

## Department of Community College Work Development Semester Conversion Study

February, 2010

### Community College Faculty:

Responses were received from four community colleges. Attempts will be made in the near future to connect with all seventeen community colleges. Initial reaction was one of disbelief about the committee charge and there is some of hesitancy to embrace the conversion concept. Attempts were made to inform faculty that this was a study that did not yet include financial or workload concerns, but as a way of documenting the scope of this change. This report is presented as a compilation of comments throughout the state, either quoted or paraphrased, and is intended to be used as a discussion starter and not a summary or concluding document. This is presented without prioritization or qualification.

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Office Responsible	General Process Topic	Details	Staffing requirements	Cost/time conversion profile
Department Chairs	Instructor/Class Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Department chairs (and those charged with scheduling) are looking at schedule proofs about every 3-4 weeks. With a semester system, this "hurry up because it's due by Friday" format that we're operating under now would potentially be more relaxed. This also provides additional time to schedule appropriate full and part-time faculty, and provides more time for them to prepare for their classes.</li><li>• Change the manner in which faculty are assigned courses.</li><li>• Having only two terms may reduce the effectiveness of winter term schedule as there will be less data on enrollment trends and student needs.</li><li>• Creates difficulty in predicting expendable supply needs and part time faculty and student recruitment and retention.</li><li>• Classrooms would be more difficult to schedule. Would we need more buildings?</li></ul>		One time cost
Faculty	Cost of textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The cost of textbooks is becoming prohibitive for students.</li></ul>		

		<p>Reducing the cost of purchasing textbooks from three times per year to two would be helpful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On occasions students are not able to receive financial aid before two or three weeks into the term for the purchase of books (20% of the term). Conversion would limit .this exposure.</li> </ul>		
Faculty College Marketing	Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community education or contracted education may be impacted because semester scheduling might be more accessible for corporate groups.</li> </ul>		
Faculty	Cooperative Work Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extending the time a student has in cooperative work or internships may enhance the ability to secure a job after graduation.</li> </ul>		
	Financial savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is clear that converting to semester would save money in the longer term.</li> <li>• In aviation it would mean that students would need to pay for more instruction “upfront” and this will disadvantage the student.</li> <li>• We'd likely start school in August, when air conditioning is expensive, but we might not need as much heat if we are not here in January.</li> </ul>		
	Scope of classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of courses, in particular the interdepartmental courses may be a challenge. Some courses are used as prerequisite and it will be more difficult to make smooth transition with less transition points.</li> <li>• Our ability to focus on one topic per course would be completely eroded. A semester is too long for one specific topic, but too short to effectively cover two topics.</li> <li>• Classes serving as licensing criteria will need to work through the respective licensing agency.</li> <li>• Career Pathways Certificates have designed those certificates to prepare students for jobs usually within a “less than one year” timeframe, often only 2 terms.</li> </ul>		
	CTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many CTE programs are geared more for employment than future education. The quarter system works well for these types of programs.</li> </ul>		
	Pedogogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CTE courses will not be better for longer course periods.</li> </ul>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All classes would need restructuring.</li> <li>• Music departments would be hindered in offerings.</li> <li>• Flexibility would be lost.</li> <li>• Course content guides and course outlines would need to be rewritten.</li> <li>• I will say that students learn better on a semester system and that many courses are designed for a semester system.</li> <li>• Research has shown that more beginnings and endings of terms (3 or 4 of each rather than 2 of each) make students experience more periods of intense focus - probably the same for teachers.</li> <li>• I believe that the semester would better serve students, giving them the time to better assimilate the information in a content area as well as gain the short and long term skills that each discipline inherently seeks to encourage students to develop.</li> <li>• Many disciplines whether transfer or certificate, more naturally break down into semester lengths. The quarter system has worked, but I believe in the current economic, business, and intellectual climate a semester system would better serve Oregon students.</li> <li>• Most of the college textbooks that cover a full year's overview information are already divided into semesters, so a change to semesters would not heavily impact the choice of textbook, which I assume faculty members already choose based on the quality of the information between the pages.</li> </ul>		
	ESOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converting from terms would be very difficult due to the progress of the student. A reconfiguration would not only impact the regular academic years (Sept-June) but would cause serious problems for summer term, which cannot be a full semester in length since it is only three months.</li> <li>• I think the term system fits the community college model and mission better than a semester system because this is the place where people come to get re-trained when they lose their job or to brush up on their skills before applying to</li> </ul>		

		<p>a supervisory position or to improve their speaking/pronunciation skills before a big conference, etc. The term system fits these needs better because folks in the community have the opportunity to more quickly improve their skills. Short term training is better for a flexible, nimble workforce.</p>		
	Step-in-Step out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many community college students step in and out of their education. This would reduce the entry points and discourage a fragile student group. If the term is a semester, then these students have to wait much longer to re-enter, resulting in their forgetting more and restarting at a lower place. And some students may not start knowing how long the term goes.</li> <li>• Departments are attempting to develop shorter courses and the conversion seems antithetical to providing more short term training/education.</li> <li>• Do we know if semester system will be detrimental to our student completion rates? We both know that 10-20% of the students enrolled in our classes experience some kind of serious crisis (financial, familial, personal, etc.) during our current 10-11 week format. If we were to extend to 14-15 weeks, I think it likely that this high risk category may increase by 5-10%.</li> </ul>		
	Support/Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although there will be many challenges, I think it would be a great idea. The main change for me would be less administrative type prep work each term.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		
	Personal Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversion will change the dynamic for families. Will the calendar correspond to K-12?</li> <li>• The biggest reason that made sense in tying the community college school year to the times when the K-12 school year because children were out of school for vacation periods and needed more supervision and family time could still be accomplished by matching semester holidays and breaks to the K-12 year.</li> </ul>		
	Student Entry Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less entry points means less accessibility.</li> </ul>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quarter</li> </ul>		
	Part-time employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do fewer classes mean less part-time work?</li> </ul>		
	Student Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many summer jobs and apprenticeships are geared to servicing clients whose greatest needs occur during the summer. For students who earn much of their money during the Thanksgiving/Christmas holiday season, the shortened vacation period might be problematic. This is where a full summer session could answer these needs by allowing students to decrease their course load during the winter semester.</li> </ul>		
	General comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instead of using this time to move forward to meet the needs of a dynamic industry, we'd be re-inventing the wheel, and it would be square. Not good.</li> <li>• I feel quarters are too cramped.</li> </ul>		