Faculty Senate

April 19, 2017
Faculty Senate Resolution on
Cornell Leadership in Honesty and Reliable Knowledge

How can the university turn a blind eye to ... the capacity to dress falsehood up as truth and reject the fruits of reasoned argument, evidence and rigorous verification?

Standing up for the truth — which is, after all, higher education’s business — might appear to be an act of political partisanship. But this is not about political parties. It is about the proper role of the academy in a troubling time.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/08/opinion/american-universities-must-take-a-stand.html?_r=0
Cornell Leadership in Honesty and Reliable Knowledge

Whereas dishonesty, falsehoods, and the distortion or suppression of reliable knowledge have become critical public issues of particular urgency;

Whereas a central mission of colleges and universities is the discovery, validation, communication, and preservation of reliable knowledge;

Whereas social media, the internet, and other forms of digital communication are dramatically changing the patterns of our communication in a manner that “blurs the distinction between fact and fiction” and creates conditions where reliable knowledge is often drowned out by large volumes of false information;

Whereas Cornell University has a unique position as both a private and land-grant university with an official “…mission to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge; [to] produce creative work; and [to] promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community,” and “…through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of our students, the people of New York, and others around the world”;
Therefore be it resolved that Cornell university leadership and faculty should expand and initiate educational activities, both on- and off-campus, to explain established academic practices for discriminating between fact and opinion, validating facts, establishing what is reliable knowledge, and exposing the communication practices that distort, confuse, and seek to repress or censor reliable knowledge.

Be it further resolved that Cornell faculty and leadership should work with communication experts, journalists, and other relevant groups to develop innovative means, appropriate to the changing technology of communicating reliable knowledge with the public.

Be it further resolved that the Cornell leadership should collaborate with other colleges and universities to forward these objectives.
Original:

Whereas social media, the internet, and other forms of digital communication are dramatically changing the patterns of our communication in a manner that “blurs the distinction between fact and fiction” and creates conditions where reliable knowledge is often drowned out by large volumes of false information;

Amended:

Whereas social media, the internet, and other forms of digital communication are dramatically changing the patterns of our communication in a manner that, like speech and writing themselves, can sometimes blur fact and fiction and create conditions where reliable knowledge is drowned out by large volumes of false information;
Academic Calendar Committee “Final” Report

Senate Discussion

April 19, 2017

Becky Stoltzfus and Charlie Van Loan
The Committee

Marianella Casasola
Tom Fox
Becky Stoltzfus
Rob Thorne
Charlie Van Loan

Akhi Issur
Ben Oster
Rina Winarto

Imani Allen
Marin Clarkburg
Cassie Dembosky
Betsy East
Greg Eells
Gina Giambattista
Mary Beth Grant
Hazel Hall
Connie Mabry

A good example of students, staff, and faculty working together.
Finding the Overall Best Calendar

Given the emphasis on academics that is part of our charge, the Committee has focused on:

- how to position breaks so that they maximize learning and well being
- how to increase summertime opportunities for scholarship and employment
- how to enhance the value of class days just before and just after Thanksgiving
- how to structure an effective orientation period and study/exam period

As much as possible, we also address concerns that relate to religious practice, childcare, and a host of practical issues such as getting grades in on time, big course prep, getting the dorms ready for graduation families, etc., etc., etc.
The Current Calendar

Play with the tiles.

But NYS requires that

Class Days + Exam Days \( \geq 75 \)

each semester.
Compared to Our Peers

We have the least number of Orientation days.

Cornell = 3
Median = 7
All peers have at least 5.

Ivy League +
Duke
Johns Hopkins
MIT
Chicago
Stanford
Michigan
Berkeley
Compared to Our Peers

We have the least number of class days after Thanksgiving.

Cornell = 5
Median = 10

Except for Harvard and Cornell, everybody has at least 8.
Compared to Our Peers

We have the only two-break Spring semester except Brown.

Yale has a single 2-week spring break.
Compared to Our Peers

We have a somewhat long study/exam period.

Cornell  13
Penn     10
Columbia 10
Michigan 10
Duke     10
Berkeley 7

Ivy League +
Duke
Johns Hopkins
MIT
Chicago
Stanford
Michigan
Berkeley
Compared to Our Peers

We have a relatively long Dec/Jan break.

Cornell is about 1.5 weeks above the median.

We have a relatively short summer break.

Cornell is about 2.5 weeks below the median.
Starting, Stopping, Breaks

Don’t start too early

Don’t end too late

Gimme 5!

Don’t start so late

Reposition

Don’t end so late
Childcare Days: 2016-17

A childcare day is a Cornell class day that is not a public school class day.

The number of childcare days doesn’t capture everything, but it is a start.

Very difficult to synch breaks with the public schools if we position our breaks according to what’s academically best for our students.

Similar comment about religious holidays.
The Proposed Alternatives

The Modified Current Calendar

What we think is the best possible calendar given that graduation stays on Memorial Day Weekend.

The Early Commencement Calendar

What we think is the best possible calendar given that graduation is held two weeks earlier.

The Fall Semester is the same for both of these calendars.
The Modified Current Calendar Framework

Five-day orientation.

Classes start 2 days later.

Seven class days after Thanksgiving.

Modified study/exam period.

Feb break is always after 24 class days.

Modified study/exam period.

Increases the gap from the last exam day to graduation.
Other Differences

1. The summer break increases by 5 days.

2. The summer break increases by one “work week”.

3. The Dec/Jan break decreases by 3 days.

4. Weekday Balance
   - Current Fall: 12-15-14-14-14
   - Modified Fall: 13-14-13-14-14
   - Current Spring: 13-13-15-14-14
   - Modified Spring: 13-14-14-14-14
The Early Commencement Calendar Framework

Five-day orientation.

Classes start 2 days later.

Seven class days after Thanksgiving.

Modified study/exam period.

Classes start 8 days earlier.

Only one break.

Modified study/exam period.

Graduation is two Weeks earlier
Other Differences

1. The summer break increases by 15 days.

2. The summer break increases by two “work weeks”

3. The Dec/Jan break decreases by 10 days.

4. Weekday Balance
   - Current Fall: 12-15-14-14-14
   - Early Fall: 13-14-13-14-14

   - Current Spring: 13-13-15-14-14
   - Early Spring: 13-14-14-14-14
The Modified Exam Period (Fall Illustration)

Current Calendar

Modified or Early Calendar

- Class Day
- Break Day (Thanksgiving)
- Study Day
- 1-Exam Day
- Exam Day
The Modified Exam Period (Fall Illustration)

New material taught just after the Thanksgiving break can be properly reviewed and integrated with earlier course content.
Instead of ending classes with a 5-day frenzy, instructors can plan a course wrap-up that works well for students as they begin preparing for finals.
Moreover, the weekend after Thanksgiving weekend gives students more time to complete end-of-term projects and papers.
End-of-Term Design

An opportunity for us all to rethink how the semester can and should wrap up.
Some Peer School Study/Exam Periods

Columbia

Penn

Berkeley
The Evolution of the Cornell Study/Exam Period

1991
7 exam days
6 study days
21 exam periods

1997
8 exam days
5 study days
22 exam periods

2005
9 exam days
5 study days
22 exam periods

2017
8 exam days
5 study days
19 exam periods
Another Trend

The last twenty years has seen a near doubling of breaks days:

1  Labor Day
2  Fall Break
1  Wednesday before Thanksgiving
2  Thanksgiving and day after
2  February Break
5  Spring Break

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6+7 = 13
Wrap-Up Timeline

April    Faculty Senate and Assemblies Discussion
May     Faculty Senate and Assemblies Vote

Report & Recommendations to Provost who decides.
New calendar (probably) takes effect 2018-19.

View report and leave comments:
http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/news/academic-calendar-committee/recommendations/
For Voting We Recommend a Ranking Ballot

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<thead>
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<th>Circle the Rank</th>
<th>Calendar Framework</th>
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<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>Current Calendar Framework</td>
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<tr>
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<td>It features a 3-day orientation, a 2-day October break, a 3-day Thanksgiving break, 5 class days after Thanksgiving, a 2-day February break, a 5-day spring break, a 13-day finals period with 8 exam days, a 4-day gap between the last exam day and graduation. Commencement is held on Memorial Day weekend.</td>
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<td>Modified Current Calendar Framework</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Same as the Current Calendar except that it has a 5-day orientation, 7 class days after Thanksgiving, an 11-day finals period with 7 exam days, and a 7-day gap between the last exam day and graduation. Commencement is held on Memorial Day weekend. The summer break is five days longer and the between-semester break is five days shorter.</td>
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Extra Slides
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<td>16</td>
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<td>Pair over lunch</td>
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Possible Fall Calendar Framework

Fall Calendar Framework  F1

- 2-day Fall break
- 3-day Thanksgiving break
- A modified study/exam period
- Four August class days moved to December

Improvement over the current calendar?

<table>
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<th>Unsure</th>
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<td>Alumni</td>
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Possible Fall Calendar Framework

Fall Calendar Framework F2

- 2-day Fall break
- 5-day Thanksgiving break
- A modified study/exam period
- Two August class days moved to December
- An effectively longer orientation period

<table>
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Improvement over the current calendar?
Possible Spring Calendar Framework

Spring Calendar Framework S1

- February break is one week later
- Spring break stays the same
- A modified study/exam period

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<td>Alumni</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
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Improvement over the current calendar?
Possible Spring Calendar Framework

- The 5-day break is positioned in March
- The 2-day break is positioned in April
- A modified study/exam period

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Improvement over the current calendar?
Possible Spring Calendar Framework

Spring Calendar Framework S3

- Commencement is 2 weeks earlier
- February break and spring break remain
- A modified study/exam period
- Classes start about 13 days earlier

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<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
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Improvement over the current calendar?
Possible Spring Calendar Framework

Spring Calendar Framework S4

- Commencement is 2 weeks earlier
- No February break
- A modified study/exam period
- Classes start about 8 days earlier

<table>
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This means that 32 Cornell students checked into the Cayuga Medical Center ER on a Sunday during 2006.

Same stats only confined to “senior week”. These are the seven days that precede Commencement Sunday.

<table>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perspective: Emergency Room Visits During Senior Week

New Calendar Reduce Senior Week Years: