

**Semester Conversion Impact Statements from PCC Faculty
for Statewide Investigation
(per Senate Bill 442) February, 2010**

Thank you for distributing this email regarding the potential conversion from a trimester system to a semester system. While I find it extremely challenging to separate out the aspects of cost or changes to curriculum, I understand this is a preliminary report, and the intent is to gather feedback regarding the dynamic of semester planning and implementation vs. trimester planning.

The first thing that comes to my mind is scheduling. The imposed deadlines that PCC is currently experiencing regarding scheduling are daunting, at best. It seems like department chairs (and those charged with scheduling) are looking at SWRSECT's and 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 parttime faculty, and provides more time for them to prepare for their classes. Potentially, the cost of textbooks and related course supplies may be reduced by going to a semester system. Of course, that would depend on the nature of the curriculum. As it stands now, students are often required to buy textbooks each term for the classes they participate in. I have witnessed on more than one occasion where the texts and supplies per class cost more than the class itself. If the frequency is reduced, students wouldn't be so strapped each term when it comes to purchasing required materials. This also places more emphasis on program planning to focus on the materials that best suits your needs while on a semester system. Advertising your program, either through a printed schedule or from a digital perspective (online), would be streamlined through a semester system. Businesses may be influenced in a more positive manner if they can send their employees to one extended course vs. two courses (two terms) covering the same subject matter. Again, this rationale would be subjective to the materials and overall time frame required to accomplish the training objective(s). Additionally, a semester system would provide an extended CWE offering (primarily for professional-technical programs) thus making the experience more in-depth and meaningful for the participating student. I guess the same could be said for a variety of other course offerings that would benefit from an extended time frame. Please keep in mind that the statements I have provided above are somewhat theoretical, and not empirical. When it comes to saving money and budgeting time, semesters certainly pose an advantage over trimesters.

Now for the hard part: For most professional-technical programs, you can't possibly cover the variety of required subject matter in 2 terms vs. 3 terms. Specifically, for Drafting Technology we cover a lot of ground in discrete subject areas. We would never consider teaching SolidWorks design software in the first term, ultimately combining it with AutoCAD design software. That strategy would be similar to teaching Chinese and Japanese together in the same class. They share affinities, but you wouldn't consider teaching them together. On a broader level, the re-distribution of subject matter for 1-year, 2-year and Associates Degree professional technical programs would be

overwhelming. For many of these programs that are not geared for transfer, should these stakeholders be compelled to change this proven format for the sake of conformity? Additionally, it seems like we have this conversion conversation about every 2 to 3 years. Having worked at PCC for almost 20 years now, I have not seen an argument that suggests that semesters would work so much better for our students currently taking classes on a trimester basis.

Mark Hagen, Dept. Chair, Drafting Technology

I can see some issues for ESOL. First, similar to the instructor at Rogue, we would be looking at reconfiguring our program. ESOL is an eight-level program. 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. Squeezing a semester's worth of instruction into a quarter's worth of time would be quite tricky.

Second, (I'm not sure this is an "activity") we have many students who take a term off, especially at the lower levels. 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.

We would also have to make some changes in our placement testing procedure for students (including international students) entering our program. We test and advise students every term, so there are more opportunities for students to begin with a quarter system than with a semester system.

Also, we would need to change the procedure for faculty applying for assignment rights.
Roxanne Hill, ESOL

1) Benefit: This will make the Dept Chair job easier as it is one less schedule to create an implement which, depending on the department, could be a substantial amount of time saved.

2) Drawback: Only having two terms (excluding summer) will allow for less flexibility in meeting course demands throughout the year. Much of what I do in Spring is influenced by both what happens in Fall term and what Winter term initially looks like. Having only two terms may reduce the effectiveness of Winter term schedule as there will be less data on enrollment trends and student needs. In addition, although somewhat rare, I have had a few classes in the past that were student initiated (courses requested by students). But often times these requests come later in the year and without a later starting term, would be difficult to implement in the "winter term."

Chris Edwards, Speech Communication

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.

For example, each term I:

Create a grade book (copy course lists from MyPCC)

Update my Blackboard course (change dates of assignments)

Update MyPCC Course Tools

Enter grades at the end of the term

Respond to student inquiries about adding a course

Changing to a semester system would mean that I would have to do each of these tasks one time less per year. We would have to change our curriculum, but it would be a pretty smooth change for the math department. For example, we currently have the Math 60/65/95 algebra sequence which could be converted into a two-term sequence. Similarly, our Calculus Sequence could be converted to a year-long sequence followed by a year-long sequence of vector calculus, linear algebra and differential equations.

I know they wanted to know about challenges, but to me the benefits outweigh the challenges. To me, it really means less duplication of tasks and services.

Carly Vollet

1. How will the two semesters run date wise? I, along with many other faculty, have young children in school and if our school year no longer corresponded with the K-12 school year this would be a large burden on us. Part of the reason I do this job is that it is family friendly. It would also greatly impact our part-time availability (many of whom are parents with kids).
2. Many community college students can only dedicate short time periods to coming to school. I think the quarter system is much better suited to their needs. A semester system is much less flexible and more appropriate for traditional students at 4-year institutions. It is common for community college students to have to drop out of a class due to life issues. A semester system

would mean they lose more money when they drop classes and it will take longer to catch up the lost class (only 2 or 3 offerings a year instead of 3 or 4).□□

3. All classes in our program will have to be restructured. I know money is not being considered at this stage but it will take a lot of hours to redo all the curricula.□□

The semester system has always seemed more appropriate to the east coast climate than the west coast climate. Summers here begin later and run through to the end of Sept. A summer break from mid-June to mid-Sept seems much more in tune with the seasons than mid-May to mid-Aug which seems to be the normal semester timetable.

□Dr Vicki Schroeder□ PCC Physics Rock Creek

We have been down this road before, and now the issue of semester □conversion is resurrected. We still have the same issues and objections. □Reconfiguration of our classes will not work for us - we have a carefully □structured program with many requirements in threes (three different group □instrumental classes, three distinct music history classes, etc.) By going □to semesters, we would have to eliminate subject areas to stay viable as a □one-year (or less, as we are currently at 43 credits) program. We would □lose flexibility and and vital content. There is really no way to combine □subject areas to create semester-length courses. in fact, many of our newer □courses are set up to run for shorter periods of time i.e. six weeks. By □having shorter courses, staying on quarters, the needs of our students to □prepare for the industry are being met. We are opposed to the conversion □from quarters to semesters.

□Allen Jones□
Professional Music SAC Chair

The most negative impact would be on community college students who need more frequent opportunities either to be enrolled or to spell out for necessary intermittent employment.

Rita Hennessy, Part time Philosophy Instructor, Sylvania campus, and prior long term, full time Instructor at Lane Community College

We are a multi-campus department. In order to implement a change to□semesters, every one of our Course Content Guides would need to be□re-written, requiring participation from at least 20 faculty,□including both full-time and part-time faculty. In addition, all of□our degrees and certificates would have to be re-written, as we would□either need to remove classes or change 2-year degrees to 3-year□degrees and 1-year certificates to 2-year certificates. Much of the□information on the PCC web site, catalog, schedule, and numerous□publications across all 3 campuses would need to be re-written. In□addition, faculty pay per class would need to be adjusted, both□full-time and part-time, to account for teaching fewer classes each□year with more teaching hours in each class.□□This all seems like an enormous undertaking, which would

require hundreds if not thousands of hours of faculty and administrator time. Thank you for your request for feedback.

Ron Bekey Full-time Instructor Computer Applications

I am the Microelectronics SAC chair. I am not in favor of the change. We would have to spend a lot of time adjusting our curriculum to it. Also we are actually going in the opposite direction. We are trying to modularize our curriculum so that students can take short 1 credit classes as they see fit at times that are convenient to them. We think that education in the future would be different from its current mode in that it will be much more fluid and flexible. Having a semester system will not help.

--Shelton Fu

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 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.

Laura Horani, ESOL

I am past SAC chair of Geology/General Science. I've also taught Phy121/122/123 (although it is not part of my SAC). I've taught here and at a community college in Arizona that was on the semester system. I've been a student at colleges on 10 week terms and at colleges on a semester system. I will say that students learn better on a semester system and that many courses are designed for a semester system.

Regarding our SAC: I'm not sure what effect this would have on Physical/General Science courses. But it would make the geology lab sequence easier. G201 and G202 would be combined into one course. Our current lab manual has 16 chapters--we always have to supplement with instructor created materials. G203 covers a huge amount of material--the lab manual has 20 chapters--we don't use half of it! The material would be easier to digest if gone over during a semester rather than a 10 week term. For the non-lab geology courses, G208 and G209 could easily be combined into one course, and G207 is another class with a lot of material that would benefit from being spread out over a semester.

My experience with Phy 121, 122, and 123 is similar. The text books and lab materials are all designed for two semesters. So Phy 121 is stuffed, while Phy 123 has about 5 or 6 chapters for 10 weeks.

A switch to semesters wouldn't involve just spreading a current course out over a longer

period of time. At least for our SAC, we would be redesigning classes and combining classes. Don't know if that helps.

Melinda Hutson Geology

One obvious piece of work that springs to mind is that our COGs would all need to be rewritten.

Jan Underwood Spanish

I would like to know why do we want this change? What is challenging that needs this conversion as a solution?

This conversion will require to redo everything we have developed so far and change all operation to a different format. It is a major change that needs to be justified by a serious challenge that we need to address, in my opinion.

Sanda Williams

Department Chair

Electronic Engineering Technology

The move from the quarter system to semesters would have a negative impact on the Aviation Science program. It would require a complete overhaul of the program and each of its component courses except for a few lab classes that accompany the flight activity. In addition, the longer terms would make predicting flight training progress even more difficult than it already is, making it more difficult for students to sign up for an appropriate number of credits. It would also mean that students would have to come up with larger dollar amounts for flight training costs when registering in order to cover the flight costs for the longer periods of time, making it all the more difficult to finance their education. Therefore, PCC would be forced to invent a new system of late registration and payment that would allow students to register for flight training as the need arose rather than at the beginning of a term, and the financial aid department would have to adapt to this new system in order to serve the students.

Larry Atree

Dept. Chair Aviation Science

Portland Community College

Converting to semesters would pose extreme challenges to our Bioscience Tech program because of the topical nature of our courses. We would be forced to

completely restructure all courses and the overall curricula for both our certificate and AAS programs. 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. We'd have to figure out how to split or combine topics. I have significant experience with curriculum development and know that a huge amount of time would be required to do this. It would essentially require a complete program review, several consultations with our advisory board members, and much redundant effort. 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.□□ Also, a semester format would lead to many indirect problems, including book purchases, difficulty in predicting expendable supply needs and part time faculty and student recruitment and retention. Many of these practical problems are tied to pedagogical considerations, so I'm having difficulty separating one from the other. I will say that I've coordinated a biotech program before in a semester college and it was extremely frustrating. I really hope it doesn't happen here.

Josephine Pino, Bioscience technology

Speaking on behalf of AMT – Aviation Maintenance Technology program.

“. . . information regarding systemic changes which would need to occur with such a conversion. This first report will not deal with pedagogy or costs, but only the impact on activities/procedures.”

A change of this nature would have a low impact on our daily activities and delivery. An AMT student currently receives instruction at a rate of three 90-clock-hour modules of instruction per term, based on Subject Knowledge areas defined by the Federal Aviation Administration. Currently, AMT students complete their course of study mid-term, their last term. So however a semester breaks up the academic year, we would probably only need to make small adjustments in the modular delivery schedule. AMT has delivered course material for its entire 35 year history in a module-based fashion.

Evan though we are not asked to address the cost of a change to semester-based delivery, it is the primary consideration for a department of our size, four F-T + one P-T instructor. We not only are required to meet curriculum and paperwork standards for PCC, the State of Oregon and our accrediting body, AMT must meet significant Federal Aviation Administration standards. Semester conversion would require not only re-aligning the PCC curriculum but it would also require re-alignment of our FAA Part 147 curriculum. I

estimate that converting both PCC curriculum paperwork and FAA documentation would consume the equivalent effort of one full time faculty member's academic year.

This conversion would be of no additional benefit to our students, which should be of primary consideration. A large majority of our students do not go on to further schooling. Most complete only the necessary coursework to obtain the FAA Aviation Mechanic certificate. I believe this would be a similar situation in most of the CTE programs at PCC.

Marshall Pryor

Faculty Department Chair

Aviation Maintenance Technology

Scheduling -

- Rooms - already a nightmare. Could end up worse, or maybe better, but at least we would have to do it one less time per year
- my program could be impacted several ways by how other departments react. Does WR121 just get stretched out over 5 more weeks, or do we end up with a 6 credit WR121? I don't have room in my program for bigger gen. ed. courses.
- also, my students have to take MTH95, MTH111, and MTH243. Before they could do that all in one year, now they need 1.5 years to do it. That might impact their ability to get the prereq's necessary to graduate in 2 years.
- It seems like I would have to remove things like SP215, CH222 to make the schedule work. That would be disappointing.

Part Time Faculty -

- fewer classes – does that mean fewer PT faculty?
- Who gets assignment rights?
- I suspect my adjunct (who have full time jobs in the tech industry) would have some difficulty committing to a longer term.

Eric Kirchner, Microelectronics

In addition to all of the horrific issues I'm sure other faculty and SAC chairs will raise, one that I believe presents some compelling reasons to stay with the term system is the workforce development issue, particularly affecting CTE programs. Those of us with Career Pathways Certificates have designed those certificates to prepare students for jobs usually within a "less than one year" timeframe, often only 2 terms, and in other cases 3 or more. Because career skills courses are sequential, transforming those sequences to semesters would inevitably put many of those certificates out of eligibility for defined training programs, like those supported by WorkSource, Displaced Workers, Workers Compensation (although in some cases, student may get up to 2 years), vocational rehabilitation (again, may be more than one year). Moving to a semester system would thus put the State's workforce development and training priority at odds with the higher education system – something I'm sure CCWD would find problematic.☹

Jan Abushakrah, PhD☹Gerontology Faculty Department Chair

☐ My immediate response to the notice just received regarding the possible impacts of ☐converting to a semester system (beyond implementation costs) include 1) revising our☐(political science) curriculum. almost certainly to collapse U.S. National Government (now ☐covered in 2 quarters) to one semester, 2) a program reality that might make some courses☐less frequently than once per year, unless more faculty and facilities are made available, and ☐3) the need for increased attention throughout PCC devoted to student retention. ☐☐ You may also recall how there was a push to adopt a semester format some 22 years ☐ago at PCC, an effort that was well into the planning stages when it was abandoned. At ☐that time I was an early supporter -- but later came to hold the opinion that a semester ☐system might 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%. Michael Sonnleitner, Political Science

I attended the legislative hearings on this issue as a Senior Policy Analyst with the Oregon Economic Development Department back in the 1980, when this proposal came up. The one downside I recall was the reliance of Tourism and Food Processing industries on college student labor during September.

I attended a private university on the semester system, with semesters running September through January and February through May, which was a bit awkward with final exams three weeks after Christmas break. I subsequently taught at Idaho State and Willamette, where semesters ran from late August until December and January to April, which seems to be the current mode.

Oregon's tourism season in recent years has stretched well past Labor Day, when people without children in school typically take their vacations.

Canneries and other food processing concerns do not shut down until harvest ends about October. So, these businesses would be left in the lurch with a sudden exodus of college student labor in late August.

I hope this input is what you were seeking.

NORM SOLOMON
Economics Instructor

□1. 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. □2. Our summer term would likely be impacted, but I'm not sure how - would it be a half a semester? □3. 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. □4. To whose schedule would we conform or what model would we use? Portland Public Schools'? It's important, given how many of our students have kids in school. □5. Is this just another example of administrators proposing changes for the sake of change? Or is there a good argument in favor of the switch? What has changed since the time (whenever that was) that we decided on the quarter system? □6. I'm guessing we would not serve as many students, since we would not field as many classes in the academic year. Cynthia Kimball, former English dept Chair

Please excuse me if you have already considered all this, but a change to semesters would require a "bridging matrix" that allows students who took classes under the quarter system and classes under the semester system to know whether they have met the requirements for a degree. This may be complex because the courses themselves are likely to be reorganized. Gordon McDonald, Economics

Because we have students that learn at different rates, we in the math department have made several courses longer so they would take two semesters of time instead of two quarters. If we switch to a semester then the faster paced classes would be lost.

A more real impact is that if a school year has two semesters, instead of three quarters, then a student has to wait longer to try again. In other words if a student fails to pass a

class they would only get two more chances in a calendar year in a semester system, instead of the three (or possibly four) they can on the quarter system. James Wolford
Mathematics

First reaction, without time to formulate a 'thoughtful response' is this would incur a tremendous amount of work to totally re-write from scratch the course work for our department to go from quarter system to semester. I'm not even sure we could do what we do, because the quarter system presents such a good breaking point for course material. The main question would be why is it necessary? The present system works very well for us.
Glen Truman, Industrial Drafting