calendar, we submitted three specific alternate models (J-Term, May Term, and Balanced Trimester) to various segments of the VU community and met with 17 different groups of faculty, staff, and students to receive their feedback. Notes from these meetings were transcribed and sorted according to topic and calendar model and then reviewed at length by the ACTF.

Section 5.2 opens with a summary of opinions and attitudes on campus regarding the current VU academic calendar (Section 5.2.1). Relying on the typology identified in a much earlier published review of academic calendars, we devised a table (Section 5.2.2) containing a set of

evaluative criteria organized as academic, student, faculty, and administrative considerations. To these we added a final group of criteria consisting of the “What” statements in the new VU strategic plan. For every criterion, each calendar model is given a symbolic evaluation of + (advantage), - (disadvantage), 0 (neutral), +/- (mixed), or ? (unknown). Following this chart are narratives (Sections 5.2.3-5.2.5) that expand on the table by explaining our evaluation of these calendar models in significant detail. In studying the implementation of alternate calendar models by various institutions, we discovered that there are varying degrees of robustness, and these are indicated in the narratives by phrases like “light”, “robust”, and “all-in”.

Our report closes with a brief conclusion (Section 6). It does not recommend the adoption of any single calendar model but it does offer an example of the way an alternate calendar model might be chosen to achieve a specific strategic goal. We hope this helps the Strategic Planning Committee in its deliberations.

3. Schedule and Scope of Work

The Academic Calendar Task Force (ACTF) met nearly weekly from August 2016 through April 2017. We worked through the beginning of October 2016 on tasks 1 and 2 listed above, and spent the remainder of the academic year working on tasks 3-5.

4. Resources Utilized by the ACTF

In the course of our work we identified and made use of the following resources:

- Archives of the VU University Senate and subsequent Faculty Senate
- EAB report “Adapting and Introducing Academic Calendars”
- “Academic Calendars and Academic Costs” by Habecker and Smith (1982)
- Academic calendars of peer institutions
- Federal guidelines (Higher Education Act) and definition of credit hour
- Responses from campus units to current calendar and alternative calendar models
- Responses to student survey regarding Labor Day
- Responses to faculty survey sent by CAS Dean’s Office
- Research into institutions with alternate calendar models
- Conversations with representatives from Drake and Transylvania Universities

5. Results of the ACTF Work

5.1. Process for Academic Calendar Creation, Approval, Review, and Modification

It was clear from our charge that VU has no formal process for annual approval of its academic calendar. Additionally, we quickly discovered that VU has no established procedure for regularly reviewing and making changes to the academic calendar, and that with only minor modifications, the calendar has been in substantially the same form since at least 1972. In response to our charge, we crafted procedures for (a) annual construction and approval of the academic calendar; (b) review of the calendar every five years; and (c) approval of proposed calendar changes. These procedures are described in **Appendix A**. Responsibility for these matters had not been specifically delegated to either the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, or the University Council in the existing VU Instrument for Internal Governance. Thus, on behalf of the President, Provost Biermann convened a meeting of the University Steering Committee, consisting of the President (or designate), Chair of Faculty Senate, Chair of University Council, and President of Student Body. Also in attendance were the Associate Provost and the ACTF Chair. In November 2016 the ACTF proposal was approved by the Steering Committee and subsequently confirmed by President Heckler. In April 2017 language establishing the necessary procedures was formally approved and added to the Faculty Handbook.

From the archives of the (old) University Senate, the ACTF discovered the existing list of calendar guidelines, which are presumably still in force. These are given in **Appendix B**. We note that these guidelines provide more flexibility in some areas than we expected to find. For example, they specify a period of “one or two full weeks” for a recess from classes in the spring term, which makes it clear that the current two-week recess is not required by the existing guidelines.

5.2. Consideration of Current Calendar and Alternate Calendar Models

In September 2016, the ACTF circulated an email request to members of President’s Council and Provost’s Council for their thoughts on both (1) essential and (2) desired elements of the VU academic calendar. At about the same time we surveyed a sample of freshman and senior students on the matter of holding classes on Labor Day. These efforts to get feedback gave us some initial guidance as we began our consideration of the current calendar and specific alternative calendar models. As more people on campus became aware of our charge, task force members also received occasional suggestions via email for changes to the current calendar. We also reviewed the academic calendars followed by peer schools as well as other nearby universities. A summary of peer school calendar types is given in **Appendix C**.

The ACTF decided to develop the following alternate calendar models to submit to the campus community for feedback:

1. J-Term model
2. May Term model
3. Balanced Trimester model

It is important to stress that our Balanced Trimester model refers to three equal length terms of instruction corresponding to the traditional Fall, Spring, and Summer terms. By contrast, some universities operate on a calendar divided into “Quarters” (Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer), and some of them refer to the Fall, Winter, and Spring periods as “trimesters”, which leads to confusion. The ACTF did not seriously consider the Quarter Model, influenced in part by negative comments we received about this model from members of the Provost’s Council.

In order to streamline the work of developing alternatives, the ACTF decided to base each of the three models as much as possible on the dates of the 2016-17 calendar, making some changes to the length of breaks but leaving aside (for the moment) matters like the starting date of the fall semester and the number of weeks in a semester.

By the end of 2016, the ACTF had prepared a document contrasting the current academic calendar with the alternative calendar models. These models are included in **Appendices D-F**. We distributed this document to the units on campus recommended to us by Provost Biermann and others, and invited them to meet with small groups of ACTF members to provide feedback. We ultimately met with the following units:

- Provost’s Council
- Faculty Senate
- Student Senate
- Graduate Student Advisory Council
- Student Affairs
- Enrollment Management
- Advancement and Alumni Relations
- Facilities Management
- Finance Office
- Athletics
- College of Nursing and Health Professions
- Graduate and Continuing Education
- VUCA/Performing Arts
- Campus Ministries
- Library Faculty
- Office of International Programs/Office of Minority Programs
- Academic Advisors

During late January and February, two members of the ACTF met with groups from each of these units for 30-60 minute sessions and took copious notes that were subsequently transcribed into reports. Comments from these reports were later coded and combined into a master spreadsheet that could be sorted by topic and calendar model. In addition to this wide-ranging feedback, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) took the initiative to distribute the ACTF document to all CAS faculty along with a short survey. The ACTF

considered these survey results, along with written comments from this group of about 80 faculty members who responded.

Section 5.2.1 below summarizes attitudes toward the current VU academic calendar, based on the extensive feedback we received from the campus community. Section 5.2.2 contains an overview table summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of alternate calendar models using criteria we believe are relevant to the VU environment. Using the framework provided in the article by Habecker and Smith, these criteria are organized as academic, student, faculty, and administrative considerations. To these we added a final group of criteria consisting of the “What” statements in the new VU strategic plan. Sections 5.2.3-5.2.5 describe each of the alternative calendar models we considered and summarize the strengths and weaknesses of each. These assessments reflect not only feedback from members of the VU community but also discussions we had with representatives from Drake University and Transylvania University. Drake made the decision to adopt a J-Term calendar about 6 years ago, while Transylvania has followed a robust May Term calendar for many years.

5.2.1. Feedback on Current Calendar

In our conversations with various units, members of the campus community faithfully entertained alternative calendar models, but they also spoke from actual experience regarding the existing calendar, freely commenting on how it currently impacts academics, student life, campus life, advising, athletics, facilities, and other areas of the university. The ACTF thought it would be beneficial to summarize constituents’ comments about the current calendar, including how its opportunities and constraints are perceived to affect the areas noted above.

In the words of one unit, even if we do not adopt a “new” calendar model, making minor changes to the current calendar “may help campus morale” and would be “very welcome.” Indeed, our collection of comments by campus community members suggests that even if we do *not* adopt a new calendar model, changes could be made to the current calendar to improve academics, student experience, faculty and staff work/life balance, administrative operations, operation of the physical plant, etc. A list of such changes is provided at the end of this section (**A Modest Proposal**). Alternatively, if a new calendar model *is* implemented, the ACTF recommends that the perspectives noted below be taken into account in its implementation.

While this is not meant to convey a scientific sample, comments are summarized roughly in order of importance to the campus community based on frequency of mention within and across various conversations.

Semester Length

The most frequent sentiment to emerge across campus conversations is that the length of each semester (during the academic year) is too long and that we should seek ways to shorten both fall and spring. Conversations about “compression” largely focused on ways to shorten the

number of weeks while still meeting fundamental academic obligations. During our conversations these were often combined with perspectives (and proposals) regarding the timing and length of various breaks. For sake of clarity, however, we attempt to address each item separately.

Compression

Faculty and academic administrators expressed awareness of peer schools who operate with a 14 week semester including finals, and mentioned two different ways to accomplish this at Valpo. The most popular idea was to peg the weekly class schedule to the minimum number of contact hours required by regulatory and accrediting bodies. A second approach mentioned, which could be used in combination with the first, is to lengthen the core MWF class period from 50 to 55 minutes, and lengthen the TR class period from 75 to approximately 80 minutes.

Members of student affairs also supported the idea of a shorter semester for the sake of student mental health, so as to lessen anxiety. At least one person noted that shortening the length of the semester would effectively give faculty a pay raise.

We heard two specific perspectives that represented an opposite view. Specifically, undergraduate students and representatives from campus ministries worried that a more compressed semester might lead to additional stress due to an overload of work for students in a shorter timeframe.

Start Dates and End Dates

Discussion about semester length went beyond compression to include start and end dates in both fall and spring. Based on our conversations we posit that if the semesters during the academic year were compressed, people would generally prefer to see the *fall* semester start later, and for the *spring* semester to end earlier. However, this preference is clearer for an early spring end date than it is for a late fall start date.

Regarding start date in fall, participants in at least three discussions queried if it would be possible to start the fall semester after Labor Day. Relatedly, we also heard voices of those who feel strongly that class should not be held on Labor Day itself (since it is a federal holiday and many faculty and staff have children who are on vacation from school). However, we saw equally as many shrugs and heard as many references to private universities in Indiana who do hold classes on Labor Day. Somewhat to our surprise, there was no consensus preference among the freshman and senior students who responded to our survey. Our sense is that if Valpo were to continue to start classes before Labor Day, those university employees whose services are not required on that day would appreciate a Labor Day recess.

Relevant to end date in fall, faculty and staff from the VUCA defended preserving two weeks in the schedule between Thanksgiving and end of classes for the sake of events that are important

to the Lutheran tradition, since they are an essential expression of our mission. (We mention this here because it puts pressure on end date for fall, although there are more comments below about length and timing of Thanksgiving in particular.)

Regarding end date in spring, we heard a general preference to allow the end of the spring semester to come even earlier than it does now. Two arguments were germane here. First, many faculty members expressed the view that students are advantaged in internship and job placements if they can be released earlier in the semester. (Career Center staff did not necessarily validate this assumption.) Second, many felt that the overall semester could be shortened, and the end of the term could come earlier, if we were to reduce the number of days dedicated to finals, *and* if we reduce the number of days between the end of finals and graduation in spring. We heard no defense of maintaining the status quo for the current spring final exam period and current timing of graduation.

Breaks Within Semesters

Intertwined with the issue of semester length is the length and timing of various breaks within semesters. Campus community members had plenty to say on these topics, particularly regarding Spring Break, and to a lesser extent Thanksgiving break.

Spring Break

Somewhat to our surprise, a majority of campus constituents consistently expressed that the current two-week spring break is too long, falls too early in the semester, and makes the spring semester overly long. Faculty, along with other staff who work with students (student affairs, ministry, etc.), expressed the concern that undergraduates seem “significantly disengaged” after returning from such a long break. Additionally, in the experience of enrollment management, the timing of spring break is “awful” for recruiting prospective students due to a lost week and weekend at the height of campus visit season. The lively discussions about the length and timing of spring break also generated a variety of proposals for fixing these problems.

Length. Regarding length, we heard one proposal to limit the break to 2 days in spring, in order to provide “some break,” but to better mirror what is done in fall. On the other hand, we heard a different suggestion to implement a 10 day spring break, so as to provide more than a week for academic opportunities while also minimizing “spring break creep” that occurs when students leave early or return late. One middle of the road perspective was advocated by graduate students, for example, who suggested taking away one week of spring break, moving the break to later in the semester “when it is actually spring,” and ending the semester earlier.

It is important to acknowledge that across a variety of unit meetings, faculty from College of Nursing and Health Professions consistently defended the current length and timing of spring break, pointing out that both length and timing are ideal for certain existing overseas study courses. Additionally, undergraduate students defended the existing length of both

Thanksgiving and Spring Break, citing the value of time to recuperate, being able to travel without rushing, and allowing for extended travel home. In one conversation, athletics noted that a shorter spring break would complicate (or limit) travel for athletes who currently play in spring tournaments.

Timing. A specific perspective regarding timing of spring break was expressed by members of library faculty, faculty senate, and student senate, who recommended aligning spring break with area schools, so as to enable families to vacation together and to minimize childcare complications that arise with mismatched school breaks. It was also requested by alumni that if breaks are moved, to keep fall and spring national council meetings in mind, as they include students; additionally, to consider that moving spring break could increase attendance at the Horizon League basketball tournament.

Other comments were made about Easter holiday, but from these we can draw no definitive conclusions. Many regard it a positive that we currently recognize Good Friday as a holiday. Constituents from VUCA favored the early timing of Spring Break because it does not currently conflict with student-involved programming at Easter. Some advocated for Easter Monday to be a holiday as well, perhaps in conjunction with a shortened spring break, while others pointed out that now that Valpo is more of a regional university the need to have Easter Monday off for travel is not as acute.

Fall Break and Thanksgiving Break

We received comparatively fewer comments about length and timing of breaks during fall, but those we did hear largely mirrored what we heard about of spring. Namely, Thanksgiving break is too long and could be shortened to three days. (However, unlike with Spring break, we did hear specific vocal defenders of the existing week long Thanksgiving break.) While we did not hear much about fall break, student affairs staff noted that it would be beneficial to balance the two breaks better (that is, take days away from Thanksgiving and add them to fall break) for the sake of student adjustment. Discussion about Thanksgiving also raised awareness about the effect of breaks on international students. Multiple units (not just OIP) noted that week-long breaks are not long enough for international students to travel home (and might even shorten the breaks between semesters, when they are able to travel home); meanwhile, these students are impacted by limited campus services over Thanksgiving and even Spring Break. Again, as with comments about spring, the longer Thanksgiving break was noted to be a benefit for a service trip (WAVES).

Breaks Between Semesters

Above it was noted that if the fall and spring semesters were compressed, generally, campus constituents would prefer to see the fall semester start later and for the spring semester to end earlier. However, this general tendency should be tempered by one additional constraint: there is also a desire for a definitive and adequate break between fall and spring semesters not only

to address administrative needs but also for all (and particularly staff) to benefit from needed downtime.

Break Between Fall and Spring

Very early on in our campus conversations we heard about the need for a definitive break between fall and spring, mainly for the sake of staff and administrators who need to process academic actions after fall classes end and for staff and faculty to discharge necessary duties before the start of the spring semester. One very concrete suggestion included specifying a minimum number of business days between the end of finals and shutdown of campus, and the same before classes begin again in spring. Aside from imperatives about work that needs to get done, we also heard appeals for the need not only for students and faculty to take a break, but for staff to do so as well. Campus Ministries noted that we could do a better job “modeling the sabbath” by valuing (and actually taking) “time away, time for rest.”

Break Between Summer and Fall

In discussions about nearly all calendar models, staff and administrators in Facilities Management and Residence Life quickly and sharply cautioned that there is already a tight turnaround between summer and fall terms to perform upgrades and to prepare for fall move in. While this relates to a change in calendar model, we also mention it here because it expresses a specific experience with the current calendar. We heard no frequent, specific suggestions to alleviate this tight turnaround in the current calendar. Indeed, there were frequent questions about how summer camps might be impacted by various calendar models, which suggests that Facilities Management values and will continue to accommodate their contributions. However, we did note the expression of concern that any changes to the calendar that might rush the facilities turnaround even further can lead to safety problems for staff. As such, any changes to the existing calendar that may affect the timing of the break between summer and fall should be well coordinated with Facilities Management. We note here that the current university calendar guidelines specify “at least three weeks between the end of a regular summer session term and the fall term” (**Appendix B, #12**).

A Calendar to Accommodate Multiple Populations

Also within the context of the current calendar, various groups representing the academic perspective (professional advisors, specific colleges, Provost’s Council, graduate students) asked our committee whether it is possible to operate multiple calendars for different populations. While specific graduate programs were occasionally mentioned (e.g., PA, some online programs), the majority of comments contrasted undergraduate, graduate, and law as “different programs [that] have different needs.”

A Modest Proposal

It is quite possible that the Strategic Planning Committee will review the ACTF report and ultimately decide *not* to recommend one of the alternate calendar models we studied. In that event, it would still be possible to make some relatively modest changes in the current calendar in response to the feedback outlined above. We think these changes would be well-received by many faculty and staff and might even improve morale. Changes that should be considered in this case are:

1. Cancel classes on Labor Day.
2. Shorten Thanksgiving break from one week to three days (W-F).
3. Change fall break to M-T to balance the W-F Thanksgiving break.
4. Shorten fall and spring semesters by one week (perhaps by lengthening class periods).
5. Cancel classes on Easter Monday.
6. Align spring break with that of local public schools (last week in March).
7. Shorten final exam period to four days.
8. Ensure three weeks between end of final exams in fall and beginning of spring semester; or, specify a minimum number of business days after finals and before the shutdown of campus, as well as after January 1st and before the start of classes.
9. Better align the start date of classes for undergraduate, graduate, and law to simplify reporting.

5.2.2. Evaluation of Alternate Calendar Models

	favorable (+), unfavorable (-), neutral (0), mixed (+/-), unknown (?)			
	Evaluation Criteria		Calendar Model	
	(Enhance/Strengthen or Minimize)	J-Term	May Term	Trimester
ACAD	Flexible Academic Programming	+	+	+
ACAD	Creative Pedagogy	+	+	0
ACAD	Study Away Programs	+	+	0
ACAD	Student Motivation and Engagement	+	+	+
ACAD	Graduate Programs	-	0	+
STUD	Co-curricular Programming (including service trips)	+/-	+/-	0
STUD	Experiential Learning (non-internship)	+	+	0
STUD	Pre-professional (internships)	-	-	+
FAC	Faculty Scholarship	+	+	0
ADMIN	Student Recruitment	+/-	0	+
ADMIN	Financial Impact [of change]	-	-	0
ADMIN	Administrative and Reporting Burden	-	-	-
ADMIN	International Student Enrollment	+/-	-	+
OTHER	Ability to Address Concerns about the Current Calendar	0	0	+
SP	Be Welcoming and Inclusive	+	0	+
SP	Model High Quality Holistic Learning	+	+	+
SP	Achieve Long-Term Institutional Sustainability	?	?	+
SP	Provide Outstanding Experiences for Student Retention	+	0	+

5.2.3. Evaluation of J-Term Calendar

The January Term (J-Term) calendar is the boldest of the calendar options. This option could provide several advantages including opportunities for study away programs, innovative co-curricular programs, and novel courses. However, this option would also require significant resources, could prolong the academic calendar, and would require a dramatic change in campus culture. A successful J-Term would require active on-campus experiences (both educational and co-curricular) and off-campus experiences (i.e., study away programs). This would present a significant culture change and would require buy-in from faculty, administration, and students. Moreover, this option would require significant planning on behalf of the entire University in order to make a J-Term successful.

In the recent past, we have identified three comparable universities that have considered adding a J-Term: Drake University, Miami University (OH), and Xavier University. Both Drake¹ and Miami² ultimately decided to implement a J-Term, primarily to support study away opportunities; whereas Xavier³ decided against implementation due to cultural and cost constraints.

Academic Considerations

A J-Term would provide great flexibility in academic programming. Offering an additional term would provide students with increased options for taking classes to complete degree requirements, and should help with 4-year graduation rates. Additionally, most institutions utilizing a J-Term successfully offer creative pedagogical classes, both in content and in delivery. For on-campus experiences, a J-Term would allow professors to teach niche classes that both they and their students could find unique and interesting. For off-campus experiences, a J-Term would offer an outstanding opportunity to build robust study away programming. Most of the feedback we received regarding J-Terms at other institutions suggested that this term helped build a sense of community and increased the social bonds between students. Specifically, administrators at Drake suggested that the transition to a J-Term has had a tremendously positive effect on the campus culture. However, a J-Term schedule would be difficult for graduate and some professional programs due to issues with being able to offer short-intense classes, as well as difficulties with continuous enrollment for graduate school programs.

¹ <http://www.drake.edu/dc/j-termexperience/>

² <https://miamioh.edu/winterterm/>;

http://www.miamioh.edu/files/documents/about-miami/provost/reports/Calendar_Subcommittee_Report_2011.pdf

³ <http://www.xavier.edu/core/facstaff/documents/12015-07-28ReportonJterm.pdf>

Student Considerations

Implementing a J-Term could create new and interesting opportunities for co-curricular programming. For instance, seminars in leadership or vocation could be created to help build soft-skills. However, the timing of a J-Term could create issues for athletic, music, and theatre programming. Additionally, the MLK Day activities could be affected due to decreased on-campus presence of faculty and students. The implementation of a J-Term could also create unique opportunities to increase experiential learning. For instance, a J-Term could provide a focused experience in activities such as undergraduate research, field research (e.g., storm-chasing), editing films, completing artistic portfolios, and perhaps even capstone experiences. However, a J-Term could have a negative impact on some aspects of pre-professional development. The prolonged calendar could put time constraints on internships and summer employment opportunities. Finally, the immersive nature of most J-Term experiences are best suited to full-time students who do not have significant family or work responsibilities. Programs with students who have these responsibilities will find it difficult to offer intensive, three-week courses.

Faculty Considerations

For faculty who are not teaching in the J-Term, the month-long break from teaching obligations would provide an opportunity to focus on scholarship, or course design/redesign. Alternatively, faculty who are teaching during the J-Term would likely receive a one-course reduction in either the fall or spring semester, allowing additional time for scholarship. Although there is no guarantee that this time would be utilized for either scholarship or course design, a J-Term would provide faculty the opportunity to pursue these endeavours.

Administrative Considerations

Generally, a J-Term could have a positive impact on student recruitment. The timing of our current spring break is challenging for student recruitment because faculty and students are largely absent from campus during an important time for student recruitment. Additionally, students visiting during a robust J-Term would witness a vibrant and alive campus community. Recruiting visits could discuss the unique experiences of our J-Term semester with respect to both on-campus and off-campus activities. With respect to international student enrollment, there could be both positives and negatives. Additional semester options could provide international students the opportunity to complete their degree sooner. A J-Term might also allow for an increased ability to deal with international student academic actions, and provide adequate time for international student orientation for the spring semester. However, there is also the possibility that some international students travel home during the break and not return for the spring semester. The implementation of a J-Term would likely come at a considerable cost. Having campus running for an additional month would require additional resources and

outlays. Similarly, a J-Term would increase the administrative burden in areas such as reporting, financial aid, and faculty load.

Strategic Planning Considerations

- Model holistic learning: J-Term would allow for increased participation in study away programming and opportunities to develop co-curricular opportunities. J-Term could also provide additional time for faculty to focus on research, professional development, or course design to more effectively take advantage of technology for academic purposes.
- Be welcoming and inclusive: Although there is nothing directly welcoming or inclusive about implementing a J-Term, this semester could be utilized to have campus conversations about Lutheran identity and diversity in a global community. Study away programs would provide students and faculty a first-hand look at how people around the globe live and work, ultimately providing new perspectives on diverse cultures. Most peer institutions with J-Terms report that it is the most transformational aspect of their academic programming.
- Outstanding experiences for student success: It is expected that a J-Term would help facilitate outstanding experiences for student success due to increased opportunities for study away, and increased flexibility in academic scheduling for staying on-track for graduation. Furthermore, most schools report an increased sense of community among students and opportunities to build cohorts and social identification.
- Institutional sustainability: It is uncertain how a J-Term would affect long-term institutional sustainability. On the one hand, it would require significant additional resources; on the other hand, the opportunities provided by a J-Term could have a positive effect on retention rates for faculty and students, as well as potentially four-year graduation rates.

Other Considerations

J-Term calendar option does not directly address many of the current concerns about the academic calendar. However, the process of transitioning to a different calendar would require a more thoughtful examination of many of the current calendar concerns (e.g., length and timing of breaks, holidays, start and end dates).

Important Considerations if J-Term is Implemented

Implementing a J-Term would require thoughtful consideration to a number of potential issues. It would be advisable to consider shortening the semester to begin and end at approximately the same dates as in the current calendar. To do so would require shortening the current 2-week spring break to 1 week, and lengthening class periods to shorten the length of each semester. Administration should develop policies for faculty participation and workload. An example policy would require faculty to teach in the J-Term one out of three years. Faculty load would be reconceived as 3-0-3, 2-1-3, or 3-1-2. We should also consider the addition of new course numbers for courses only offered in the J-Term, and consider how cross-listed classes (undergraduate / graduate) would be affected. Administration must also consider policies for

students, such as whether J-Term is optional, required, or required for certain student populations, and by what provisions students could opt-out of J-Term. Implementation of a J-Term would be both financially and administratively burdensome. Additionally, it would necessitate thoughtful consideration to how facilities and student support services would be affected. The stakes are high for a J-Term, if done well it has great potential for improving the campus community, but designing and implementing a robust J-Term will be expensive in time and money. Overall, feedback from faculty, staff, and administrators was dichotomous. Individuals with previous experience under a J-Term were uniformly positive about this possibility at VU; however, individuals with no prior J-Term experience provided predominantly negative feedback about the prospects of a J-Term at VU. In the end, achieving campus-wide buy-in would be both important and challenging.

5.2.4. Evaluation of May Term Calendar

The specific design of May Term needs to be determined as these terms can be designed in different ways. One approach is to have two 6-week summer sessions where May Term overlaps with summer session I. This design causes little disruption to the current summer session configuration. With this design, the full summer term spans 12 weeks which facilitates some graduate programs and the accelerated nursing program. A major disadvantage of this design is students who must enroll in summer I are not be able to participate in any May Term programming. May Term can also precede the summer term. This configuration requires shortening the length of the summer term as there is not adequate time to offer a full 12 week term following May Term. This design would negatively impact some graduate programs and the accelerated nursing program.

The desired level of May Term implementation also needs to be determined. Offering a “light” May Term with limited programming would cause the least disruption and involve less cost to the University. Conversely, a more “robust” May Term that includes heavy programming would require considerable resources. Additionally, this version would be a significant change that affects the entire University and would require precise planning. Buy-in of faculty and staff will be essential for a successful transition.

Academic Considerations

Instituting a May Term provides opportunity for flexibility in academic programming. Study away, service learning, immersive, and interdisciplinary experiences may be implemented during May Term. The distinct timeframe allows for immersive experiences that facilitate creative pedagogy. For instance, Transylvania University successfully implements team teaching during May Term. Additionally, students who have participated in May Term may have increased engagement with the University. If May and summer terms ran concurrently, graduate and nontraditional (accelerated nursing) programs that have courses in summer I would not be able to participate in May term. For graduate programs, May Term could possibly be used for project completion.

Student Considerations

Instituting a May Term would have varying effects on student activities. It could provide a distinct time for service trips, touring, and experiential learning but students participating in

some co-curricular activities such as spring athletics may be precluded from participating due to scheduling difficulties. Additionally, students participating in May Term would finish the academic year later in May which may interfere with obtaining internships and summer jobs.

Faculty Considerations

For faculty who are not teaching during May Term, the time period would provide an opportunity to engage in scholarly work. Faculty workload needs to be considered. Faculty workload could be distributed across fall, spring, and May Term, or additional compensation for May Term could be offered.

Administrative Considerations

Since May Term occurs so late in the academic year, it would likely not have a substantial impact on student recruitment. However, instituting a “robust” May Term would have a substantial financial impact as resources would have to be allocated for programing, faculty pay, student services, etc. An increased burden on administration and reporting would also occur. The overlapping of May and summer terms causes difficulty in determining faculty load and financial aid reporting. If it were required, May Term might cause difficulty for International students.

Strategic Planning Considerations

- Model holistic learning: May Term has the potential to promote high quality holistic learning. Immersive experiences during May Term typically include an in depth exploration of certain subject matter.
- Be welcoming and inclusive: This immersive approach has been reported to enhance community building, which may promote student retention and being welcoming and inclusive.
- Institutional sustainability: It is unknown whether May Term would promote long-term institutional sustainability. A “robust” May Term with great student participation could promote this goal, whereas a “light” version that is simply used as a shortened summer term would have little impact.

Important Considerations if May Term is Implemented

Overall compression of the academic calendar would be necessary for a May Term to be feasible. Since spring term classes would need to end prior to the beginning of May, the current 2-week spring break would need to be shortened to 1 week. The length of final exams should be shortened as well.

Whether May Term is added onto the end of spring term or considered part of summer term would need to be determined, as there are different implications for these variations. Including May Term as part of the spring term would allow students to participate without additional tuition. This would be favorable for students, but place an increased burden on administrative reporting. Among our peer schools that follow a May Term calendar, examples of both options can be found (see **Appendix C**).

The timing of commencement would need to be determined. Commencement placed prior to May Term fits better with the “light” version of May Term so students who are not participating

may begin summer employment or internships upon completion of regular spring term. Commencement placed after May Term fits better with the “robust” version, but this would push back student availability for summer jobs and internships.

As mentioned above, the impact of a May Term calendar on faculty workload needs to be considered.

Student participation needs to be determined. Some participation would need to be required for a May Term to be “robust”. Making May Term optional will likely not result in great student participation and thus would fit better with a “light” version of May Term.

5.2.5 Evaluation of Trimester Calendar

A trimester system can be implemented on three different levels, labeled by the task force as “light,” “robust,” and “all-in.” While the three levels are detailed in the following paragraphs, it is important to note that the university can scale and time its decisions to move from one level to another according to the current strategic situation.

The “light” version of the trimester consists of a shortening of the fall and spring semesters. This allows the summer session to replicate those two terms. That is, each fall and spring can have two seven week mini-terms and so can the summer. (This assumes a 14+1 model; it can also be done with a 13+1 if additional time is needed between terms.)

The “robust” trimester is the light trimester with additional intentionality. For example, a May Term can be built into the first summer term to accommodate study away experiences. Or, as a second example, a transitional bridge program could be built into the second summer term as a bridge program for new first-time first-generation students. Select programs, such as the accelerated nursing program, can utilize a year-round academic calendar.

In the “all-in” level, all undergraduate programs, as well as the graduate programs, run year round with the intent of completing the undergraduate curriculum in a three year cycle.

It is significant to note that the “light” and “robust” levels can be implemented with a voluntary system of summer employment by the faculty, while the “all-in” version would require a full scale re-envisioning of faculty workload.

Academic Considerations

The trimester system offers no particular opportunity for flexible programming or creative pedagogy at the course level. It does create opportunities at the programmatic level by supporting accelerated programming for students, and by providing better use of summer classes to help students get back on track.

There are immediate benefits to the graduate school in the light level, and increasing impacts on the undergraduate program if the advanced levels are adopted. For example, the study away agenda depends on the financial model developed for the use of a May Term and may improve or worsen the current system

Student Considerations

There is little impact on the undergraduate co-curricular program unless the university adopts the “all-in” level. At that level, the university would need to significantly reconsider the goals of the co-curricular program and consider shifting from a traditional student experience to a career-oriented experience.

The trimester model would have little impact on non-internship experiential learning (e.g. undergraduate research) while having a slightly more positive for internships by providing a longer summer window.

Faculty Considerations

Faculty scholarship could be negatively impacted if faculty were required to teach in the summer as well as the fall and the spring.

Administrative Considerations

A trimester system would resolve many of the concerns with the current semester calendar by shorting the fall and spring terms. On the other hand, the “robust” and “all-in” levels would create other calendar problems by squeezing the third term into the year.

As the transition to a trimester system could be made over several years, there would be minimal financial impact because of the changes. There would be additional FM, dining service, and residential housing costs as the summer term begins to take hold.

It could be implemented with minimal reporting efforts, depending how an embedded May Term is developed.

A trimester system would benefit the graduate programs, with continuous course offerings and more entry points into the programs.

Strategic Planning Considerations

- Model holistic learning: The options for bridge and remediation programs both late and early in the first year are strengthened. The model creates more windows for internship opportunities, particularly in the summer.
- Be welcoming and inclusive: The model can support this if options for entering the university the second summer programming are implemented for selective new students.
- Provide outstanding student experiences and success: Inasmuch as the programming helps student to catch up or get ahead with their studies, this is beneficial. We note that some of this is already being done, but not in an intentional way across the university.
- Institutional sustainability: There may be potential for greater revenue generation. That is does the model attract more students to justify the summer, or simply move the same number of students through the system more quickly?

6. Conclusion

As the ACTF was charged with presenting and evaluating alternate calendar models to the Strategic Planning Committee, we make no formal recommendation and do not rank these models in order of preference. From our study we believe the choice of an academic calendar is indeed a strategic matter and has implications for VU as it works to achieve the goals established by the university leadership. The relative importance assigned to various goals should guide the university in its choice of calendar. We offer the following as an example.

If the most important goal were to increase student participation in study away programs, the J-Term calendar model would be a natural choice. By contrast, if the most important goal were to increase the graduate and continuing education enrollment, the Trimester calendar would be very attractive. If growth in study away programs and the graduate school were judged to be equally important goals, the combination of the May Term and Trimester calendars (with the May Term overlapping the first summer term) should receive serious consideration.

This simplistic example does not take into account many other relevant factors that must be examined when considering a calendar change. Short and long-term investments of both money and time must be estimated and carefully weighed. The probable return on these investments must be presented in a compelling way. Support for any such change from faculty, staff, and students must be nurtured through careful planning and communication. The mere adoption and implementation of a new academic calendar does not guarantee its success. The crucial “buy-in” that a successful calendar change requires will only come by enlisting the help of all these groups in the planning process.

7. Appendices

Appendix A Procedure for Reviewing and Modifying VU Academic Calendar

(Forwarded by Academic Calendar Task Force (ACTF), October 5, 2016; Approved by University Steering Committee, November 9, 2016; Confirmed by President Heckler, November 14, 2016)

Recommended Processes for (A) Adoption/Modification of Calendar Guidelines and (B) Annual Calendar Approval

The ACTF communicates the proposal below to the Provost with the suggestion that the Provost request that the President convene a meeting of the University Steering Committee according to the provisions in Article V Sections 2-3 of the VU Instrument for Internal Governance in order to formally adopt the proposal and have it reflected in the

necessary handbooks and bylaws of the Faculty Senate, the University Council, and the Student Senate.

A. Process for adopting/modifying existing calendaring guidelines*

1. Anyone can submit suggestions for modifying calendaring guidelines at any time to the Registrar.
2. The Registrar reports these suggestions to the Provost's Council which determines whether they warrant a full review. This review will be conducted by a task force identified or selected by the Provost.
3. If the task force returns to the Provost a proposal to change the guidelines, the proposal is circulated to the Law School, EPC, GEPC, Student Senate, CCPC, and Provost's Council for feedback.
4. The task force reviews the feedback gathered above and sends a revised proposal to the Faculty Senate for further review. Its recommendation regarding the proposal is sent to the Provost.
5. The Provost sends a final proposal to the President's Council for approval.
6. An evaluation and review of the calendaring guidelines will be conducted by a task force appointed by the Provost at least once every five years.

The workflow in this process follows:

Anyone → Registrar → Provost's Council → Task Force → Provost →
[Law/EPC/GEPC/CCPC/Student Senate/Provost's Council] → Task Force → Faculty Senate →
Provost → President's Council

B. Annual Calendar approval process

1. Annually, the Registrar constructs a calendar for the academic year three years out, consistent with the approved guidelines.
2. This calendar is circulated to the Provost's Council for feedback.
3. The Registrar makes any modifications s/he feels appropriate in response.
4. The calendar is submitted to the University Council for approval.

The workflow in this process follows:

Registrar → Provost's Council → Registrar → University Council

*Guidelines include the structure of mini-terms, start-stop dates, etc.

Both of these processes would be included in the description of the Registrar's duties in the Faculty Handbook (Section 2.2.4).

Appendix B Existing VU Calendar Guidelines

Valparaiso University Academic Calendar Guidelines

(reproduced verbatim from minutes of the University Senate, dated 12/13/1972, 4/21/1982, 3/21/1984, 3/18/1987, and 10/16/1991)

Mr. Mark Ilten, Chairman, Educational Processes Policy Committee, presented, on behalf of the Committee, the following recommendation concerning the University academic calendar.

A. That, beginning with the Spring Semester, 1973-74, the Administration be charged with drawing up the University calendar according to the guidelines approved by the Committee.

B. That the University calendar, for any year, shall be established four (4) years in advance, according to the guidelines in effect at the time of preparation. (this was amended on 3/21/1984 to be two (2) years in advance).

C. That the following guidelines be followed in constructing the University calendar:

1. 70-75 class days so arranged that there shall be at least 14 5-day weeks with the possible exception of holy week, the week in which Thanksgiving falls, and the week of mid-term break.
2. Fall and Spring semesters need not be exactly equal in length.
3. The fall semester ends no earlier than December 15 and no later than December 22.
4. One full calendar (Monday through Friday) week for fall vacation during the semester.
5. One or two continuous full calendar (Monday through Friday) weeks for spring vacation near the middle of the semester.
6. No classes on Good Friday and Thanksgiving.
7. Reading days are desirable.
8. Four and one-half days for final examinations.
9. Final examinations to end by Tuesday noon prior to spring Commencement.
10. There shall be two major summer terms, each contained within a six week block of time. When pedagogically feasible and desirable, courses may be shorter than six weeks to accommodate tours, field-trips or other experience-intensive courses. (revised and approved, 10/16/1991)
11. The minimum number of contact minutes will be 700 per credit hour for every course, excluding those with labs, offered during the summer term (same as during the academic year). (revised and approved, 10/16/1991)
12. There shall be at least three (3) weeks between the end of a regular summer session term and the fall term.
13. Provision shall be made for classes or laboratories which meet once a week to be scheduled to meet at least 14 times during each semester.
14. A long weekend (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) near the middle of the Fall Semester. (approved 4/21/1982)
15. That Martin Luther King's Birthday (January 15) be commemorated beginning with the 1989-1990 academic year. (approved 3/18/1987)

Appendix C Peer School Academic Calendar Types

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Peer School	Has a J Term (January term)	Has a May Term (shorter term in May)	May term overlaps with Summer term or ends before Summer term starts	Has a Trimester Calendar (14-16 weeks of equal length three times per year: Fall, Spring, Summer)	Has none of the Calendars mentioned in Columns B through E	Has an online calendar that is same or different from Columns B through E
Baldwin Wallace University	No J Term	Yes May Term	Summer Term starts before end of May Term (overlaps)	No Trimester calendar		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Bradley University	Yes J Term	Yes May Term	Summer Term starts after May Term ends (no overlap)	Has a Trimester calendar (3 equal terms of 15 weeks each)		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Butler University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester
Creighton University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Drake University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester

Elon University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		No calendar term for online programs
Fairfield University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester
Gonzaga University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Hamline University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Ithaca College	Yes J Term	Yes May Term	Summer Term starts after May Term ends (no overlap)	No Trimester calendar		No calendar term for online programs
John Carroll University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	No calendar term for online programs
Loyola University Maryland	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Mercer University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester

Providence College	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Quinnipiac University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Saint Joseph's University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester
Samford University	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Santa Clara University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	Quarter Calendar		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Seattle University	Yes J Term	August Term	Summer Term ends before August Term starts (no overlap)	Quarter Calendar		Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester
Stetson University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
University of Evansville	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester

University of Portland	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Same pattern as J Term May Term or Trimester
University of Redlands	No J Term	Yes May Term	Summer Term starts after May Term ends (no overlap)	No Trimester calendar		No calendar term for online programs
University of Scranton	Yes J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar		Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Villanova University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	Different pattern from J Term May Term or Trimester
Xavier University	No J Term	No May Term	n/a (No May Term)	No Trimester calendar	No J Term May Term or Trimester evident	No calendar term for online programs

Appendix D Proposed J-Term Academic Calendar

I. Summary

In the **January Term** model (commonly referred to as **J-Term**) the academic calendar is partitioned into three terms: fall semester, J-Term, and spring semester. Typically the fall semester meets for 15 weeks from late August through Christmas break (4 months), the J-Term for 3-4 weeks in January (1 month), and the spring semester for 15 weeks from February through May (4 months). The approximate number of months in each of these terms yields the “4-1-4” terminology that is often referenced under an academic calendar that includes a J-Term.

An example of the application of a J-Term calendar is presented in Section II. Generally, in this calendar option the academic year would begin at the same time it does now - the end of August. However, due to the additional term, it would extend the calendar through the end of May, and potentially place commencement in June. Although different iterations could be considered, this version of the J-Term calendar recommends several additional modifications to the current calendar. First, it reduces the Thanksgiving break to three days (W-F). Second, the application of a J-Term model would require limiting spring break to one week. These two modifications allow for the academic year to begin toward the end of August and to terminate prior to the end of May.

The J-Term model is designed to achieve two primary goals. First, J-Terms present a variety of opportunities to create robust off-campus (i.e., study away) programs. In this model, the J-Term serves as an opportunity for students to embark on short-term study away opportunities with minimal disruption to their overall academic plan of study. Current spring break study away programs could be altered to fit under this calendar model, and additional study away opportunities from other schools and departments could be created to provide students with a variety of meaningful study away options. Second, the J-Term would be utilized to provide an opportunity for students to take classes on-campus. Although on-campus J-Term offerings are likely to vary by college and department, many of the on-campus J-Term courses would focus on “core” courses that are requirements for different majors, niche classes that would allow for students to explore special topics, and/or classes that may benefit from the focused, intense timeframe. A more detailed list of advantages of the J-Term calendar are presented below in Section III.

Although a J-Term would provide many opportunities for the VU community, it would also present some challenges. First, it would require a cultural change that requires students and faculty to actively participate in J-Term experiences. Active engagement in J-Term experiences would provide a robust campus community both on-campus and around the world; however, minimal engagement in these experiences could leave the campus void of community for a month. Second, a J-Term would extend the calendar through the end of May. Prolonging the academic calendar could have negative implications for students seeking summer employment and faculty that utilize summer months to pursue their research agenda or other personal and

professional obligations. A more detailed list of the challenges associated with a J-Term calendar are presented below in Section IV. Several universities that employ a version of the J-Term calendar are listed in Section V.

II. J-Term Calendar Example

In crafting this calendar, choices were made about matters like the length of Thanksgiving and Spring breaks, the day of the week for the first/last day of classes, the length of final exam periods, and the date of Commencement. These are flexible and can certainly be changed if desired. This calendar is intended to be an example and illustration only--not a final proposal.

Key Dates	Comments	2016-17 dates
Fall Semester starts on	2 W before Labor Day	Aug. 24
Labor Day	no classes	Sept. 3
Fall break	2 days (MT or RF)	Oct. 13-14
Thanksgiving	3 days (WRF)	Nov. 23-25
Last day of classes	W	Dec. 7
Reading day	R	Dec. 8
Fall Final exam period	4 days	Dec.9-10,12-13
End of fall final exams	T no later than Dec. 19	Dec. 13
J-Term begins	First W after Jan. 1	Jan 4
MLK Day	no classes	Jan. 16
Last day of Classes (final exams)		Jan. 25
Spring Semester starts on	W	Feb. 1
Spring break	one week after 7 weeks	Mar. 20-24
Good Friday	no classes	Apr. 14
Last day of classes	F	May 19
Reading day	S	May 20
Final exam period		May 22 - 26
Commencement		June 4
Summer I Term starts on	T	May 30
Last day of classes	F	July 7
Summer I Final exam period		
Summer II Term starts on	M	July 10

Last day of classes		F		Aug. 18
Summer II Final exam period				

III. Advantages/Attractive Features

- Supports study away opportunities since it happens DURING the academic year
- May improve 4-year graduation and retention rates
- Potential for month long internships/coops
- Provides opportunity for special topics courses, or other courses that may benefit from short, intense timeframe.
- Longer window for spring orientation for new students is possible
- Longer break between fall and spring semesters takes some pressure off administrative tasks
- Would allow faculty and staff with January conferences to attend without missing campus activities
- Would allow offerings for certificate programs
- Permits concentrated faculty research/scholarship activity
- Would allow longer period for spring course preparation (especially new courses/preps)

IV. Disadvantages/Challenges

- Prolongs regular academic calendar
- Really short Christmas Break
- Faculty workload - inload/overload
- May cause issues with summer terms (they have to be short)
- Could negatively impact on-campus faculty searches, which often occur during January.
- Many grad programs do not have current offerings that easily fit into a J-Term.
- Weather and some travel costs negatively impact short-term study abroad trips
- Developing a new campus culture that takes advantages of the J-Term will take time
- Need to develop a mechanism that promotes/requires faculty participation in instruction
- Late end to spring semester negatively impacts summer employment/internships for students.

V. Examples of Other Universities That Employ a Version of This Model

- Drake University
- Quinnipiac University
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

Appendix E Proposed May Term Academic Calendar

I. Summary

The **May Term calendar model** (also referred to as Maymester) includes an intersession term that typically lasts 3 to 4 weeks beginning in early May after the end of the spring semester. Course offerings during May Terms can vary depending on the University's focus. Some schools limit offerings to travel courses or service learning experiences, as the distinct time frame of a May Term allows for students to travel without disruption to their overall academic plan of study. May Terms can also be used to encourage teaching of creative courses not taught during the regular semester or short-term intensive courses designed for an immersion experience. Additionally, May Terms can be used to provide general education courses. This approach increases students' academic flexibility allowing more opportunities to acquire credits needed for graduation.

Moving to a May Term model requires limiting the current spring break to one week to allow the spring semester to end prior to the beginning of May. May Terms can be configured in different ways. One option is to overlay May Term with a summer session. This configuration would allow the University to keep the current summer session schedule which includes two 6-week sessions; however, students taking summer session I courses could not participate in May Term. This would prevent students in the accelerated nursing program or any other program requiring summer I as part of their plan of study from participating in travel trips or any other offering during May Term. Alternatively, summer session could follow May Term, which would require changing the length of the current summer sessions.

Multiple challenges will need to be addressed if the University chooses to implement a May Term model. How to group May Term (with the spring or the summer terms) for financial aid and reporting purposes would need to be determined. If May Term were included as part of the spring term, students would not be charged extra tuition fees for May Term courses. If May Term were included with summer term, students would have to pay additional tuition for May Term courses. Additionally, students could easily go into credit overload, so a mechanism for exempting May Term courses from counting towards overload would need to be considered. Additionally, extension of student services would need to be determined. There is currently some summer housing available, but whether it would be adequate if a May Term were added is unknown. Lastly, faculty compensation for teaching during May Term will need to be determined. Options include paying faculty for May Term outside of their regular salary much like current compensation for summer courses or including May Term as part of the spring teaching load.

II. May Term Calendar Example

In crafting this calendar, choices were made about matters like the length of Thanksgiving and Spring breaks, the day of the week for the first/last day of classes, the length of final exam periods, and the date of Commencement. These are flexible and can certainly be changed if desired. This calendar is intended to be an example and illustration only--not a final proposal.

Key Dates	Comments	2016-17 dates
Fall Semester starts on	2 W before Labor Day	Aug. 24
Labor Day	no classes	Sept. 3
Fall break	2 days (MT or RF)	Oct. 13-14
Thanksgiving	3 days (WRF)	Nov. 23-25
Last day of classes	W	Dec. 7
Reading day	R	Dec. 8
Fall Final exam period	4 days	Dec.9-10,12-13
End of fall final exams	T no later than Dec. 19	Dec. 13
Spring Semester starts on	W	Jan. 4
MLK Day	no classes	Jan. 16
Spring break	one week after 7 weeks	Feb 27-Mar 3
Good Friday	no classes	Apr. 14
Last day of classes	F	Apr. 21
Reading Day	S	Apr. 22
Spring Final exam period	5 days	Apr 24-28
Commencement		May 7
May Term starts on	T	May 9
Last day of classes	F	May 26
May Term Final exam date		
Summer I Term starts on	M	May 15
Last day of classes	F	June 23
Summer I Final exam period		
Summer II Term starts on	M	June 26
Last day of classes	F	August 4
Summer II Final exam period		

III. Advantages/Attractive Features

- Short term study abroad trips could be offered during the May Term.

- Other special courses that fit a 3-week timeframe could also be offered during May Term.
- Since the spring term would end earlier than our current calendar, students would be available earlier in the spring for summer jobs and internships.
- Two summer terms (6 weeks) and/or one summer term (12 weeks) could continue to be offered, as summer session I could overlap May Term.
- If the May Term were included as part of the spring term for billing purposes - then students would not be charged extra tuition fees for May Term courses.

IV. Disadvantages/Challenges

- If the schedule included a May Term/summer I overlap, students could not participate in both May Term and summer I.
- Students in the accelerated nursing program or any other program requiring summer I as part of their plan of study would be prohibited from participating in short term study abroad trips or any other offering during May Term.
- How to group May Term (with spring or summer terms) for financial aid and reporting purposes would need to be determined.
- If May Term were included with summer term for billing purposes, then students would have to pay additional tuition for May Term courses. Additionally, students could easily go into credit overload, so a mechanism for exempting May courses from counting toward overload would need to be considered.
- Extension of student services would need to be determined. There is currently some summer housing available, but unsure if it would be adequate if a May Term was added.
- Faculty compensation for teaching during this term will need to be determined. Options include paying faculty for May Term outside of their regular salary much like compensation for summer courses currently or including May Term as part of the spring teaching load.

V. Examples of Other Universities That Employ a Version of This Model

- Hope College
- Bradley University
- Case Western University

Appendix F Proposed Trimester Academic Calendar

I. Summary

The **Trimester calendar** consists of three equivalent academic terms during the calendar year. The fall, spring, and summer terms each consist of 14 weeks of instruction plus final exams. Each of the three terms contains an early and late short term of seven weeks.

The model is designed to achieve two goals. First, it is intended to increase the capacity and potential of our summer academic programming. This supports the work of a number of current programs (accelerated BSN, Health Sciences, Graduate School) that utilize the summer sessions systematically and creates the potential for increased use of the summer for other programs. Second, the model is intended to simplify the university's various term structures so that undergraduate, graduate, and online programs have common start and end dates. Not only does this simplify work on the staff side, it also clarifies information for students and faculty.

The model requires shortening spring break to a single week. While this reduces the options for short-term study away during that time frame, it simultaneously creates the potential for "May Term" short-term study away options within the first seven week session of the summer program. One tuition model that would encourage student participation in this summer session would be to provide each incoming undergraduate with a coupon for 'free tuition' for one May study away course. In reality though, this tuition revenue could be included in the academic year tuition paid over four years.

As currently outlined, the model continues to provide a two day break in the fall, an entire academic week off at Thanksgiving, three weeks between fall semester finals and the beginning of spring semester classes, and it preserves Good Friday as a university holiday. Labor Day would become an academic holiday, and MLK Day would continue to be an academic day. In the summer term, Memorial Day would continue to be a university holiday and there would be a week long academic holiday around July 4. The fall term would begin on a Thursday, creating the potential for a short bridge program for students during the early part of that week.

Concerns with this model include the fact that the summer term begins immediately after the spring term (as it does in the current calendar), and that there is a smaller window of time between the end of the summer and the beginning of the fall term than there is currently.

II. Trimester Calendar Example

In crafting this calendar, choices were made about matters like the length of Thanksgiving and Spring breaks, the day of the week for the first/last day of classes, the length of final exam periods, and the date of Commencement. These are flexible and can certainly be changed if desired. This calendar is intended to be an example and illustration only--not a final proposal.

Key Dates	Comments	2016-17 dates
Fall Semester starts on	2 R before Labor Day	Aug. 25

Labor Day	no classes	Sept. 3
Fall break	2 days (RF)	Oct. 13-14
Thanksgiving	5 days (M-F)	Nov. 21-25
Last day of classes	F	Dec. 9
Reading day	S	Dec. 10
Fall Final exam period	5 days	Dec. 12-16
End of fall final exams	F no later than Dec. 19	Dec. 16
Spring Semester starts on	M	Jan. 9
MLK Day	no classes	Jan. 16
Spring break	one week after 7 weeks	Feb 27-Mar 3
Good Friday	no classes	Apr. 14
Last day of classes	F	Apr. 21
Reading Day	S	Apr. 22
Spring Final exam period	5 days	Apr 24-28
Commencement		May 7
Summer I Term starts on	M	May 1
Last day of classes	F	June 16
Summer I Final exam period		
Summer II Term starts on	M	June 19
July 4th Break	M-F	July 3-7
Last day of classes	F	Aug. 11
Summer II Final exam period		

III. Advantages/Attractive Features

- Allows for a full, regularized summer term when we are ready for it.
 - Good for the graduate school, accelerated nursing
 - Might help with degree completion process
- Allows for a May Term to be developed as needed
 - A good time for short term study abroad
- Reduces spring break by a week
- Formalizes a three week gap at Christmas
- Gets the spring term done at the end of April - a long summer with the late fall start

- Deep symmetry of terms, breaks, holidays, etc.
- Could squeeze finals into four days

IV. Disadvantages/Challenges

- Fall term begins quickly after the end of summer
 - (could be fixed by changing the time-schedule to allow for even more compression.)
- Possible problems for football in August, for music in December
- Possible problems for the law school with its two weeks of finals
- Needs flexible time schedule to manage a missing final period in 7 week courses
 - (but this is a problem in our current system)
- Logistics of a May Term are not obvious.
- Does not provide an obvious period for short-term overseas trips.

V. Examples of Other Universities That Employ a Version of This Model

- University of Michigan
- Ohio State University
- Butler University