

## Revision of the University Academic Calendar Proposal Summary

### Subject Specification

Beginning in fall 2018, a 2-day fall break will occur on the Thursday and Friday in week 8 of the semester (e.g., fall break 2018: Thursday-Friday, October 11-12). In addition, the fall semester will begin two weekdays earlier to offset the fall break days and retain the same number of instructional days. Beginning in 2018, the fall semester will start on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday—rather than the last Monday—in August.

This proposal revises the university academic calendar to accommodate the earlier start of the fall semester. *The instructional length of the spring semester will be shortened, thereby aligning the instructional days of the fall and spring semesters (as currently, the spring semester is nearly one week longer than the fall semester).* The instructional lengths of the fall semester and the summer term are unchanged.

### Background Information

#### ISSUES CONSIDERED WITH RECONFIGURED FALL SEMESTER

As Kent State operates on a full-year schedule (see table 1), the 2 instructional weekdays added to the start of fall semester must be shifted from another part of the calendar.

Table 1: Kent State Academic Calendar

Fall semester	16	
Winter break *	4	
Spring semester	17	
End-of-term break	1	
Summer term	13	
End-of-term break	+ 1	
	52	weeks

*\* Winter break includes 20 M-F days, which are broken into 3-6 days after fall semester, 6-7 holiday break days, and 7-10 days before spring semester.*

Shifting the days from either the 4-week winter break or one of the 1-week end-of-term breaks was deemed unworkable, as many offices across the university need those short time periods for all the activities and processes required after a term ends and before a new term starts. In addition, the winter break is used for opportunities for students to participate in short-term study away/abroad experiences. If two weekdays are removed from one of the 1-week term breaks, offices will have only three weekdays in most years to accomplish their tasks to prepare students and the university for the next term.

Actions that occur during those periods include, but are not limited to, student orientation; graduation clearance; registration petitions; financial aid disbursement; residence hall maintenance; tuition assessment and payments; new-faculty and -staff training; faculty final grading and grade changes; dismissal decisions, appeals and reinstatements; and ground maintenance and building construction and repairs.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED FOR THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Two options were considered: (1) shorter spring semester and (2) shorter summer term. The provost requested that college and campus deans seek input from their advisory committees and departments/schools. From the responses, eight colleges/campuses supported a shorter spring, two colleges/campuses supported a shorter summer, and four colleges/campuses either did not provide a consensus or reported no preference.

In addition, the Provost Advisory Council conducted a straw poll, with nine in favor of shortening the spring semester, and two in favoring of shortening the summer term. This informal vote reflected their personal opinions and not their college's positions.

These options were further discussed during several meetings with faculty and coordinators of programs, including those requiring laboratories, accelerated/online delivery and out-of-classroom experiences (e.g., studio, clinical, student teaching, internship/practicum, study abroad/away). Other attendees represented such university functions and offices as bursar, registrar, dining, health, parking, facilities, architect, residence, recreation, information, admissions, faculty senate, financial aid, student affairs, student success, dining services, student orientation, global education, human resources, university events, intercollegiate athletics, graduate student senate, continuing and distance education and undergraduate student government.

In two of those meetings (one attended primarily by academic program coordinators and one attended primarily by student affairs/administration), a vote was taken, and the decision from both groups was for a shorter spring semester.

### **Shorter Spring Semester Option**

The option considered was to end the spring semester earlier by 2 weekdays (4 calendar days). Therefore, spring semester would end on Wednesday, rather than Sunday. In addition, a reading day would be added between last class day and first final exam day. The summer term would shift up 2 weekdays (4 calendar days), beginning on Thursday, rather than Monday.

Proponents of a shorter spring felt it will be beneficial to align the two semester since, currently, Kent State's spring semester is nearly one week longer than its fall semester, with more instructional days see table 3.

Table 3: Semester Comparison

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Length</b>	
Fall M-F classes	70 days	<i>Length does <u>not</u> include holidays and class breaks.</i>
Spring M-F classes	74 days	

In addition, student affairs staff stated that having final exams end earlier—on Wednesday, rather than Sunday—and keeping commencement on Friday (graduate) and Saturday (undergraduate) will allow opportunities for activities before commencement to recognize graduates and build traditions. Typically, the month of April is crammed with student activities; some events could be moved to the day(s) between finals and commencement.

Some faculty liked the idea of having one or two days between final exams and graduation. Since finals do not end until Sunday currently, there are instances of students participating in commencement before they have taken all their final exams. Another faculty member indicated that it may be helpful to have a reading day in addition to the weekend, so as to break up final exams and to provide more study days.

Opponents of a shorter spring were against the loss of the instructional days, especially for out-of-class requirements (e.g., clinical hours). Other faculty stated a concern of a shorter spring in conjunction with weather-related campus closures that may happen in the spring. Some did not like having only one day (reading day) between end of classes and start of finals, rather than the current weekend option.

### **Shorter Summer Term Option**

The option considered was to end the summer term earlier by 2 weekdays (3 calendar days). Therefore, summer term would end on Wednesday, rather than Saturday.

Proponents of a shorter summer term felt that the impact of the change will be less disruptive since there are fewer courses offered in the summer when compared to the spring semester. For example, there were 2,066 courses offered in summer 2017, compared to 3,915 courses offered in spring 2017.

Opponents of a shorter summer term felt that most courses scheduled in the summer are intensive already. Courses that will be affected by a shorter summer term are those scheduled for full-term, in the last 7 weeks and in the last 5 weeks (Summer 3), see table 2.

Table 2: Summer Instructional Days Comparison

Summer Terms	Current	Shorter	Summer Terms	Current	Shorter
Intersession M-F classes	14 days	14 days	First 7-week M-F classes	34 days	34 days
Summer I M-F classes	24 days	24 days	Last 7-week M-F classes	34 days	32 days
Summer 2 M-F classes	39 days	39 days	Full-term M-F classes	63 days	61 days
Summer 3 M-F classes	25 days	23 days	<i>Length does <u>not</u> include holidays.</i>		

Program coordinators stated that condensing compact courses even further will jeopardize student learning and degree progress. Many of Kent State's fully online graduate programs are offered in an accelerated manner, with students taking 7-week courses sequentially in the summer.

In addition, if the summer term was shortened, students in the architecture program may not have enough summer studio experiences to prepare for their portfolio review, and students in the nursing program may not be able to complete all their required clinical hours. Furthermore, the College of Nursing will not be able to offer high-credit courses. This may lead to that college losing revenue on summer courses and having to extend its accelerated program an additional semester, which will make the program less competitive with other institutions.

A faculty member suggested eliminating the 3-week Summer Intersession. While eliminating the Summer Intersession will allow Summer 1 and Summer 3 to be shifted up so that Summer 3 can remain at 5 weeks, the elimination will not prevent the shortening of the last 7-week and full-term courses, see chart 1 on the next page.

Conversely, faculty from several areas did not support eliminating Summer Intersession as many study away/abroad experiences take place during that time. In addition, faculty reported that the Summer Intersession allows students to complete a course before starting a summer internship or a Summer 1 or Summer 3 course. Architecture program coordinators reported that they use the Summer Intersession time for their summer admission process; after admitted, students take courses in Summer 1 and Summer 3. There was a concern from education faculty that the shifting up of Summer 1 may prevent school teachers from taking courses as many schools will be in session still.

Several faculty members opined that if Summer Intersession is eliminated, there should be an overhaul of summer scheduling since, currently, Summer Intersession (3 weeks) pairs with Summer 1 (5 weeks) and Summer 3 (5 weeks) to create the 13-week summer term.

Chart 1: Example of shorter Summer Term 2019 with No Intersession

May 13–May 19	<b>End-of-Term: Mon, May 13 – Sun, May 19</b>		
May 20–May 26	<b>Full Term</b> Mon, May 20 – Wed, Aug 14 (12 weeks, 3 days**)		<b>1<sup>st</sup> 7 Weeks</b> Mon, May 13 – Sat, Jun 29 (6 weeks 6 days*)
May 27–Jun 2		<b>Summer 1</b> Mon, May 27 – Sun, Jun 30 (5 weeks*)	
Jun 3–Jun 9			<b>2<sup>nd</sup> 7 Weeks</b> Mon, Jul 1 – Wed, Aug 14 (6 weeks 3 days*)
Jun 10–Jun 16			
Jun 17–Jun 23			
Jun 24–Jun 30		<b>Summer 2</b> Mon, Jun 10 – Sun, Aug 4 (8 weeks*)	
Jul 1–Jul 7			
Jul 8–Jul 14		<b>Summer 3</b> Mon, Jul 8 – Sun, Aug 11 (5 weeks)	
Jul 15–Jul 21			
Jul 22–Jul 28			
Jul 29–Aug 4			
Aug 5–Aug 11			
Aug 12–Aug 18			
Aug 19–Aug 25	<b>End-of-Term: Thu, Aug 15 – Wed, Aug 21</b>		
	<b>Fall Semester: starts Thu, Aug 22</b>		

\* Duration includes 1 holiday  
 \*\* Duration includes 2 holidays

**Other Options Considered**

Faculty offered other options. These options included keeping the fall start date unchanged, replacing fall break with a full-week Thanksgiving break, and starting fall semester a full week earlier (rather than on a Thursday).

Keeping the fall start date unchanged was proposed originally. However, Faculty Senate voiced many concerns about decreasing the instructional days of a semester that was already shorter than the other semester. Currently, the fall semester has 70 M-F class days, compared with 74 M-F class days for spring semester. Not to add instructional days to offset the fall break will cause the fall semester to decrease to 68 M-F class days.

A related suggestion was to add the additional days to the end, instead of the start, of the fall semester. To do so will cause final exams and final grading to abut the holidays and leave no days for end-of-term processes that must happen before the university closes for the holidays.

Creating a full-week Thanksgiving break does not resolve the issue of keeping instructional days intact for fall semester – a decision still will need to be made to shorten either spring or summer to offset no classes on Monday and Tuesday in Thanksgiving week. More important, the intention of a fall break is to have a class recess early in the semester, to alleviate student stress and anxiety that is evidenced by the spike in referrals to campus health offices in September and October. A longer break at the end of November, week 13 of the semester, does not assist in that challenge.

Starting fall semester a full week earlier still affects other terms – a decision still will need to be made to shorten either spring or summer to compensate for the days shifted to fall. Moreover, starting fall semester a full week earlier—rather than two weekdays earlier—will entail an *even* shorter spring or summer than what is proposed. In addition, starting fall semester a week earlier and *not* shortening spring semester or winter break by a full week will affect the faculty's 9-month contract.

## Alternatives and Consequences

The alternate to the proposed is to shift the days from either the summer term or one of the end-of-term processing breaks, which, based on constituent responses, have been deemed to be more disruptive to the mission of Kent State than a shorter spring semester.

## Specific Recommendation and Justification

Based on feedback from a wide range of constituents affected by the academic calendar, the Office of the Provost proposes the following changes to the spring and summer terms to ensure the number of instructional days in the fall semester is unchanged.

1. Spring classes end 3 weekdays (5 calendar days) earlier—ending on a Tuesday (rather than Sunday).
2. A reading day is added on the Wednesday following last day of classes.
3. Spring final exams start on the Thursday following the reading day, and end the following Wednesday (rather than Monday to Sunday)
4. Work to ensure that classes that meet on Monday or Tuesday in the spring will have their final exam in the following week, so their last class day and final exam are not in the same week.
5. As is done currently, no exams, classes or parts of classes will be scheduled between noon and 2 p.m. on Remembrance Day (May 4).
6. Summer term shifts forward 2 weekdays (4 calendar days), with summer classes starting on Thursday (rather than Monday), and ending 13 weeks later on Wednesday, (rather than Saturday). Length of summer parts of term is unchanged, and length of overall summer term increases by one day (Sunday).
7. Revisions to the academic calendar will not affect the faculty contract.

On the next page, table 4 shows a visual view of the changes using spring and summer 2019 as an example, and table 5 shows the effect on semester days.

Table 4: Example of Spring and Summer Comparison

Current							Shorter Spring							
May 2019							May 2019							
S	M	T	W	R	F	S	S	M	T	W	R	F	S	
			1	2	3	4				1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30	31		26	27	28	29	30	31		
August 2019							August 2019							
S	M	T	W	R	F	S	S	M	T	W	R	F	S	
				1	2	3					1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

Class

Final Exams

Commencement

Term Break

Table 5: What stays the same. **What has changed.**

Academic Calendar	Current	Proposed
Fall semester	16 weeks	16 weeks 4 days
Fall M-F classes	70 days *	70 days *
Fall M-Sun classes	98 days *	100 days *
Fall holidays/breaks	7 days	9 days
Fall final exams	7 days	7 days
Winter break	4 weeks	4 weeks
Spring semester	17 weeks	16 weeks 3 days
Spring M-F classes	74 days *	71 days *
Spring M-Sun classes	104 days *	99 days *
Spring holidays/breaks	8 days	8 days
Spring reading day	0 day	1 day
Spring final exams	7 days	7 days
End-of-term break	1 week	1 week
Summer Term	12 weeks 6 days	13 weeks
Summer M-F classes	63 days *	63 days *
Summer M-Sun classes	88 days *	89 days *
Summer holidays	2 days	2 days
End-of-term break	1 week	1 week

\* Length does not include holidays and/or class break(s).

## Timetable and Actions Required

March 2018..... approval by the Educational Policies Council

April 2018 ..... approval by the Faculty Senate

May 2018 ..... approval by the university president

Spring 2020..... implementation