

Rutgers University Senate
Academic Standards, Regulations, and Admissions Committee
Response to Charge S-1003 on Fall 2010 Academic Calendar
April 2010

Charge S-1003, Fall 2010 Academic Calendar: Consider the potential problems with the Fall 2010 academic calendar brought to the Senate's attention by Senator Ted Szatrowski; namely, the fact that the first class meeting for sections of courses meeting on Monday only will not take place until near the end of the second week of classes. Evaluate the difficulties this will cause for faculty and students. Consult with Arun Mukherjee, University Director of Scheduling and Space Management, with appropriate staff in the Office of Information Technology (OIT), and with representatives of various schools and colleges and recommend whether or not changes should be made to the Fall 2010 academic calendar to solve the problems identified. Also revisit the academic calendar for subsequent years to see if changes should be made in order to avoid similar problems with Monday classes in the future. Respond to the Senate Executive Committee by April 2010 with regard to recommendations for Fall 2010 and by October 2010 for recommendations for future years.

Background and Findings

According to the current academic calendar, fall 2010 classes will begin on Wednesday, September 1, which means that the first meeting of course sections that meet on Mondays only will not take place until Monday, September 13, near the end of the second week of classes. This potential problem was brought to the Senate's attention at the March 26 Senate meeting by Senator Ted Szatrowski, who asked that we consider recommending changes to the 2010-2011 academic calendar to alleviate this problem with Monday-only courses or course sections. Senator Szatrowski's request was considered by the Senate Executive Committee on April 9, 2010. Despite the lateness of the identification of this issue, the Executive Committee agreed to charge ASRAC with addressing this problem. ASRAC considered this charge electronically, since it was not possible to schedule another meeting before its next regularly scheduled meeting on April 30.

Members of ASRAC agree that having the first Monday class meetings on September 13 will cause serious difficulties for a substantial number of faculty and students; i.e.:

- Students registered for or considering taking a Monday-only course will not be able to attend the first class meeting until well after the end of the add/drop period.
- Faculty members teaching Monday-only courses will not be able to meet with their students until near the end of the second week of classes.
- In courses with some but not all recitation/lab sections meeting once a week on Monday, the Monday sections will be a week behind other sections of the course until Thanksgiving week. (This will be a particularly serious problem in some lab courses.)
- In large courses with multiple lecture sections, in which some but not all sections have a lecture on Monday, the sections with a Monday lecture will be one lecture behind until Thanksgiving week.

The Committee also considered several proposed solutions to the problem, and agreed that the best solution would be to make two changes in designation of class days, namely: to have Monday classes meet on Wednesday, September 8; and to have Wednesday classes meet on Monday, November 22. The committee co-chair then consulted with Director of Scheduling and Space Management Arun Mukherjee concerning what would need to be done to implement the proposed changes. Mr. Mukherjee in turn consulted with Fei Luo, Associate Director for Programming Support at the Office of Information Technology (OIT). The result was a detailed action plan for implementing the proposed changes to the academic calendar. The plan suggests rerunning the entire room assignment creation and load process for the 14,296 courses currently scheduled for the Fall 2010 term, rather than just the 632 courses that would be affected by the change in designation of dates to minimize risk. Members of ASRAC also got input from a number of faculty and administrators in their units.

Conclusions

ASRAC concluded that it would be highly desirable to make the proposed changes in designation of class days, if it is at all practical to do so at this late date. Given the very short time we had to consider this matter, however, we were not able to do the sort of thorough consultation we would normally do with those that will be affected by the proposed changes. Whether or not it is practical to make the proposed changes for fall 2010, ASRAC will revisit the academic calendars for 2011-2012 and beyond to see if changes need to be made to avoid serious problems with Monday classes in the future. We will report to the Senate on any needed changes early in the fall semester. We have, therefore, two formal recommendations to offer.

Recommendations

1. ASRAC strongly recommends that the proposed changes to the academic calendar for fall 2010 be implemented, unless the Rutgers' administration persuades the Senate Executive Committee that there are compelling reasons not to do so. Specifically, we recommend that Monday classes meet on Wednesday, September 8, and Wednesday classes meet on Monday, November 22.
2. We recommend that the room assignment creation and load process for the 2011-2012 academic year not be run until the Senate has finished considering possible changes to the academic calendars for 2011-2012 and beyond.

2009-2010 Academic Standards, Regulations and Admissions Committee:

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