

Proposal

Effective Fall 2012, the UF academic calendar should have a Fall Break consisting of the Wednesday – Friday of Thanksgiving week. Specifically, there should be no classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

Comment

The task force took serious note of the temptation that students and faculty may have to extend the break to the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving week if this policy is implemented. However, it was felt that implementing this recommendation would enable faculty to (a) be firm in requiring students to attend classes, (b) cover new material, and even (c) give tests on Monday and Tuesday. The college deans may also encourage faculty members to maintain these positions in their classes.

Approvals: Approved by the UCC, APC, and, informally by the academic deans.

Rationale

This is the recommendation of a task force consisting of 8 members; 3 representing the faculty senate, 3 from the administration, one from the general counsel, and one student. The task force was set up by Provost Glover and both the out-going and in-coming Faculty Senate Chairs, Frank Bova and John Mecholsky. The Provost's charge to the task force was to investigate and make recommendations on any changes to the Fall calendar that would be beneficial to the academic programs and sustainability efforts at UF.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that a large number of classes are cancelled on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving in consideration for students who have to travel outside of Gainesville to arrive on time at their Thanksgiving destinations. The fact that there are many fewer students on campus on that Wednesday is further evidenced by the low wastewater usage and RTS ridership data. These figures show significant decreases (up to 60%) in utilization by students on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving compared to other regular Wednesdays. So there is solid evidence that, although that Wednesday is counted as an instructional day, there are very few student-hours of instruction on that day. Another problem is created by the likelihood that there are no classes after noon on that Wednesday. This creates an inequity between morning and afternoon classes which can only be corrected by canceling classes for the entire day.

To meet the Board of Education requirement of 220 instruction days per academic year, the UF policy requires 81 days in Fall and Spring, and 29 days in Summer A and B. Since 1998, UF calendars have included a minimum of 225 instructional days so including a one day reduction will not present any danger of violating the BoE policy. Incorporating the proposed holiday in the 2012-2016 calendars will result in the following distribution of instructional days.

Fall 2012 – 82.5/Spring 2013 – 84.5 \\ Fall 2013 – 82.5/Spring 2014 – 84.5
Fall 2014 – 84.5/Spring 2015 – 83.5 \\ Fall 2015 – 84.5/Spring 2016 – 83.5

So this change does not result in any significant discrepancies between the Fall and Spring instructional days.