

The following document, “**Objectives & Principles Guiding the Reexamination of the Academic Calendar**,” was produced by a committee formed during the fall semester of 2010 by the Dean of Faculty and charged to evaluate the current Cornell calendar and recommend changes to it, should these seem warranted. **This document is being circulated solely for the purpose of eliciting feedback.**

As its name suggests, this document does not include any specific recommendations, but instead lists some principles that the committee is following in its deliberations. Some of these principles and objectives may prove to be mutually incompatible; the document also does not prioritize these objectives. The committee anticipates that various constituencies will find particular objectives or principles troublesome, as do individual members of the committee itself. However, the committee as a whole believes that these comprise a reasonable and coherent set of discussion points worthy of consideration by the entire Cornell community and others affected by changes to the university’s calendar. It is this broad input that is now sought by the committee.

The “Objectives & Principles” document was sent to President Skorton and Provost Fuchs on March 18, 2011, after being discussed at the Registrars and Associate Deans (RAADDSS) meeting on March 10, 2011. It is now a public document, and we urge its widespread distribution and discussion. Comments concerning these objectives and principles should be directed by May 15, 2011, to [calendarcommittee@cornell.edu](mailto:calendarcommittee@cornell.edu).

The committee is currently evaluating diverse academic calendars on the basis of these principles, and will continue to do so as the principles are amended based on comments received from the community. The committee will then publicize one or more of these calendars for community-wide discussion, perhaps as early as the end of the current semester.

The committee expects to engage the various University assemblies in the discussion of revised calendars. These include, but are not limited to, the following groups: Student Assembly; Employee Assembly; University Assembly; Graduate & Professional Student Assembly; Faculty Senate; Academic Deans; Deans, Directors, & Department Heads; Provost; and President.

As result of these discussions, the committee expects to recommend a specific academic calendar to be considered by the University Faculty for recommendation to the Provost. Final decisions will rest with the higher administration, and it is likely that any significant changes would not be implemented for two or more years after their approval.

### **Academic Calendar Committee Membership**

Laura Brown (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education)  
Cassie Dembosky (University Registrar)  
David DeVries (Associate Dean, Arts)  
Jeff Doyle (Plant Biology faculty; chair)  
William Fry (Dean of Faculty)  
Christoffer Heckman (Graduate & Professional Student Assembly)  
Kent Hubbell (Dean of Students)  
Michael Matier (Director, Academic Planning & Information Systems)  
Leslie Meyerhoff (Employee Assembly)  
Lois Pollack (Applied & Engineering Physics faculty)  
Natalie Raps (Student Assembly)  
Kathleen Walsh (Hotel faculty)

*April 13, 2011*

**Cornell University**  
**Objectives & Principles Guiding the Reexamination of the Academic Calendar**

**Objectives:** Reexamine the existing academic calendar with an eye to proposing changes that will (1) comply with New York State Education Department (NYSED) requirements; (2) afford optimal educational opportunities for both students and faculty; and (3) address concerns about student stress and mental health related to prolonged periods of instruction without multi-day breaks (exclusive of weekends).

**Basic Principles**

- Provide for a 15 week semester (including a final examination period) pursuant to NYSED Regulations of the Commissioner – [Title 8, Chapter II, Part 50.1\(o\)](#) – which defines a “semester hour” as “a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments.”
- Allow for an equal number of days of instruction (69) in both the fall and spring semesters<sup>1</sup>.
- Allow for two “breaks” each semester – Fall Break (2 days) and Thanksgiving (3 days) in the fall, along with President’s Day (2 days) and Spring Break (5 days) in the spring.
- Schedule breaks so as to break up long periods of instruction; if possible coordinate breaks with those of regional school systems.
- Shorten the exam/reading period in both the Fall and Spring semesters<sup>2</sup>, while providing sufficient time for students to prepare for exams.
- Provide sufficient time to submit grades, clear individuals for graduation, and conduct academic reviews.
- Shorten the period between the end of final examinations and May commencement<sup>3</sup>.
- Hold May commencement prior to Memorial Day weekend.
- Coordinate with Ithaca College to ensure that move-in day for fall semester does not occur on the same day.
- Coordinate with Ithaca College to ensure that May commencement does not occur on the same weekend.

**Fall Semester Specifics**

- Do not hold classes on Labor Day.
- Fall Break: Monday and Tuesday, centered in semester.
- Thanksgiving break: Wednesday (all day), Thursday, and Friday<sup>4</sup>.
- Schedule seven days of classes after Thanksgiving break.

**Spring Semester Specifics**

- Do not hold classes on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- President’s Day (February) break: Monday and Tuesday.
- Spring Break: Monday through Friday; equal number of instruction days from February break to Spring Break and from Spring Break to end of classes.

**Additional Implications**

- An earlier start to spring semester would shorten Winter Session.
- Commencement weekend earlier than Memorial Day weekend could lengthen summer recess (depending on the beginning of Fall semester), leaving more time for Summer Sessions.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently there are 67½ days of instruction in the fall and 70 in the spring

<sup>2</sup> Currently, Study Period is 4 days, Sunday to Wednesday, and exams are scheduled over a 9 day period, beginning 7 p.m. Wednesday and ending the following Friday

<sup>3</sup> Currently there are 7 days, known as Senior Week

<sup>4</sup> Currently classes end at 1:10 p.m. Wednesday