Faculty II Affairs Committee Report

December 6, 2016

Members: Phillip Spivey (Chair), Duston Morris, Jane Dahlenburg, Jeffrey Padberg, Julia

Winden-Fey, Nancy Gallavan, Lee Sanders

**Charge:** By the last meeting of the December 6, 2016 Faculty Senate meeting, make recommendations to the Faculty Senate as to the advantages/disadvantages and if we should change from a Thursday to a Monday class start (or any other day of the week). Coordination with the University Calendar Committee is essential.

**Activities:** Faculty Affairs II Committee met in early September with UCA Registrar and University Calendar Committee Chair, Rebekah Rasnick, to discuss how best to gather information for determining the UCA community’s views concerning preference for either a Monday or Thursday start for the Fall 2019 semester. In addition, we wanted to know how the UCA community (faculty, staff, and students) viewed changes to the Fall calendar with regards to Fall Break (keep, eliminate, expand, or shorten?) and Thanksgiving Break (expand?).

The committee decided to create a campus-wide survey to gauge the UCA community’s views on these issues. The survey (Appendix A) posed nine questions with a section for written comments. Amber Hall (UCA Institutional Research) administered the campus-wide survey. On November 7, the survey was sent to all UCA faculty, students, and staff. Two reminders to complete the survey were sent on November 14 and 21. The survey was closed on Wednesday, November 23 and results were received on November 28.

On December 2, Faculty Affairs II Committee met to discuss the survey results. Based on the survey results (Appendix B), Faculty Senate President McKinzie’s survey results analysis (Appendix C), and written comments (Appendix D), the committee concluded the following:

A. Monday or Thursday Semester Start: The majority of survey respondents, especially students, wanted to keep the Thursday start of the semester. Many of the written comments expressed the need for a Thursday start as a time for getting oriented to new courses and taking care of business, like purchasing textbooks and moving into residences.

B. Fall Thanksgiving Breaks: The responses to the survey questions related to potential alterations of Fall and Thanksgiving Breaks were mixed. The majority of student respondents wanted to retain a four-day Fall Break in October and a four-day Thanksgiving Break in November. For psychological and academic reasons, many respondents emphasized the need for a Fall Break.

**Future References:** In addition to discussing the survey’s results, Faculty Affairs II Committee discussed how information from the survey might serve as a reference for university discussions related to the following:

A. **Child Care Center**: Many of the survey’s written comments mentioned a need for child care during the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving Week. Most Arkansas public schools are closed for all of Thanksgiving Week. Survey respondents, who self-identified as parents, mentioned the strain of having to arrange for child care during Thanksgiving Week. As UCA develops child care programs, this may be one campus need to consider.

B. **Full-Week Thanksgiving Break Suggestion**: Written Comment #459 offered an interesting suggestion that might be considered by the University Calendar Committee. The written comment stated, “Why is getting rid of study day the last day of the semester not an option? According to my students, this day is typically not utilized as a study day. It seems logical to me to have a three-day weekend for Fall Break, a full week at Thanksgiving, and eliminating one day of Fall Break and Study Day to get the two additional days needed to expand Thanksgiving Break.”

C. **Staff Concerns**: In the future, if UCA decides to expand Thanksgiving Break to one full week, would UCA staff still have to report during the break? This would be an issue that would need to be considered by UCA Staff Senate.

D. **UCA/Conway Public Schools Thanksgiving Program**: During the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving Week, UCA could coordinate and host a variety of educational and creative programs for Conway Public School students. This suggestion could be considered by UCA Outreach and Community Engagement.

E. **Loss of Student Motivation after Thanksgiving Break**: Many survey respondents complained of the lack of student motivation during the final week of classes between Thanksgiving Break and Final Exams Week. This is an issue that should be considered by UCA Student Life.

**Recommendation**: It is the recommendation of Faculty Affairs II Committee that there be no change to the UCA Fall Academic Calendar.