REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

University Senate Committee: Executive Committee

Brief History of Issue - why the issue is being considered:

The Academic Year Calendar has been a frequent topic of interest for Faculty, Academic Staff, Classified Staff, students, and community members. Since 2008, Executive committee has been empowered to approve academic year calendars. For instructors who teach the same course in the Fall and in the Spring, equal length semesters would be appealing because that would allow standardization of course content. Winterim could be extended and become more flexible with the ability to offer courses or co-curricular experiences of one-week or two-week or three-week or four-week duration. Representatives from Housing and Residence Life have expressed concerns regarding the start of the academic year calendar because first-year students have several days of unstructured time before classes begin. Many students leave campus on Wednesday to travel home for Thanksgiving recess.

Points Discussed by Committee:

1. For instructors who teach the same course in the Fall and in the Spring, equal length would allow consistency in course content and delivery.
   a. Courses that meet only half the semester would be standardized, especially during Spring semester when there are eight weeks before Spring Break and seven weeks after Spring Break
   b. 14 full weeks of classes would benefit departments that offer laboratory or studio courses
   c. 14 full weeks of classes would benefit departments that offer multiple sections of the same course
   d. 14 full weeks of classes would benefit departments that offer night classes for non-traditional students

2. Expanding Winterim would provide greater flexibility and more opportunities for instructors and students.
   a. Classes would not have to meet on Saturdays and there would always be at least 18 days of instruction
   b. A greater array of credit-bearing and co-curricular experiences could be offered so students could earn additional credits and/or complete LE experiences, thus improving time-to-graduation
      i. Might attract students who would like to complete an LE experience; participate in an immersion experience with smaller classes; participate in field courses; participate in collaborative research; take an on-line or hybrid course
      ii. Might attract students looking to stay on campus during winter break or students enrolled at other institutions who will be in Eau Claire during winter break; students enrolled at other institutions who could take advantage of a UWEC course/experience to meet requirements at their institution
      iii. Concentrated learning in full day courses might be helpful to students with borderline GPA
      iv. Opportunities for students to repeat a course, thereby improving time-to-graduation
      v. Opportunities for nontraditional students to earn their degree in a timely fashion
      vi. Improve access to high-demand courses
   c. There are numerous benefits to UWEC
      i. Added income for colleges and departments and faculty
      ii. Opportunities for professional development
      iii. Opportunities for faculty/staff to offer courses/experiences in their special area of interest; teach from off campus
      iv. Opportunities for faculty/staff to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration
      v. Enhance the reputation of UWEC
      vi. Enhance recruitment and retention; keep students at UWEC rather than having them go to Stout or River Falls or La Crosse or other “competitor” institutions
   d. Make greater use of campus offices and facilities (e.g., Library; Davies Center; cafeterias; Recreation)
   e. 30% of the total revenue generated from enrollment gets returned to the departments, the colleges, Academic Affairs and the Chancellor
      i. Department gets 35% of the 30%; College gets 30% of the 30%; Academic Affairs gets 20% of the 30%; remaining 15% of the 30% goes to the Chancellor
Pros of Recommendation:

1. Provides greater flexibility in the academic year calendar without constraints.
2. Provides more opportunities for Faculty, Staff, and students during Winterim.
3. Provides more flexibility for Phase II Orientation.
4. Provides an opportunity to lengthen Thanksgiving recess.

Cons of Recommendation:

1. Shortens Fall semester by two days in four years of a seven year cycle, but maintains 70 instructional days every fall semester.
2. Shortens Spring semester by five days.

Technology/Human Resource Impact:

Academic calendars for 2016-17 and later will have to be revised and posted on-line. Registrar will have to revise dates/deadlines for adds/drops/withdrawals. Changes will have to be made to the on-line catalogue. Changes will have to be made to the Faculty and Academic Staff Rules and Procedures and posted on-line.

Committee Recommendation:

A. Change the academic year calendar to include equal length Fall and Spring semesters of 14 full weeks (70 days) of instruction time followed by five days for Final Exams.

B. Expand Winterim from three weeks (minimum of 14 days) to four weeks (minimum of 18 days).

C. Change Article Six: Academic Policies; Section A – Scheduling Policies; UWEC Guidelines on page 125 of the Faculty and Academic Staff Rules and Procedures.
MOTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The University Senate Executive Committee,

by a vote of  16  for to  0  against on  April 15, 2014

Recommends that the following changes be made to the academic year calendar:

A. Change the academic year calendar to include equal length Fall and Spring semesters of 14 full weeks (70 days) of instruction time followed by five days for Final Exams.  AND

B. Expand Winterim from three weeks (minimum of 14 days) to four weeks (minimum of 18 days).  AND

C. Change Article Six: Academic Policies; Section A – Scheduling Policies; UWEC Guidelines on page 125 of the Faculty and Academic Staff Rules and Procedures.

UWEC Guidelines

1. Academic Year contracts should begin the Monday of the week before the week when classes start except when this causes the May commencement to fall on Memorial Day weekend. In those years, Academic Year contracts should begin on the Monday two weeks before the week when classes start.

2. If there is only one day of classes prior to Labor Day, wait until after Labor Day to start classes.

3. If classes begin prior to Labor Day, be sure students can use the previous weekend to move into the dorms.

4. There should be approximately 43 42 MWF and 29 28 TTR class days each semester.

5. Semester lengths should be kept as equal as possible.

6. At least 13 full five-day weeks should be included to facilitate lab courses.

7. Finals should be scheduled over five days.

8. When finals must stretch over a weekend, a study day should be included prior to the first day of finals.

9. Commencement should fall on Saturday and occur after finals if possible. If the Saturday after finals falls on December 23 or later, the previous Saturday should be used for commencement.

10. Fall semester should end no later than December 22.

11. Winterim should consist of no less than 14 days including Saturdays fewer than 18 days. Classes cannot meet on Sundays.

10. Spring Break should occur following the end of the seventh week of classes.

Implementation Date: 2016-17 Academic Year

Signed: _______________________
Chair of the Committee

Send to: University Senate Office