

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

Alternative Academic Calendar Committee

Report to Faculty Senate

December 2011

Information about the challenges and benefits of various academic calendar models

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Background

In the Fall of 2010, after a meeting involving University President Bob Kustra and Faculty Senate President and Vice President Owen McDougal and Anne Gregory, it was decided to assemble a group of people to examine the University's academic calendar. The faculty senate leaders worked with Provost Sona Andrews to assemble the Alternative Academic Calendar Committee (AACC) and charge it with the following:

Committee Charge:

The Alternative Academic Calendar Committee (AACC) is asked to investigate and analyze the challenges and potential benefits of various models for our academic calendar with the goals of improving the educational experience of students, creating more opportunities for faculty, and more efficiently utilizing our scarce resources.

The committee's charge is not to recommend but to identify:

- *Potential models (ranging from the current model at Boise State; one of creating a true trimesters where the academic year is divided into three terms of relatively equal lengths; retaining the semester system, but creating a summer term with a 12-10 week session of instruction; and other appropriate models)*
- *The pros and cons of various options in the context of issues related to, but not limited to:*
 - *The impact on student life, such as the impact on financial aid, athletic programs, student government, and most importantly student learning.*
 - *The need for additional faculty*
 - *The impact on faculty research*
 - *Impact on departments, programs, colleges*
 - *The impact on other university services (Student Affairs, maintenance and utilities, Library, etc.).*

It is important to keep at the forefront the need to ensure that the models proposed are academically sound.

It is expected that the group will meet regularly during the academic year, with periodic updates to the Faculty Senate and Administration. A final report will be delivered to the faculty senate in Fall 2011. The Senate will then make recommendations to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the University President.

Committee Membership:

The Committee met for the first time on November 24. Members included

Michael Blankenship, SSPA, co-chair*

Doug Bullock, COAS, co-chair**

Mark Wheeler, Extended Studies, co-chair

Mark Gehrke, ASBSU*

Keith Allred, COE

Mary Ann Cahill, Faculty Senate*

Susan Park, COBE*

TJ Wing, COHS

Janet Callahan, COEN

Mark Hansen, Faculty Senate**

Al Dufty, Graduate College

Chris Rosenbaum, Budget

Lisa Jordan, Research

David Tolman, Financial Aid

Brandie VanOrder, ASBSU**

**Member from Nov '10 –April '11*

***Member from Aug '11 –Dec '11*

Methods Used to Explore Calendar Options

The Committee used a variety of methods for exploring and analyzing various calendar models.

Included were the following:

- Literature review: The committee gathered and read many articles regarding both academic calendar models and successful methods for building summer enrollment. The most relevant are included in this report's appendix.

- Examination of other institution’s calendar models: Data was gathered from several schools utilizing different calendar models, including Boise State’s peer schools. This is also included in the Appendix.
 - Assessment of learning in BSU’s compressed courses: Because a looming question was how effective compressed courses were in achieving the same learning outcomes as full-length courses, a study was commissioned by the group. BSU’s Office of Institutional Assessment, Analysis and Reporting looked at students who had taken compressed courses to see how well they performed in those courses as well as subsequent courses.
 - Faculty, staff, and student experiences: The Boise State University community is comprised of faculty, staff and students with rich experiences here and on other campuses. Committee members were encouraged to reach out to their colleagues regarding their thoughts on calendar models. This led to many discussions in the group about the pros and cons of various models.
 - Surveys of students and faculty: With the help of IAAR, questions were asked of all enrolled students and all fulltime and part-time faculty. The committee received responses from over 2,400 students and 415 faculty. The answers received from survey questions as well as free-form comments provided the committee with some of its most compelling information.
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Summary of Trends in Higher Education

It would be misleading to say that there is a “best practice” when it comes to academic calendars. The goals of universities are different and their academic calendars reflect those differences. Based on the literature reviewed by the committee and data collected from a variety of sources, here are a few take-aways:

- The traditional semester system, similar to the one that exists at Boise State, is the most prevalent at universities.
- The quarter system is the second most common system at universities.
- More universities are switching from quarters to semesters than vice versa.
- Trimester calendars have not been widely adopted in the United States; they are more common in Canada.

- Regardless of the calendar being utilized at a given institution, there has been considerable discussion around the topic of making universities more productive year-round, thereby making the institution more cost-effective and students' education more affordable. Strategies for this include:
 - Growing summer enrollments by making the “opt-in” nature of them more attractive to students, by either offering more courses online, in accelerated formats, or at lower prices. Incentives for faculty and academic departments are also emphasized since it is necessary to get them to opt into offering an increased number and array of courses. These incentives are mainly financial but also emphasize flexibility, allowing faculty to teach in the summer but still conduct research and spend time doing other things that are important to them.
 - Requiring groups of students to complete some credits during summer terms, or assigning upon admission entire cohorts to tracks such as summer/fall or spring/summer. BYU-Idaho uses the trimester model because they assign students equally among three tracks: fall/spring, spring/summer, or summer/fall. The University of Florida hopes to pilot a program in Summer 2012 that will add up to 2,000 students to a spring/summer track, utilizing its existing semester calendar.
 - Providing year-round options that allow students to earn their degrees in as quickly as three years instead of 4. Several institutions are experimenting with different variations on this theme, but few have adopted the year-round 3-year bachelor degree on a large scale, for two reasons: 1) a majority of students prefer the experience of earning a degree in four (or more) years; and 2) a change in federal financial aid policy is needed for this model to realize its potential. Currently students can only receive full financial aid for 2 semesters per year. Some institutions have moved forward with 3-year degrees but instead of requiring year-round, fulltime attendance, they have participating students attend part-time in the summer and also bring in external credits such as AP and concurrent enrollment credits.
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Various Calendar Scenarios Explored by the Committee

In its charge the committee was tasked with looking at some specific calendar models, including “trimesters where the academic year is divided into three terms” and “retaining the semester

system, but creating a summer term with a 12-10 week session of instruction,” and “other appropriate models.” The committee discussed a quarter system in some of its initial meetings. Below is brief description of each model that the committee explored:

Boise State’s Existing Calendar – Fall/Spring Semesters, with Summer/Intersession Terms

Boise State’s existing calendar model is the most common at universities today. Fall and Spring semesters are each comprised of approximately 15 weeks of instruction plus one week of finals. These are the “main” semesters as far as delivering the curriculum. Students get one week off for Thanksgiving, four weeks off between fall and spring semesters, and one week off for spring break. Summer and Intersession terms are designed as add-ons and are considered “optional” as far as what’s offered and who enrolls.

Compared to most universities its size, Boise State’s summer program is fairly large. Typically about 8,000 students enroll. Almost all of these summer students are part-time, however, combining for just 40,000 credit hours (an average of 5 credits per student). Consider that in the fall semester Boise State’s nearly 20,000 students amass over 240,000 credit hours (an average of 11 credits per student). With the current calendar the expanse between the end of Spring semester and the start of Fall semester is not long enough to include a full-length semester. Courses are compressed into either 3-week, 5-week, 8-week or 10-week sessions.

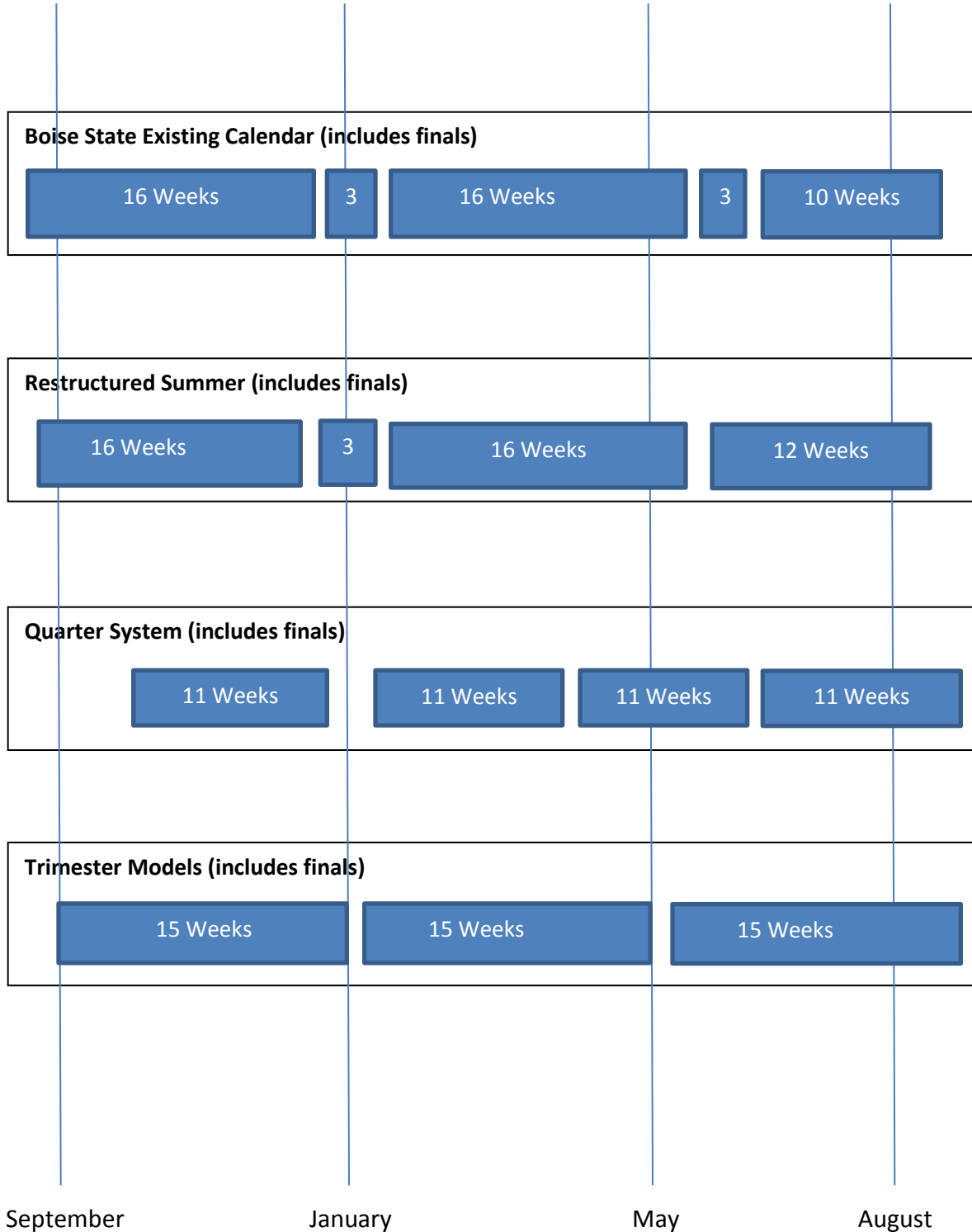
Keeping Fall and Spring Semester the Same but Restructuring Summer

Some question whether the summer sessions as they currently exist at Boise State are too compressed. Plus, several believe that having multiple sessions of varying lengths is chaotic and makes it challenging for students to schedule multiple classes. Without changing the existing Fall and Spring semesters it is possible to restructure summer term to have sessions as long as 12 weeks. Would restructuring the summer’s academic calendar make the summer a more robust academic term?

Quarter System

After the traditional semester system, the most common calendar model is the quarter system. The academic calendar is divided into four 10-11 week quarters. Typically Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters are considered the main quarters for delivering the curriculum. Summer is often treated as an add-on term and as optional. Also, a credit in quarter system is worth 0.66% of a credit in a semester system. Therefore, bachelor degrees typically require about 180 quarter credits (compared to 120 semester credits).

Various Calendar Models



The AACC discussed the quarter system initially but eliminated it from consideration early on because:

- None of the other public institutions in Idaho are on quarter systems
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- Transfer students to Boise State from Idaho's community colleges as well as its public four-year colleges would be negatively affected by such a change; transfers from Boise State to other Idaho public institutions would also be negatively affected.
- Nationally, more institutions are changing from quarter to semester systems than vice versa. One reason cited for this is that quarter systems require more administration to accommodate the additional round of course scheduling and registration that occurs annually.
- No one championed a quarter system as a way of achieving the goals set forth in the committee's charge.

Trimester Model

It became glaringly apparent to AACC members very quickly that when you say "trimester," just about everyone has a different understanding of what model entails. Oftentimes people interpret it as meaning "year-round." Some people confuse it with the quarter system, because in a quarter system the main body of an academic year consists of 3 (thus tri-) quarters. And some people are wary of trimester models because they have heard of semester credits and quarter credits but never trimester credits.

A trimester calendar simply means that the year is divided into three semesters of equal length, typically about 14 weeks each. To achieve the needed contact hours within 14 weeks (rather than 15) vacation days are reduced, such as those around Thanksgiving, winter break, and even President's Day. Credits in trimester systems are semester credits. While it is possible for a trimester calendar to be used in a year-round model, its most widespread application is in Michigan and none of the public institutions there considers itself year-round. For instance, at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, most of the students attend - and most of the faculty teach - during the fall and spring trimesters. The summer semester - while a full 14 weeks long - is still considered an add-on and optional. Also, a good number of the summer courses are compressed into 7-week courses, with some offered in the first half of the summer semester and the rest offered in the second half.

At least one institution has adopted the trimester calendar as a way of increasing its year-round productivity. And that institution is nearby: Brigham Young University – Idaho, in Rexburg. BYU-Idaho strives to have teaching and enrollment spread equally across its 3 semesters. Many of the faculty there teach all three semesters in exchange for greater pay. (BYU-Idaho is not a research university and faculty devote most of their time to teaching). Students, interestingly, do not attend year-round. Students are assigned to attend 2 of the 3 semesters. They are divided into Fall-Spring, Spring-Summer, and Summer-Fall groups. There are two main reasons for doing this rather than having students attend year-round. The first is that the majority of students either prefer not to attend year-round or cannot attend year-round. The second is that federal financial aid will only pay for fulltime enrollment across two semesters, not three.

In its discussions, the committee found it helpful to refer to 3 different variations of the Trimester model: *Trimester – Michigan model*; *Trimester – BYU-Idaho model*; *Trimester – Year-round model*. While there are undoubtedly possibilities beyond the 3 variations listed here, distinguishing between these three different approaches to the trimester helped the group come to a better understanding of trimesters.

Questions About Compressed Courses

Because Boise State’s existing calendar as well as some other calendar models feature short sessions for compressed courses – allowing students to earn 3 credits in as little as 3 weeks – the question came up about how “academically sound” these courses are. Even though student contact hours in these compressed courses are equal to full-length courses because they typically meet 3-4 hours each weekday, some committee members questioned if the same learning outcomes were being achieved. Others pointed out that particular topics are best learned through immersion, for which the short-session courses are a great fit. The Committee worked with BSU’s Office of Institutional Assessment, Analysis and Reporting to conduct a study of compressed courses. IAAR looked at students who took a compressed course that was the first in a 2-course series. IAAR looked to see how well the completers of the compressed course performed in the subsequent course. A summary of the study is in the appendix. The results of the study did not reveal glaring deficiencies stemming from the short-session courses. While some committee members were unconvinced by the study about the extent of learning

in compressed classes, for most members the study assuaged concerns. It was felt that the decision to offer a particular course in a compressed format is best left to the department chairs.

Budget Impact

Calendar and budget are two different things, but certainly they affect each other. As mentioned earlier, Boise State's existing calendar features a summer program that is an "add-on" to the regular academic year and students and faculty "opt-in." Related to this, summer courses are not subsidized like fall and spring courses. The University only offers summer courses that generate enough student tuition revenue to cover or exceed costs. To ensure this, undergraduate classes must average 20 students and graduate classes 12 students. Classes that don't meet these thresholds are typically cancelled. The result is a summer curriculum that is not as expansive as fall or spring. On the positive side, this model allows Boise State to focus its scarce resources on making fall and spring as robust as possible. Additionally, Summer 2010 netted \$2.3 million over direct cost. About \$1.2 million of this went to central coffers to cover indirect expenses of the summer program, such as classroom usage, air conditioning and other utilities, and support services; about \$1.1 million was distributed across the academic colleges based on the summer credit hours they generated. These net revenues provided the university and the academic colleges additional funding for a wide range of initiatives.

Contrast the above with either the BYU-Idaho or Year-round Trimester models. The summer semester is equivalent in just about every way to fall and spring semesters. At BSU, implementing such a model could mean summer credit-hour generation ballooning from 40,000 to over 200,000! But it would also mean offering the full curriculum, which in the fall and spring semesters requires subsidization. It would also mean offering the same services, which currently ramp down and sometimes even close in summer. Certainly Boise State would be more efficient if it had equal enrollments across 3 semesters each year. But it is hard to determine exactly how much will be yielded from utilizing buildings more efficiently, avoiding construction costs, and from the additional State revenue the University should receive for delivering more instruction each year.

The committee looked at too many scenarios to generate budget calculations for each one. But certainly changing the calendar model has the potential to impact budget – both positive and negative. The Committee addressed this at a high level for each model.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Calendar Model

Each calendar model has advantages and disadvantages. Early on the AACC members began keeping a list of pros and cons associated with each calendar model. What follows is the committee’s early thinking about the pros and cons of each model.

Existing Boise State Academic Calendar - Pro

- Current summer/intersession structure offers multiple options for compressed course delivery; lots of flexibility for faculty and students;
- Decent calendar alignment with public schools and other State universities;
- Good growth trend: enrollments across all semesters are growing when measured over several years; summer credit hours have grown a total of 25% over the last five years.
- Many employees appreciate the week of closure around Christmas and the four weeks between fall and spring semesters when there are no classes in session. Plus students get an additional full week off for Thanksgiving and a full week off for spring break.
- Many students like the “opt-in” nature of summer classes, giving them the ability to do other things, or take a break from classes, during the summer.
- Likewise, faculty like the “opt-in” nature of summer classes, giving them the ability to do other things – such as conducting research, taking a break from classes, travelling, etc.
- Current structuring of summer and intersession courses provide faculty with supplemental income opportunities
- There still appears to be considerable upside for increasing summer enrollment within this calendar model.
- The campus currently has space available for a variety of other programming in the summer: youth camps, academic conferences, new student orientation, residential experiences for prospective students, workshops for educators, etc.
- The following has more to do with the budget model than the calendar, but it was often mentioned that with the design of the current model, summer courses generate more revenue

than they cost. Summer 2010 netted \$2.3 million over direct cost. About \$1.2million of this went to central coffers to cover indirect expenses of the summer program; About \$1.1 million was distributed across the academic colleges based on the credit hours they generated.

Existing Boise State Academic Calendar - Con

- Summer is structured and treated fundamentally differently than fall and spring. Is there a compelling reason for this?
- Campus is underutilized during intersessions and summer; only a fraction of the credit-bearing students are here that exist in fall or spring semesters.
- There are no options for regular length 15-week courses during the summer; not all classes are conducive to a compressed format.
- Compressed formats lead to most students taking 1-2 courses at a time and not attending fulltime in summer
- Fastest growing segment of enrollment stems from online courses; 3- and 5-week sessions are typically not the best structure for online delivery. Longer sessions would be better.
- The high number of summer sessions and their start- and end-dates create confusion, inefficient processes, increases administrative costs.
- No breaks between sessions; no break between spring and summer. Makes administrative processing challenging for offices like Financial Aid.
- The following has more to do with the budget model than the calendar, but it was frequently mentioned: courses are cancelled in summer term if they don't meet minimum enrollments. This is because summer courses are not subsidized like fall and spring courses.

Restructure Summer But Keep Fall and Spring the Same - Pro

- Creates a 12-week session for courses that are less conducive to being compressed.
- 12-weeks sessions might be a good fit for summer courses that would target motivated high school students; in the past there has been concern about overwhelming high school students in summer courses that are too compressed.
- Retaining a number of summer sessions of varying lengths provides many options, flexibility, for students and faculty alike.
- Retains decent calendar alignment with public schools and other universities, at least for fall and spring semesters.
- 12-week session may work well for online courses.

- Moves the university forward with little disruption
- If a 12-week session brings with it more courses and more enrollments, it will increase revenue (if university continues current budget model)

Restructure Summer But Keep Fall and Spring the Same - Con

- Summer is still structured and treated fundamentally differently than fall and spring. Is there a compelling reason for this?
- Even a 12-week session requires that a semester course be redesigned and compressed.
- A 12-week session would not work for everyone. There would still need to be other sessions – such as for practicing educators who don't finish with their K-12 responsibilities until mid-June.
- This model could still result in a high number of summer sessions, confusion, inefficient processes, increased administrative costs.
- Currently, the longest session in summer is 10 weeks and it is less utilized than 3-week, 5-week and 8-week options. It appears that 12 week sessions might not be in great demand by faculty or students.

Trimester Calendar – Michigan Model - Pro

- Three equally balanced 14-week semesters. This allows summer programming to be more like fall and spring semesters.
- Courses don't have to be redesigned, condensed (although in Michigan most courses are put into 7-week formats)
- 14-week span allows students to take greater number of credits concurrently.
- Trimester calendar does not necessarily mean that students and faculty need to participate in all three semesters, although it could make it more feasible for faculty to teach on load in the summer or for students to attend fulltime in the summer (if they could afford it).
- Would allow Boise State to consider the BYU-Idaho, where students are distributed across Fall-Spring; Spring-Summer; and Summer-Fall cohorts.
- January is a more productive month with this model because for most weeks the University is serving 20,000 students rather than just 700-800 (current number of intersession students).
- The more condensed fall and spring semesters allow more time in summer for full-length classes, more research, more student employment opportunities, co-ops, travel, etc.
- Would not require a change in class-meeting patterns, length of class times.

- Summer semester could continue to be a revenue-generator for the University – as long as the current budget model is retained.
- As long as summer participation is not required, summer vacation opportunities still exist for those who want them
- Allows for better co-op programs
- A 14-week summer semester would be better for online classes – huge growth area
- A 14-week summer semester would be a good fit for high-ability high school students.
- A full-length 14-week summer semester might make it more feasible for faculty to teach “on contract” during the summer in exchange for being off-contract fall or spring semester. Ability to do this would vary according to department and would require chair approval.

Trimester Calendar – Michigan Model – Con

- Doesn’t align with other Idaho public universities; alignment with public schools is okay.
- Fall and Spring semesters become more condensed. To trim a week off both semesters, Thanksgiving break would be shortened by at least 2 days, winter break would be shortened by 1.5 weeks, and classes would be held on Presidents’ Day.
- Eliminates winter intersession and the associated supplemental revenue opportunities for faculty.
- Would require changes to Idaho SBOE academic calendar policy
- Fulltime students don’t get additional Pell grants for a third semester, so full-time year-round attendance would not be an option for many students if they attended fulltime in fall or spring.
- Administrative offices probably could not shut down for a week between fall and spring since there is only 2 weeks between semesters and a lot of work to do in that span.
- Leverages existing space better but doesn’t necessarily increase human resources. More faculty and more staff are also needed to instruct and serve more students.

Trimester Calendar – BYU-Idaho Model – Pro

- The university can maximize capacity by enrolling an equal number of students each semester.
- Even though the University is running year-round, students are attending only 2 of 3 semesters. This allows them to maximize federal financial aid.
- This model could help students get placed into internships, co-op programs and short-term jobs since they would not all be competing for summer opportunities. Students’ “semester off” would be evenly distributed.

Trimester Calendar – BYU-Idaho Model – Con

- The majority of students want to attend fall and spring semesters. Forfeiting one of those semesters and attending summer instead is a “deal-breaker” for some.
- Many faculty prefer to teach fall and spring semesters and not summer. Forfeiting one of those semesters and teaching summer instead is a “deal-breaker” for some.
- Questions arise over the extent the BYU-Idaho model is conducive to an aspiring research university. To what extent can the University ramp up summer programming without ramping down research?
- For students assigned to a summer track to receive the same experience as students in fall and spring, the University would need to do more than bolster its course offerings. It would need to invest in student activities, support services, and co-curricular programming for the summer semester.
- Making summer to be like fall or spring will require changing the budget model for summer. For the same curriculum and services to be offered, summer would need to be subsidized to the same extent fall and spring semester are. If state resources are flat, this could mean reallocating some resources away from fall and spring.
- Academic departments no longer have their faculty assembled on campus at the same time; coordination and communication is more challenging.

Trimester Calendar – Year-round Model – Pro

- This would reflect how most other segments in our economy operate – year-round. It maximizes resources, productivity and efficiency.
- Students could graduate sooner – for instance, 3 years rather than 4, allowing them to enter the workforce or enter graduate school earlier.

Trimester Calendar – Year-round Model – Con

- This model has not been fully implemented at a large public university because it is not supported by current federal financial aid policy, which limits fulltime financial assistance to 2 fulltime semesters per year.
- Without increased aid, students say they cannot pay for a third semester per year.
- Most students state that they do not prefer fulltime year-round attendance.
- Students have valuable learning and developmental experiences that occur during the semesters they currently have off.

- For students assigned to a summer track to receive the same experience as students in fall and spring, the University would need to do more than bolster its course offerings. It would need to invest in student activities, support services, and co-curricular programming for the summer semester.
- Making summer to be like fall or spring will require changing the budget model for summer. For the same curriculum and services to be offered, summer would need to be subsidized to the same extent fall and spring semester are. If state resources are flat, this could mean reallocating some resources away from fall and spring.

Identifying the “Drivers” to increased Summer Activity

The committee came to a realization that some issues were more important than others when it came to achieving the goals of creating a more productive university, improving the educational experience, and creating more opportunities for faculty. To get at which issues were the “drivers” to reaching the university’s goals, the committee members asked four questions about each calendar model:

- 1) Does it increase the likelihood of students participating in the summer?
- 2) Does it increase the likelihood of faculty teaching in the summer?
- 3) Does it increase the likelihood that an expanded range of the curriculum, especially at the upper division level and graduate levels, can be delivered in the summer?
- 4) Does it make the university more productive and efficient year-round?

Certainly some calendar models offer more promise than others when it comes to these questions. However, the committee was surprised when it began assessing each model based on these questions, as illustrated in the following matrix.

	Increase student participation?	Increase faculty participation?	Increase range of curriculum	Make the University more efficient
12-wk Summer Session	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Depends</i>
Trimester-Michigan	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Depends</i>
Trimester-BYU-Idaho	<i>Required for some</i>	<i>Required for some</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Trimester-Year-round	<i>Required for some</i>	<i>Required for some</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Yes</i>

As the matrix shows, the ability of a calendar model to affect change more often than not depends on something else. The committee found that in addition to – and sometimes more important than – the calendar model are the following:

- Student cost and affordability: How much more will it cost students to attend in the summer? What financial aid will be available in the summer? Can/will students pay it? Cost is a big driver for Boise State students.
- Faculty Workload Policy: Can faculty teach “on load” in the summer in exchange for teaching reductions in fall and spring? Without the ability to teach on load in the summer, some faculty and some courses will remain “fall/spring” only.
- Summer budget model: Will summer courses be subsidized like fall and spring courses so the full range of the curriculum can be offered? The current budget model, which requires that summer programming bring in enough revenue to pay for itself, excludes the university’s most expensive programs and low-enrollment programs from full summer participation.

The Committee has learned that making adjustments to the academic calendar alone will not necessarily result in greater summer activity. Calendar changes will likely need to be accompanied by changes to workload policies, budget models and financial aid. It is also true that changes to these policies could be pursued within the existing Boise State calendar in hopes of achieving greater summer activity.

Looking at Academic Calendars on a Continuum

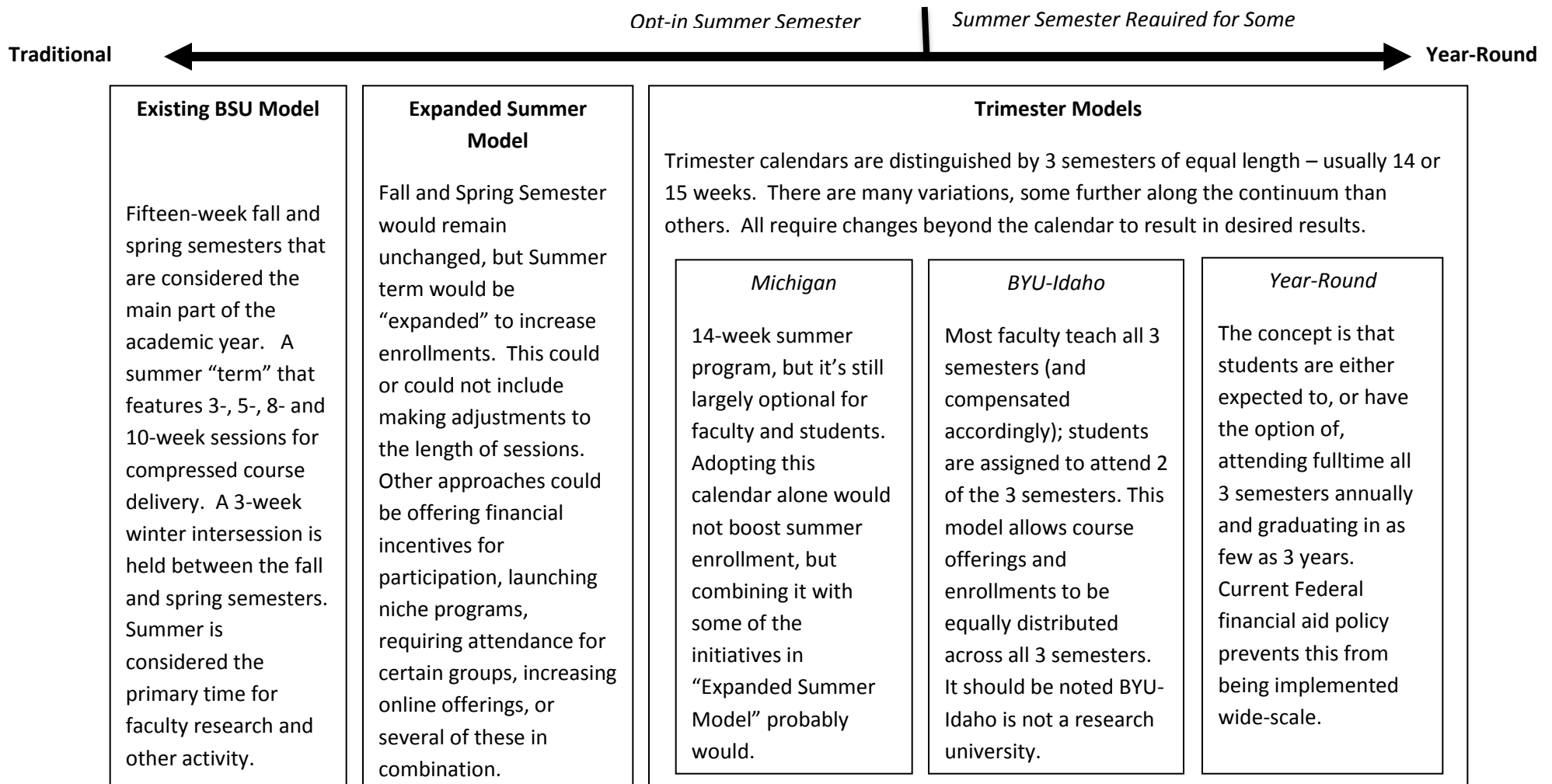
It was important to list the advantages and disadvantages associated with each calendar, but it is a lot to digest. Similarly, identifying the related issues such as faculty workload and budget model were important, but this introduces even more complexity. The committee had not arrived at any clarity about how the university should approach the choices it has regarding calendars. The committee found that placing the various calendars on a continuum – from traditional to year-round (with degrees of consequences) -- created a visual that helped people grasp the choices to be made.

See Continuum of Academic Calendars on Page 18

Continuum of Academic Calendars

The further to the right on the continuum, the following occurs:

- Move away from traditional calendar toward year-round university
- Maximize facility utilization
- Improved time-to-degree and even accelerated degree opportunities
- Less alignment with public school calendars and other state university calendars
- More disruption to higher education culture and tradition
- Generally, additional human resources needed to leverage space gains (perhaps more than increased tuition will generate)
- Summer requires the same student financial aid, workload policies and program subsidization as fall and spring



What Surveys Tell Us

The AACC asked questions of both students and of faculty to get a sense of what they thought about various calendar models and related issues. 415 faculty responded to the survey and over 2,400 students responded. The survey questions and their responses can be seen in their entirety in the appendix. Here are some general points:

Faculty:

- When asked what calendar model the committee should explore to achieve its goals, 34% of faculty said the current BSU calendar, 27% said the Michigan trimester model and 39% said the BYU-Idaho trimester model.
- 43% of faculty said they would be willing to teach summer courses on load in exchange for being off-contract during fall or spring semester. 31% said they were not sure. 26% said they would not be willing to teach in the summer.
- When asked if they would be willing to spread their teaching workload over all three academic terms, 27% of faculty said yes. 41% said no and 32% said they were not sure.
- Despite over one-third of faculty voting in favor of the BYU-Idaho model that emphasizes courses year-round, 87% of faculty said it was likely they would teach fall/spring. However, over a third responded that would be “somewhat likely” that they would teach either summer/fall or spring/summer tracks.
- Presently 34% of fulltime faculty members teach regularly during summer. When those who don’t teach in the summer were asked why, 66% responded they are conducting research, 61% said they needed a break, 41% said it doesn’t pay enough, 40% chose “family obligations,” and 40% said “travel.”
- Faculty utilized the comment boxes to provide considerable feedback on issues regarding the calendar and workload. These are not easily categorized. But some were quite passionate. Many dealt with compensation, workload, lack of resources, teaching and learning, and quality of life. Many warned against calendar changes that would negatively affect their own situation and would result in them leaving.

Students:

- When asked whether they preferred BSU’s existing calendar or a Trimester calendar in which they chose which semesters to attend, 59% of students chose BSU’s existing calendar compared to 41% who chose the trimester model.

- When asked how likely they would be to enroll if BSU courses were distributed across 3 equal semesters, 87% of students selected both fall and spring. Only 30% selected summer.
- 35% of students state that they regularly take summer classes. Of those who don't, 54% said they conflict with other responsibilities, 42% said they need a break from classes, and 33% said the courses they need aren't offered. While it was not listed as a multiple-choice response, many of the 27% who checked the "Other" box made free-form comments about costs and lack of financial aid.
- 67% of students said they would enroll in more summer classes if they were reduced in price by 15%. Another 44% said they would enroll if they were online.

Observations About the Survey Results

- No one calendar model was the clear favorite of faculty. Committee members were surprised at the degree of faculty uncertainty between the various models. While there is not a majority clinging to the status quo, there is no agreement about what would be better. It seems there is room for further discussion.
- The length of individual summer courses does not appear to be a major driver for faculty, especially compared to other issues mentioned in the survey (such as compensation and flexible workload). Only 19% said they would teach in the summer if courses were more condensed; 16% said they would teach if courses were less condensed. Most preferred 5- and 8-week formats.
- The length of summer courses and the summer semester in general does not appear to be a major driver for students, especially when compared to other issues mentioned in the survey (such as costs). Only 17% said they would be more likely to enroll if classes were not so condensed and 10% said they would be more likely to enroll if more of the classes were condensed into shorter timeframes.
- Committee members believe the open-ended comments written by faculty and students both should be read in their entirety before any group makes final decisions. They are rich with information.

In Conclusion

The AACC was not charged with making recommendations. It was charged with identifying and examining a range of calendar models that could achieve the goals of improving the student experience, increasing faculty opportunities, and better utilizing the university's resources. The committee believes the continuum on Page 18 provides the University with an understanding of the choices that exist and the impact they will have on the institution. How far to the right of the continuum does the University wish to go? To the point of making summer just like fall and spring - and requiring students and faculty to participate? The continuum illustrates both the positive and negative associated with moving to a new calendar model. Additionally, the surveys the committee conducted provide decision-makers with an understanding of how both faculty and students view the different academic calendar options.

There is no doubt that the academic calendar is important, in terms of the operation of the University as well as the lives of its students and employees. Yet, the AACC has come to believe that calendar changes alone will not accomplish some of the more meaningful goals set forth in our charge. Of equal or greater importance are:

- identifying a budget model that best accomplishes the institution's goals for summer enrollment;
- consideration of faculty teaching onload during the summer;
- and finding ways to decrease costs and/or increase aid for students in the summer.

The AACC also learned that the way Boise State counts student contact hours within its existing semester calendar differs from the way some institutions do. There are some institutions that count final exams toward student contact hours. This results in those schools having 14 weeks of instruction plus one week of finals instead of 15 weeks of instruction plus one week of finals like at Boise State. Also, some only take 2-3 class days off for Thanksgiving and instead take a 2 day "Fall Break" in the middle of the fall semester. This allows for more timely breaks, plus it evens out the number of class days appropriated to each weekday (Boise State currently has less Mondays in its semesters than other days of the week.) The concept of a fall break appealed to several faculty members plus the one student on the group. AACC members believe that even if it is decided to retain a traditional semester calendar, there could be discussion about ways the existing calendar could be enhanced.

If the university decides it would like to proceed with changing its calendar, the suggestion of the AACC is to clarify the desired outcomes of the change and assemble an implementation team to:

- Develop a detailed calendar
- Identify and work on related issues, such as:
 - Identifying the best budget model to achieve the desired outcomes;
 - Drafting revisions to institutional policy, such as faculty workload, or in some cases, suggesting revisions to SBOE policy, such as the academic calendar model.
- Present a comprehensive plan to institutional decision-makers for final approval.

The choices that exist are exciting and consequential. Vision, strategic decision-making and detailed planning are essential.
