

**UCAP
Fall Study Break Subcommittee**

**Report & Recommendations
March 6, 2007**

In 2000, the University Committee on Academic Policy (UCAP) approved a mid-semester Fall Break (Attachment 1, UCAP minutes, January 27, 2000). No further action was taken, however, through the governance system. In January 2006, ASMSU Academic Assembly raised the issue again with the passing of bill 14-32, to “Support the Creation of a Fall Break” (Attachment 2). ASMSU’s proposal was reviewed and supported by University Committee on Student Affairs. It was also reviewed by University Graduate Council, which was not opposed to the idea of a Fall Break, but requested that details be worked out before proceeding. The proposal was forwarded by ECAC to UCAP for further consideration. UCAP discussed, in whole-committee and subcommittee meetings, the possibility of a fall break. Student members of ASMSU and UCAP gathered information about breaks at other universities and various arguments supporting putting a mid-semester break into place. Because changing the semester calendar affects so many different aspects of the University, we also solicited input from a variety of administrators and offices across campus. The result is the following proposal:

UCAP recommends:

1. that a Fall Study Break be established to occur on the Monday and Tuesday of the third week in October;
2. that Fall Semester classes begin on the Wednesday prior to the current first day of class (this shift will adjust for instructional days lost in accommodating for the Fall Study Break and other Fall Semester breaks);
3. that the Fall Study Break be implemented on a 5-year (from date of first implementation) trial basis to allow for subsequent evaluation of its impact. Continuation of the Fall Study Break beyond the 5-year period will be require subsequent approval as a permanent change in the University calendar after an evaluation and review by UCAP during the fourth year of its enactment.
4. that this proposal be reviewed by University Graduate Council, University Committee on Student Affairs, and University Committee on Faculty Affairs, and then be forwarded to Faculty Council and Academic Council for consideration.

Additional Information

- If proposed change were put into effect for the Fall 2007 Semester, classes would begin Wednesday, August 22, and the Fall Study Break would take place on October 15-16 (Monday-Tuesday).

- Suggested move-in days:
Freshmen, Transfers, and International students: Sunday prior to start of classes.
Other students: Monday prior to start of classes.
- Affect on instructional days: Under the current calendar, there are 72 instructional days in Fall Semester, 74 instructional days in Spring Semester. The proposed changes would result in 73 instructional days in Fall Semester.

Rationale

The primary rationale for a Fall Study Break offered in Academic Assembly of ASMSU is that it “would provide a brief period of time for students to rest and recuperate from midterms, give students time to finish backlogged work and studying, allow students who do not live locally a chance to return home to see family and help ease stress and mental strain of the student body.”

In addition, MSU is one of only three Big Ten schools that do not have a Fall Break. (The others are University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin.) Two schools, the University of Michigan and Purdue, offer breaks similar to the proposed two-day Fall Study Break. Four universities, the University of Illinois, the University of Iowa, Indiana University, and Penn State, offer a full-week break for Thanksgiving. Northwestern University and Ohio State University are on quarters, the length of which precludes the need for mid-term breaks.

Known Issues

- Some science labs are set up and scheduled on a weekly basis; any week with one or more days without classes meeting disrupts these schedules.
- Courses that meet only once a week, especially those that meet on Monday, may be disadvantaged. (Under this proposal, Fall Semester would have class on 13 Mondays, 14 Tuesdays, 16 Wednesdays, 15 Thursdays, and 15 Fridays.)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following questions and answers represent a summary of frequent issues raised in deliberations on establishing a Fall Study Break:

Q: How has this impacted other schools that have recently adopted a Fall Study Break?

A: Since the University of Michigan has adopted the Fall Study Break, they’ve had no problems. It has been seen as a resounding success within their student body.

Q: Why do the students want it?

A: A break will allow for students to travel home and will provide an opportunity for them to catch up on their schoolwork as well as a variety of other benefits. As a result, the subcommittee attests that student stress levels will decrease.

Q: Who is affected and how?

A: Although undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and others will be affected by the break and must make some adjustments, these adjustments will not be equally weighted amongst those affected. It is assumed that these adjustments will eventually become part of the University culture.

Q: What if students just use this break to party?

A: By setting the Fall Study Break fall on a Monday and Tuesday, students will be encouraged to go home, study, and rest. Furthermore, the Fall Study Break could be for community service projects much like Martin Luther King Jr. Day is used for such endeavors at MSU. The Fall Study Break could provide opportunities for service-oriented Alternative Fall Study Break. Other schools, including Duke, University of North Carolina, North Carolina State University to name a few.

Q: When would a Fall Study Break be implemented?

A: UCAP urges the University to implement the Fall Study Break, if approved, as soon as possible given the practicalities of making adjustments to calendars and responsibilities of various individuals and groups on campus.

Attachment 1
UCAP Minutes 1/27/2000
Excerpt

6. Other Subcommittee Reports

a) Mid-Semester Break - A report was distributed. The subcommittee recommended: I) a one-day break in mid-October, and a break date on Good Friday. Discussion followed. A motion was made to reject the sub-committees recommendation. A second motion was made to split the original motion into two parts reflecting the sub-committee recommendation. The original motion was restated as a positive motion. The first part of the sub-committee recommendation passed (7 yes, 6 no), and the second part of the recommendation was rejected (11 no, 2 yes). An alternative to the second motion, setting a fixed Friday in spring semester as a break, was rejected (10 no, 3 yes).

Attachment 2
Academic Assembly Bill 14-32

Fall Break: Big Ten Universities

University of Illinois

- Thanksgiving (November 19-28)*

Governance considerations:

- Fall break should be placed between Labor Day and Thanksgiving break: longest period of time without recess
 - Proposed: Thanksgiving break: From 9 days to 5 days; Fall Break: 4 days
 - Currently (2005): Thanksgiving break: 19-27 November (28 Nov. class resumes)*
- Benefits:
 - Reduce Stress levels
 - Most Students go into counseling during that period
 - Safety issue: suicide concern
 - Efficiency goes down
 - Out-of-state students have time to return home
 - Extra reading day
- 1999: extended Thanksgiving break for same reasons
- Student leaders and dean of students, Bill Riley, support
- Students currently start fall semester on a Wednesday with Monday's class schedule.
 - With changes, would start on Monday
- 'Very little effect on University staff': professors and other faculty members have to be there anyways
- The number of required instructional days: University says there has to be 72 instructional days
 - With reading day: 71—conflict with University, supported by students*
 - At MSU, there are not a set number of days required for each semester, only that each semester be relatively consistent

Indiana University

- Fall break (2005): 7 October
- Thanksgiving break: 23-25 November
- Final Exams: 12-16 December*
- Fall break (2000): 13 October*
- **1998 Proposal (draft) from IPFW (Indiana University, Purdue University, and Fort Wayne) Campus Calendar Subcommittee Academic Calendar Formula:**
 - Two-day suspension of regular classes consisting of the first Thursday and Friday after the mid-point between the beginning of the semester and Thanksgiving break.
 - Thanksgiving recess shall consist of Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday and weekend. Monday of Thanksgiving week shall be a make-up day for Labor Day, with regular Monday classes scheduled. Tuesday and Wednesday of

Thanksgiving week shall be make-up days for the fall break, with regular Thursday and Friday classes scheduled, up to 4:30 PM Wednesday.*

- **Senate Faculty Meeting (28 February 2005): the committee recommended the following options:**
 - That IUSB schedule a fall break that would occur on Monday and Tuesday of the eighth week of the fall semester.
 - The committee believed that it is possible to schedule a fall break but the Senate must be aware of the following advantages and disadvantages.
 - Potential advantages:
 - the break would allow for refreshment and rejuvenation
 - The thanksgiving break would begin on Wednesday rather than Thursday.
 - Costs:
 - Classes would start earlier – on Wednesday rather than a Monday
 - The Labor Day break would include Saturday
 - The thanksgiving break would begin on Wednesday rather than Thursday
 - The Study Day would occur later, moving from Sunday to Tuesday
 - The Exam week would start later, moving from Wednesday rather than Thursday
 - The exam week would end later, moving from Saturday to Tuesday
 - The length of the semester would be extended, as the semester would end on a Monday rather than a Saturday
 - the overall length of the semester would increase by five actual days and one day of instruction (a Friday)
 - The spring semester would have one fewer Thursday classes than the fall does (this may affect one day a week classes) but one more Tuesday class than the fall does
 - Syllabi from semester to semester would be incompatible.
 - The discussions of the proposal centered around two issues.
 - First, some were not convinced that adding a two-day break would bring the drastic changes on the school's calendar as the committee suggested. The committee chair informed the body that they did indeed make a thorough study of the consequences and the Registrar, Mike Carroll, was actively engaged in the discussion of the proposed changes and he pointed out to the committee the changes that were associated with a proposed fall break.
 - The other issue involved the necessity of having a fall break for the campus. Kevin Smant argued that for learning purposes a break in between the semester is beneficial to both the faculty and students. It is his experience that students and faculty are usually burned out at the last few weeks of the fall semester. He believed that a fall break will rejuvenate students and faculty alike and will help them end the semester more successfully.
 - It was moved that the proposal be further studied and that more inputs should be solicited. It was suggested that students be also consulted with respect to the

proposal. It was also resolved by the Senate take up the matter for the next meeting in March as old business.*

- The Calendar Committee brought two different proposals for the Academic Calendar with one offering a modified Fall and Thanksgiving Break. Both proposals change the starting date of fall semester and change spring break. Fall semester would always start on the Monday before Labor Day and Spring Break the tenth week of classes.
- Currently Fall Break is Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving providing a full week break.
- The other option includes doing a Monday and Tuesday around Columbus Day so that there will be a four day weekend and still have Wednesday through Sunday of Thanksgiving week. In a survey done by Student Leaders, two-thirds of the students surveyed favored keeping Fall Break the entire week in November.*

University of Iowa

- 19 (Saturday) November 2005: Thanksgiving Recess 5:00 p.m., (Colleges of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Business, Engineering, Education, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, the School of Management, and the Graduate College)
- 22 (Tuesday) November 2005: Thanksgiving Recess 10:00 p.m., (Colleges of Medicine, Law, and Dentistry)
- 24 (Thursday) November 2005: University Holiday, Offices Closed
- 25 (Friday) November 2005: University Holiday, Offices Closed
- 28 (Monday) November 2005: Resumption of Classes, 7:30 a.m.*

University of Michigan

- Fall Study Break: 17-18 (Mon-Tues) Oct 2005
- Thanksgiving Break: 23-28 (Wed-Monday) November*
- Responding to desire of students, the Board of Regents approved, at their 13 December meeting, a proposal for a fall break. The two-day break will be over a Monday and Tuesday in mid-October. In exchange, Fall semester will begin the Tuesday after Labor Day instead of Wednesday. The change will go into effect beginning Fall term 2002.*

Purdue University

- 10-11 October: Fall break*

Ohio State University

- Veteran's Day observed: 11 Nov
- Columbus Day observed: 28 Nov*
- Thanksgiving break: 24 November*

Penn State University

- **Penn State Intercom: Senate recommends changes in academic calendar** (14 March 2002)

- The proposed calendar would combine the existing fall break and Thanksgiving break into one full week of vacation at Thanksgiving time. Also, fall and spring semesters each would consist of 72 instructional days and a period of four "final assessment days" would conclude each semester. These recommendations have been sent to the president after more than a year of study and debate.*
- **Penn State Live: University's academic calendar to change in 2007-08**
(14 March 2006)
 - Penn State's fall and spring semesters will become identical in format under changes that slightly reorganize the University's academic calendar effective in 2007-08.
 - Fall semester: a weeklong break from classes over the Thanksgiving holiday; shorter fall break that has been held over one or two days in October in recent years.
 - This adjustment creates fall and spring semesters that are a uniform 15 weeks in length.
 - This addresses class attendance problems seen during the short Thanksgiving week in recent years.*

University of Wisconsin (No Fall Break)

- Thanksgiving Recess: November 22-25*
- Thanksgiving break: 24-27

University of Minnesota (No Fall break)

- Thanksgiving break: 24 November
- 'Floating holiday': 25 November*

Northwestern University (No Fall break)

- Thanksgiving break: 23-24 November*