

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

October 21, 2015

To: The Steering Committee, Academic Governance

From: Judy Palac, Assoc Prof of Music Education, College of Music representative to Faculty Senate

Re: Possible Agenda Item: Fall Break

The issue of a Fall Break is not new to MSU. According to Academic Governance records, in 2000, UCAP approved the creation of a one-day fall break that was never acted upon. The Academic Assembly of ASMSU took up the issue in January of 2006, passing a bill requesting UCAP to reopen the discussion.

UCAP investigated the issue (see other attachment) and proposed that there be a two-day fall break on a Monday and Tuesday in October, and that the resulting loss of two class days be made up by starting on the Wednesday preceding the last Monday before Labor Day (at that time, the first day of fall classes was the last Monday before Labor Day). In November, 2008, the Steering Committee (ECAC at the time), with Faculty Council approval, appointed a Task Force on Academic Year Review that would look at broader calendar issues, including the fall break. The Task Force's work, with additional investigation by Provost Kim Wilcox, resulted in 2012 with only one change: fall commencement was moved from the weekend before finals to the weekend following finals. However, according to the minutes, in his remarks to the University Council on April 24, 2012, Provost Wilcox left the door open for other considerations: "He noted that there is a long tradition in universities of asking ourselves why we do what we do and that he has no doubt that the conversations about the academic calendar will be repeated, perhaps with different outcomes. Provost Wilcox suggested that in the Fall, the Steering Committee might come back to any one of the issues." There is no mention in Academic Governance records of the fall break issue beyond that date.

I respectfully suggest that the Steering Committee take up the issue of a fall break once more, for all the reasons uncovered by the UCAP investigation and more. Labor Day to Thanksgiving Day is a much longer academic stretch than is January to Spring Break. I see our students suffering at fall mid-term with illness, incomplete work, and general malaise. I believe that their, as well as faculty, productivity would benefit from two days reserved for renewal.



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