

12-3-2004

DOC 2004-09 Sense of the Senate Document

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Recommended Citation

University of Dayton. Academic Senate. Select Calendar Committee, "DOC 2004-09 Sense of the Senate Document" (2004). *Senate Documents*. 36.

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PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: *Sense of the Senate* Document
SUBMITTED BY: Select Calendar Committee
DATE: December 3, 2004

In order to facilitate university-wide consideration of possible structural reform of the academic calendar, the Select Calendar Committee requests that the Academic Senate endorse the wide distribution of the following four consultative resolutions so that they may serve to focus discussions among and between faculty, students, and staff campus-wide.

Note: In addition to the above, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate expects also that the Select Calendar Committee will henceforth directly address itself to the possible reform of the University of Dayton's implicit "Course Schedule Paradigm," which encompasses class duration and course sequencing structures, course meeting time and credit hour equivalency assumptions, and competing pedagogies related to both. Structural reforms, if any, would be instituted in the 2006-2007 academic year, at the earliest.

Resolution #1: The Academic Senate requests that the Provost and Senior Vice President for Educational Affairs develop, institute, and enforce a course schedule policy that results in significantly increased use of the existing 8:00-8:50 a.m. and 9:00-9:50 a.m. standard MWF course meeting time.

Rationale: The course schedule should encourage normal patterns of daily life for the campus community as well as provide for the rational utilization of campus classrooms. As typical U.S. secondary school students, not to mention typical U.S. employees and students at typical U.S. colleges and universities, cope successfully with learning, work, and a multitude of various public interaction beginning at 7:00 a.m. or even earlier, it is reasonable to expect University of Dayton students to do likewise beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Resolution #2: The Academic Senate requests that the Provost and Senior Vice President for Educational Affairs develop, institute, and enforce a course schedule policy that results in significantly increased use of the Monday-Wednesday-Friday course schedule for 300 and 400 level courses that are curricular graduation requirements.

Rationale: Strong anecdotal evidence indicates that typical University of Dayton juniors and seniors routinely schedule course work in a manner that leaves them no course meetings on

Fridays. The desired result is that Thursday afternoons and evenings become the de facto beginning of the students' weekend. Importantly, this pattern of academic life is made possible by the relative scarcity of curricular requirements in the Monday-Wednesday-Friday course schedule. In this way, the University's tacit course schedule policy facilitates the apparently unnecessarily high rates of undesirable student behavior among juniors and seniors that occurs in the long duration of time between Thursday evenings and Monday mornings that is, typically, unfettered by course meeting obligations. At minimum, the relative absence of academic sanctions for a lax attitude toward scheduled course meetings on Fridays detracts significantly from the value of academic excellence within the University community's culture. While it is not a silver bullet, the University can significantly affect student behavior by scheduling many more required 300 and 400 level courses in the MWF and the proposed WF course schedule.

Resolution #3: The Academic Senate requests that the Provost and Senior Vice President for Educational Affairs institute a standard Monday, 3:00-4:15 p.m., Common Meeting Time in the 2006-2007 academic calendar.

Rationale: Even when the current Friday, 3:00-5:00 p.m. common meeting time is discounted, analysis reveals that fewer course meetings university-wide are routinely scheduled on Fridays than on other days of the week. The differential is more pronounced in some academic units than in others, but all units tend to schedule fewer courses on Friday. Arguably, this pattern encourages academic norms and values that are at odds with the University's renewed commitment to the pursuit of academic excellence. In anticipation of higher than normal absentee rates or higher than average percentages of students unprepared for serious learning, many faculty are hesitant to schedule challenging academic work or examinations during Friday course meetings. In anticipation of relatively less stimulating and demanding course work on Fridays, students are more likely to adopt a lax attitude toward attendance and preparation at week's end. A vicious circle ensues, and the result is a degraded academic culture. Shifting the common meeting time symbolizes the faculty's, staff's, and administration's commitment to Fridays as full work days equal in importance to the other four days of the standard work week, and in fact allows for an increased number of course meetings on Fridays. (Note: Monday classes would end at 2:50 p.m. and resume at 4:30 p.m. Therefore, common meeting time activities that extended beyond the proposed 3:00-4:15 p.m. period could conflict with academic obligations beginning at 4:30 p.m.)

Resolution #4: The Academic Senate requests that the Provost and Senior Vice President for Educational Affairs authorize for the 2006-2007 academic calendar the elimination of the standard Monday-Wednesday, 3:00-4:15 p.m. course schedule and approve the creation of a Wednesday-Friday, 3:00-4:15 p.m. course schedule.

Rationale: Currently, course meetings conclude at 2:50 p.m. on Fridays in order to accommodate the common meeting time. Instituting WF, 3-4:15 p.m. courses extends the standard course schedule from before mid-afternoon (2:50 p.m.) to the mid-late-afternoon (4:15 p.m.). The academic week would still, as a result, conclude earlier than it does for typical U.S. employers. For their part, Mondays would --for most undergraduates, certainly-- conclude at 2:50 p.m., well before the norm for U.S. employers. Furthermore, time free of

course meetings on Monday afternoons is more likely to facilitate meetings for student organizations, groups, and clubs than Friday afternoons regularly free of course meetings. Conversely, Monday afternoons free of course meetings are less likely to facilitate undesirable forms of student behavior during Monday evenings, preceding, as they would, four consecutive days of full academic engagement.