

# Annual Report Student Academic Support Committee

Joel W. Russell  
May 6, 2008

## **STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT COMMITTEE 2007-2008**

Fran Meuser (Modern Languages & Literatures) *Chair-Fall 2007* -- 2005-2008 (off Winter, 2008)

Joseph Shively (Music, Theater & Dance) -- 2005-2008

Anne Switzer (Library) -- 2006-2009

Peg Roytek (School of Education & Human Services) -- 2006-2009

Joel Russell (Chemistry) *Chair-Winter 2008* -- 2007-2010

Buck Dillon (School of Business Administration) -- 2007-2010

President of Student Congress: Rob Meyer

Student (undergraduate): Ben Spedoske

Student (graduate):

Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee: Steve Shablin

Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee: Mary Beth Snyder

Dean of Students, or designee: Glenn McIntosh

Professional Advisers' Council designee: Sarah Mullin

## **SASC RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED BY UNIVERSITY SENATE**

1. Oakland University Excused Absence Policy (attached)  
Approved November 15, 2007
2. Resolution from SASC for 2009 Summer Semester Calendar (attached)  
Approved April 17, 2008

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AT SASC MEETINGS FALL 2007& WINTER 2008**

1. October 4, 2007
  - a. Registration – Steve Shablin
    - i. Registration dates were moved forward for all semesters.
    - ii. Plan for entire academic year registration starting winter 2009 will be proposed.
    - iii. Degree Evaluation program is now available on-line to allow students to run degree audits for all OU degree programs showing courses completed by category and those still needed.
  - b. Admissions – Glenn McIntosh
    - i. Report on Readiness Subcommittee for the First Year Experience was presented.

- ii. Glenn McIntosh suggested the SASC review the very low faculty return rate on progress reports for at-risk students.
    - c. Agenda Item for 2007-2008
      - i. Cindy Hermsen should be invited to discuss financial aid issues.
      - ii. Christina Grabowski should be invited to discuss graduate student admission issues.
      - iii. Charles Clark should be invited to discuss Academic Skill Center issues.
      - iv. Representatives of Professional Advisers Council should be invited to discuss advising issues.
  - 2. November 2, 2007
    - a. Professional Advisers Council
      - i. Carmen Etienne, Andrea Bordeianu, and Sarah Mullin provided a summary of PAC's mission and organizational structure.
      - ii. PAC works primarily with undergraduate concerns.
      - iii. PAC has bi-weekly meetings and an annual retreat that reviews work of its Advising Network and PAC subcommittees.
    - b. Full-year Registration
      - i. A proposal to have students register simultaneously for fall and winter semesters prior to fall semester was discussed.
      - ii. The SASC reaffirms its desire to have course listings available for current and subsequent three semesters/terms but does not support full-year registration due to anticipated large numbers of subsequent drop/adds.
    - c. Excused Absence Policy
      - i. The SASC heard concerns of the impact of the proposed policy on rhetoric's current attendance policy and the rhetoric faculty's suggestions for changes.
      - ii. The SASC decided to support its May 1, 2007 draft in the Senate discussion.
  - 3. December 7, 2007
    - a. Excused Absence Policy
      - i. The policy was approved by the Senate at the November 15 meeting.
      - ii. The SASC chair will suggest the Provost distribute copies of the policy to all faculty and request that it appear in the next catalog.
    - b. Graduate Admissions and Marketing Program – Christina Grabowski
      - i. Marketing initiatives include: marketing brochure, streamlined web links from graduate home page, direct mail, online admissions process, three yearly open houses.
      - ii. There was discussion of OU Educational Specialist in Leadership program's admissions criteria and per credit hour costs.
      - iii. Proposal to use different rates for different programs to ensure cost competitiveness was discussed. OU graduate programs rank third in cost in state behind UM and MTU while our undergraduate programs rank near the state average.
  - 4. February 1, 2008
    - a. Summer Schedule

- i. Drafts of 16 week proposal as to be used in 2008 and 14 week proposal presented with latter having final exams on last day of class was discussed.
      - ii. Discussion raised several potential issues and SACS decided to survey department chairs and program directors to identify other issues with the two summer schedules. (Survey attached)
    - b. FinancialAid – Cindy Hermsen
      - i. Data summaries for financial aid for 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007 presented.
      - ii. Loans which tripled last year are primarily from federal sources with a total of \$50 -56 million. The student loan debt is increasing.
      - iii. OU does not have sufficient funds to fill all need-based needs of our students. (UM meets all needs of in-state students.)
      - iv. Athletes receive on average higher financial aid than non-athletes. For merit aid athletes must meet same requirement as other students.
      - v. OU is working to attach academic qualifications to grants.
      - vi. Buck Dillon suggested we provide students help in developing financial literacy.
5. March 21, 2008
  - a. Summer Semester Calendar
    - i. Comments of department chairs and program directors concerning the 14 and 16 week summer semester calendars were discussed. Three primary issues were identified. The one raised most often was the negative consequences in the 14 week calendar from the lack of study time between the end of classes and exams. Another commonly raised issue was the likely decrease in effectiveness of instructional time in classes with scheduled class times longer than actual final exam times. A third issue of importance to a limited number of students is the consequence of a single degree conferral date at the end of the summer semester.
    - ii. The SASC will ask Steve Shablin to comment on two potential calendars for 2009. The first is the 2008 calendar including its two degree conferral dates. The second is a 15 week schedule starting a week later in May and having the eighth week for exams for seven week classes and the start of the next seven week class schedule with its exams the last days of the 15<sup>th</sup> week.
6. April 4, 2008
  - a. Summer Semester Calendar
    - i. The two potential summer semester calendars noted above were discussed. Steve Shablin had informed the committee that the 15 week calendar would not work due to two day rather than three day exam periods. The SASC members felt it could work if Saturdays were used for the third exam days.
    - ii. A draft resolution to the Senate to use the 2008 calendar with two degree conferral dates was discussed and modified. The final draft was subsequently approved by email vote. (Attached)

# Oakland University Excused Absence Policy

*Final Draft – 5/01/07*

## I. Definition

- This policy for university excused absences applies to participation as an athlete, manager or student trainer in NCAA intercollegiate competitions, or participation as a representative of Oakland University at academic events and artistic performances approved by the Provost or designee.
- Practice or rehearsal for any event is not eligible for consideration as an excused absence.
- This policy excludes those academic endeavors that require the completion of a predetermined number of clock hours, as in clinical experiences, practica or internships. In these instances, the maximum number of absences will be determined by the program director, department chair, or academic dean. This policy does not supersede program accreditation requirements. Departmental practices and procedures should be consistent with this policy.

## II. Student Rights and Responsibilities

- Students shall inform their instructors of dates they will miss class due to an excused absence prior to the date of that anticipated absence. For activities such as athletic competitions whose schedules are known prior to the start of a term, students must provide their instructors during the first week of each term a written schedule showing days they expect to miss classes. For other university excused absences students must provide each instructor at the earliest possible time the dates that they will miss.
- Make up work
  - It is the responsibility of the student to request from the instructor an opportunity to complete missed assignments, activities, labs, examinations or other course requirements in a timely manner.
  - Students are responsible for all material covered in classes that they miss, even when their absences are excused, as defined above.
  - Missed classroom activities will be rescheduled at the discretion of the instructor.
- Students should be aware that excessive absences—whether excused or unexcused—may affect their ability to do well in the class(es).
- Any student who feels that he or she has been treated unfairly concerning absences may appeal via the unit's grievance procedure or the Dean of Students.

## III. Faculty Responsibility

- Instructors are responsible for providing students with an equitable way to make up missed work due to an absence excused by this policy.
- Instructors should inform students in a timely manner of procedures to make up missed work, e.g., including the information in the course syllabus.
- Instructors may not penalize students for absences excused by this policy.
- If the faculty member believes that the number of excused absences will prevent the student from fulfilling the learning experience/mastery that a course requires, the faculty member may advise the student to withdraw from the course prior to the official published withdrawal date.

#### IV. Violation of the Oakland University Code of Student Conduct and Academic Conduct Regulations

- Falsifying information or documentation in order to obtain an excused absence is considered a violation of the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Conduct Regulations.
- Sharing information about a make-up examination or quiz with other students is deemed a violation of the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Conduct Regulations.
- All allegations of falsifying information or documentation in order to obtain an excused absence or sharing examination or quiz information will be reported to the Dean of Students for adjudication through the University Judicial System.
- Anyone found responsible for falsifying information or documentation in order to obtain an excused absence or sharing examination or quiz information may receive a course grade of 0.0, as determined by the course instructor, in addition to any sanction (s) imposed by the Academic Conduct Committee.

## **Resolution from SASC for 2009 Summer Semester Calendar**

WHEREAS, the 2006-2009 Faculty Agreement allows the scheduling of two eight-week class sessions and/or one sixteen-week session during spring and summer months in order to allow students to receive financial aid for courses independent of start and stop dates,

WHEREAS, the administration had proposed a fourteen-week session for summer 2008 that was contrary to the provision of the Faculty Agreement,

WHEREAS, the proposed fourteen-week session required final examinations to be given during the last class period in violation of the Senate rule prohibiting examinations during the last half week of our former spring and summer terms,

WHEREAS, the proposed fourteen-week session did not allow any study days between the end of classes and start of examinations thereby restricting students' opportunities to prepare for examinations,

WHEREAS, the proposed fourteen-week session either shortened overall instructional time or required each instructional period to be lengthened thereby decreasing the effectiveness of instruction especially for three and four hour sessions, and

WHEREAS, the proposed fourteen-week session had only one degree conferral date thereby disadvantaging graduates who need proof of degree attainment prior to beginning employment or taking professional certification examinations

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate recommends that the Summer Semester calendar for 2009, after adjustment for the one day difference between week days in 2009 and 2008, be identical to that for 2008 including two degree conferral dates,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2009 Summer Semester calendar be posted to the university web-site as soon as approved by the Board of Trustees in order to allow students to better plan their future studies,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that prior to the adaption of any future Summer Semester calendars requiring changes in Senate regulations such changes be studied by all appropriate Senate committees and be approved or rejected by the Senate, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that prior to the adaption of any future Summer Semester calendars requiring changes in the Faculty Agreement that such changes be made to the Faculty Agreement.

### Rationale:

The SASC sent a questionnaire to all department chairpersons and program directors to solicit faculty views on sixteen-week and fourteen week summer calendars. These questionnaires listed the following pros and cons for the proposed fourteen week calendar:

### Advantages of Fourteen Week Summer Semester

1. Starting the summer semester a week later in May would allow more guest students from other universities to enroll without missing initial class periods due to conflicts with their exam periods.
2. Oakland students and faculty as well as those of some other colleges and universities would have an additional full week break between winter terms and the summer term.
3. Oakland students and faculty would have an additional full week break between the summer term and the fall term.

### Disadvantages of Fourteen Week Summer Semester

1. There would be one fewer instructional days for courses with a final exam than in summer 2008 and each class session would be increased in length to preserve total instructional time.
2. There would be less time between the final day of instruction and the final exam day. (The calendar in effect for summer 2008 provides a weekend break while the 14 week calendar may provide no break.)

One comment was received from a program director favoring the fourteen-week calendar. All other comments favored retaining the sixteen-week calendar. These comments focused upon how the fourteen-week calendar reduced student study time by moving final examinations from a separate examination period to the last day of class and by eliminating the weekend study period in the 2008 Summer Semester calendar for classes using the seven weeks of instruction for our former spring and summer terms. Two fourteen-week calendars had been proposed – one using the same instruction periods as in prior spring/summer terms and one lengthening each instructional period to preserve total instructional time. Faculty teaching modules that have longer class periods felt that the additional minutes would be very ineffective for student learning.

The primary rationale for the fourteen-week calendar appears to be to accommodate guest students who might have examinations at their regular institution during the first week of our summer semester. All faculty and the advisor on SASC felt that our charge was to support Oakland students and that the fourteen-week calendar was detrimental to student learning for the reasons outlined above. Administrative members of SASC, although not present at the meeting when this resolution was approved, appear to favor the fourteen-week calendar. They suggested that since “many” faculty now give examinations during the final class periods for summer courses, the fourteen-week calendar would make this the uniform practice. The other SASC members believe a uniform examination practice is desirable and should be achieved by enforcement of the current Senate prohibition on examinations during the last week of classes.

## MEMORANDUM

February 15, 2008

To: Department Chairs and Program Directors  
From: Joel W. Russell, Chair, Student Academic Support Committee (SASC)  
Re: Summer Semester Calendar

The university has replaced our former spring and summer terms with a single summer semester containing a variety of sessions or parts of term. This change was made to allow students taking courses that do not fit within the eight week periods of the former spring and summer terms to receive financial aid. The most commonly used sessions are two eight week units containing seven weeks of instruction and an eighth week containing three examination days. The Summer 2008 semester (Summer I) contains 14 weeks of instruction, one week of recess/Summer II exams, and one week for final examinations for Summer I and Summer III.

The Registrar has proposed for reasons outlined below that the summer term be changed to fourteen weeks. This would be accomplished by not having a recess week and formal exam period but having final exams given on the last class day of each course. The University of Michigan and Michigan State University both use the last day of summer courses for examinations. To preserve instructional time the times for teaching modules would be increased by a few minutes to make up for the one less day of instruction. See the attached proposed calendar for 2008-2009 and class schedule matrix.

In order for such a calendar to be adopted for summer 2009 actions are required by the University Senate and the AAUP. Senate regulations prohibiting examinations during the last week of instruction of any semester (half week for our former spring and summer terms) would have to be modified. A contract exception to the Faculty Agreement provision allowing two seven-week class sessions and one 14 week session would have to be granted.

Prior to the SASC making a recommendation to the Senate Steering Committee for Senate action, the committee would like to know if each department and program could adapt its scheduling of class for summer 2009 to meet this revised calendar. Listed below are sets of advantages and disadvantages for the revised calendar. The committee would like faculty opinion on whether the disadvantages sufficiently outweigh the advantages for it to not recommend the shorter calendar. We would also like to identify any other advantages or disadvantages.

We are aware that the decision to have only an August degree conferral date for the summer semester starting in 2009 is a separate problem from the instruction calendar. However, we would like you to inform us if the single degree conferral date is a problem for your students and if so why it is a problem and an estimate of the number of students impacted.

Please send your comments on these issues via email to [russell@oakland.edu](mailto:russell@oakland.edu) with copy to [shablin@oakland.edu](mailto:shablin@oakland.edu). In the topic line show SASC survey. Please send comments by Friday, March 7.

### Advantages of Fourteen Week Summer Semester

4. Starting the summer semester a week later in May would allow more guest students from other universities to enroll without missing initial class periods due to conflicts with their exam periods.
5. Oakland students and faculty as well as those of some other colleges and universities would have an additional full week break between winter terms and the summer term.
6. Oakland students and faculty would have an additional full week break between the summer term and the fall term.

### Disadvantages of Fourteen Week Summer Semester

3. There would be one fewer instructional days for courses with a final exam than in summer 2008 and each class session would be increased in length to preserve total instructional time.
4. There would be less time between the final day of instruction and the final exam day. (The calendar in effect for summer 2008 provides a weekend break while the 14 week calendar may provide no break.)