

FY2020 CALENDAR COMMITTEE Final Report

Chair: Mazhar Arikan, Business, (2020); Faculty: Laurie Ramirez, Social Welfare (2021); Faculty: Nyla Branscombe, Psychology, (2022); Faculty: Julia Broxholm, Music, (2021); Staff: Wendy Bridges, Office Event Mgmt. & Protocol (2021); Staff: Nhan Nguyen, Research, (2020); Registrar's Office: Tiffany Robinson; Student: Zach Thomason; Student: Seth Wingerter; Student, Addison Henson; Ex-officio (non voting): Registrar KUMC: Marla Herron, Registrar; Charles Olcese, Director ISSS

FY2020 Standing charges:

1. Monitor compliance with University Senate Rules and Regulations 1.3.2 concerning final examinations, including: (a) ensuring that adequate arrangements are made each semester to inform students and faculty through the Schedule of Classes about the regulations governing final examinations, and the appropriate procedures to be followed if questions arise about the application of the regulations; (b) informing the teaching faculty and GTAs, via an e-mail from the chair, one week before the beginning of each semester (in August and January) of these regulations and their rationale; and (c) considering requests for exceptions, as provided in the regulations. Report actions taken on these matters to SenEx. (ongoing)

The committee sent an email notice to all faculty, staff, and GTA's on August 15, 2019 and January 13, 2020 to inform them of final exam rules, religious observances, and provide links to more detailed information. During FY2020, the committee reviewed and acted on petitions for exceptions (see item 2 below for details) and provided clarifications of questions raised by faculty members regarding exam regulations.

2. Monitor compliance with University Senate Rules and Regulations 1.4.2 concerning the scheduling of examinations outside of regular class hours. Following the committee's established procedures, approve or disapprove applications for tests other than final examinations to be held at times other than regular class hours. Report actions taken on these matters to SenEx.

In Fall 2019, the committee reviewed and acted on 8 requests for exceptions: approved a request for special exams for CHEM 170 and CHEM 530 in Fall 2019, approved a request for special exam for LDST 320 in Spring 2020, approved a request for special exams for MATH 146 and MATH 147 in Fall 2019, approved a request to change final exam time for RUSS 504 in Fall 2019, approved a request for special exam for ACCT 200 in Fall 2019, approved a request for common exam for BIOL 405 in Fall 2019, approved a request to change final exam time for CHEM 190 in Fall 2019, and approved a request for common exam for JPN 504 in Fall 2019 and future Fall semesters moving forward.

In Spring 2020, the committee reviewed and acted on 1 request for exception: approved a request for common exam for RUSS 508 in Spring 2020.

FY2020 Specific charges:

1. Compile questions for an online form that will be used when units are requesting exceptions of final and special exam times (USRR 1.3.2) and exceptions to Stop Day (USRR1.3.7) (University Governance will create form and post to website).

The online form was created by the University Governance and the form is available at <https://governance.ku.edu/calendarrequest>. The Calendar Committee chair receives the requests posted on this form.

2. Survey faculty, staff and students regarding replacing fall break days during the Thanksgiving week. (work with Governance Office to establish survey.)

The committee prepared a list of questions to survey members of the campus to obtain input about the possibility of eliminating Fall Break and having a full week off at Thanksgiving Break. The objective of this survey was to better understand the attitudes related to a possible change in the KU academic calendar and it was not intended to be an in-depth analysis. To this end, the committee decided to distribute a brief two-question survey. The survey included the following two questions:

Q1) What is your association with the University of Kansas?

Freshmen Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Student Faculty Staff Other

Q2) Which of the following would you prefer?

1) Not changing the current academic calendar and continue with the Fall Break (Monday-Tuesday) and Thanksgiving break as they are.

2) Changing the academic calendar to eliminate two-days off for Fall Break and have a full week off at Thanksgiving break.

An email including the weblink of the survey was sent to all KU Lawrence faculty, unclassified professional staff, university support staff, and all KU Lawrence and Edwards students on February 24, 2020. A snapshot of the body of the email sent on February 24 is appended to this report. A follow-up email was sent on March 27 to inform the members of campus community that the last day to reply to the survey has been extended until Friday, March 6, 2020.

A total of 7,403 respondents completed the survey. There were 84 people who only answered one question, so they were left out of the results. The results of the survey by the type of association with the University of Kansas is appended to this report. The committee discussed the results data from the survey during the Spring semester meeting on April 2, 2020.

The results show that 9.5% of respondents were faculty, 17.5% were staff, 56.5% were undergraduate students, and 16.2% were graduate students. Of the respondents, a majority (3,926) preferred changing the academic calendar, but the difference between the number of respondents who prefer changing the academic calendar (53%) and who

prefer not changing the academic calendar (47%) is not substantial. A majority of faculty (59%), staff (76%), and graduate students (58%) preferred changing the academic calendar, whereas a majority of undergraduate students preferred not changing the academic calendar (57%).

The committee inferred that some misunderstanding among staff members may have influenced their preferences. Some of the comments the committee received from staff members after the survey was administered suggested a possibility of misinterpretation of the second survey question which led staff members more inclined to favor changing the academic calendar. The comments regarding staff and students are appended to this report.

The committee pointed out that a recommendation based on preferences that are not significantly different from each other across different campus community groups of is not easy. One can prefer a longer Thanksgiving break which will be helpful especially if one travels to longer distance destinations during Thanksgiving break. On the other hand, one can argue that not having a break between Labor Day and Thanksgiving and having uninterrupted classes can be exhausting for students and faculty.

After an extensive debate, the committee unanimously agreed they think it would be better to not change the academic calendar considering the substantial proportion of students who prefer not changing the academic calendar.

The email sent to the members of the campus regarding the short survey on February 24, 2020



Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

The University Senate Calendar Committee has been asked to survey the University community regarding Fall Break and Thanksgiving Break. Currently the University takes a Fall Break (Mon-Tues), and Thanksgiving Break (Wed-Fri.) There has been discussions regarding eliminating Fall Break, and having a full week off at Thanksgiving break. The Calendar Committee has prepared a short survey with two questions. Individual responses to the survey will be kept confidential.

Please take a moment to complete the survey here: https://kusurvey.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_87b3gpDJRiXL18V. The survey will close at noon on Monday, March 2, 2020.

After the survey is complete, the Calendar Committee will provide a summary of the results for review to the University Senate Executive Committee. Please contact govern@ku.edu with any questions or comments.

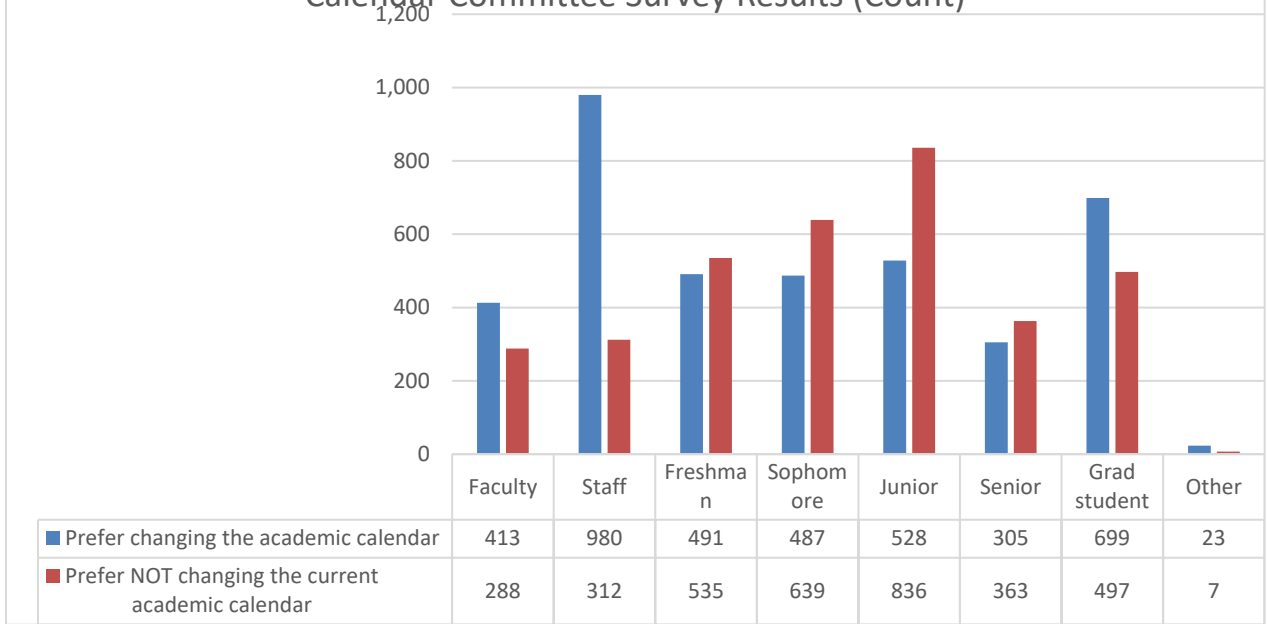
Thank you.

Associate Professor Mazhar Arkan, Business
University Senate Calendar Committee Chair, FY2020

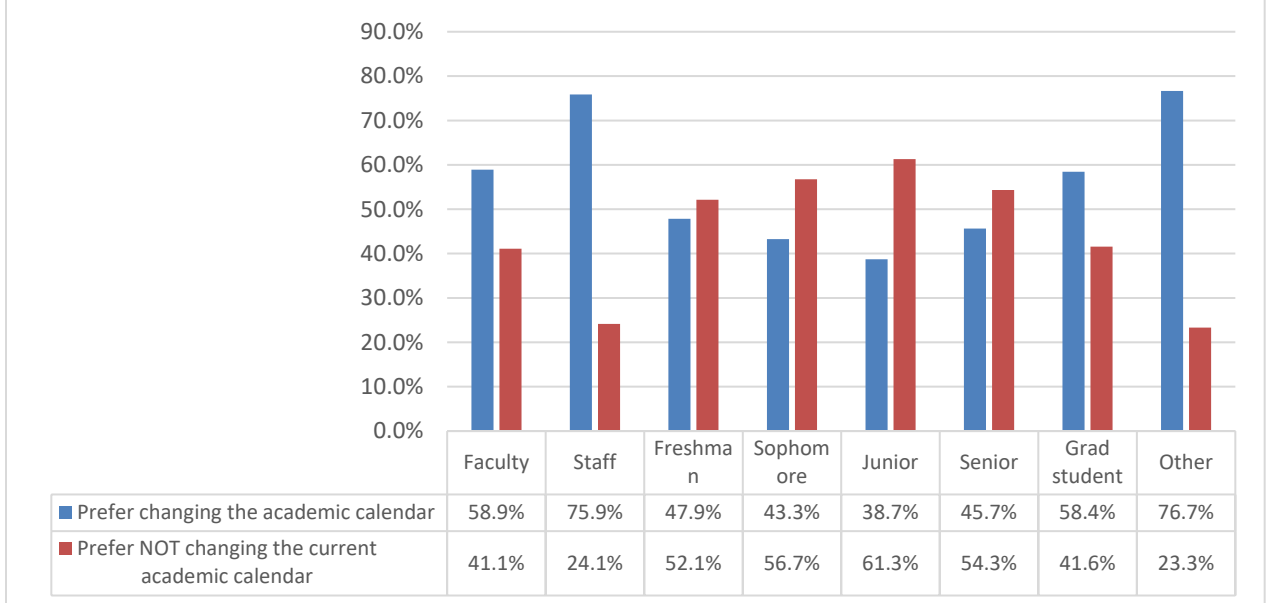
Survey Results

	Faculty	Staff	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Grad student	Other	Total
Prefer changing the academic calendar	413	980	491	487	528	305	699	23	3,926
Prefer NOT changing the current academic calendar	288	312	535	639	836	363	497	7	3,477
Total Count	701	1,292	1,026	1,126	1,364	668	1,196	30	7,403
Percentage Distribution:									
Prefer changing the academic calendar	58.9%	75.9%	47.9%	43.3%	38.7%	45.7%	58.4%	76.7%	53.0%
Prefer NOT changing the current academic calendar	41.1%	24.1%	52.1%	56.7%	61.3%	54.3%	41.6%	23.3%	47.0%

Calendar Committee Survey Results (Count)



Calendar Committee Survey Results (%)



Comments Regarding Staff:

1) As a staff member, this wouldn't impact me unless I get more time off. I assume I'm not going to get any more vacation time, but it wasn't made clear. There should be a third option on the survey of "no opinion."

2) We have been having a discussion as to what this means for us, FS Staff. My interpretation of the proposal is that this will affect the students and perhaps faculty, but it will not give staff more days off. During fall and spring breaks, FS Staff continues to report to work and my assumption is that if the proposal was approved and Thanksgiving break was a full week, FS Staff would still have to work M, Tu, W and then have Thu & F off for Thanksgiving holiday and it would not change the number of days off staff receives. Is that an accurate interpretation? Please let me know.

3) First, thanks for conducting the survey.

Second, for staff members, the questions don't really reflect our reality. We don't get "real" time off during the current fall break, and the Thanksgiving break only provides two official days off, not the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday as suggested in the survey.

Finally, I wish that the results, including response rate by stakeholder groups, would be shared broadly with the campus community. One week is not much time to elicit student response.

4) As a staff person, I'm fine with either the two-day break in October or the longer Thanksgiving break. However, if we maintain the two day fall break in October it would be terrific if KU would work with the Lawrence Public Schools to schedule their breaks on the same days. In 2019 the KU break was Monday-Tuesday and the schools had their fall break that same week on Thursday-Friday. It was maddening from a child-care perspective and surely a real challenge for students who are parents and have limited resources.

Frankly, I'm aware that the KU calendar is published several years in advance and was available for the schools to check so the fault likely lies with them. But actively reaching out to share the KU calendar with the superintendent and school board would be a great practice.

5) Thank you for including the staff in this discussion. My decision would come down to whether the entire week of Thanksgiving would be considered holiday or whether the first three days would reflect a break for only the students (and that staff and faculty would be expected to be around, as we are for Fall Break). If we could get some clarification on that, it would be appreciated.

6) Can I request a bit of clarification?

It isn't clear as to whether this would change the days that staff would have off, or if this is just referring when classes would not be in session. If we were to have a whole break week at Thanksgiving would any additional days be considered as vacation days for staff?

7) Prof. Arian,

I realize it's probably too late now, but is there any possibility of including a text field on that survey so people can expound on why they think the change in question would be a good or bad idea?

A free-text option could obviously generate a lot of feedback for your committee to dig through, so alternately (or additionally), it would be interesting to know how strongly people favor or oppose the change. Something like:

Strongly support – Support – Neutral – Oppose – Strongly oppose

Based on years of anecdotal evidence, my experience has been that most University Support Staff and Unclassified Professional Staff favor the current two-break system – often quite strongly – because many staff often look forward to fall break after the extremely heavy workload that the start of each school year brings. However, I realize that students and faculty may have different perspectives (especially those who can afford to travel over Thanksgiving break).

In any case, thank you for seeking feedback, and also for all your work on the Calendar Committee!

8) I wanted to express my appreciation for this survey and all the effort that surely went into these discussions. In addition, I'd like to call attention to the perspective of the professional staff; currently, the Fall Break does not affect our schedule at all—we work through the Fall Break, as this is not leave time for us.

It's not clear whether a full week's break at Thanksgiving would apply to the professional staff schedule, either. The current program gives us Thursday and Friday as leave time, but not Wednesday of that week.

I am wondering—and I'm sure many other staff members are—whether this proposed change would have any effect at all our professional staff leave time.

Thank you so much for your time with these questions.

Comments Regarding Students:

1) I strongly recommend no change to fall break and Thanksgiving. If the break is too long, students are hard to focus on study after break. Fall break is like that we can take a rest after busy study, and then again after another cycle of hard study, we get Thanksgiving to stay with friends, family and rest.

2) My comments:

- 1) We have a Fall Break in October because the students lobbied for it and for it then because they were so stressed by mid-terms and needed a break at mid-terms.
- 2) The Student Conduct and Community Standards Office can confirm that student misconduct is higher during mid-terms time indicating the students might need a break.
- 3) The Student Support and Case Management Office can confirm a spike in CARE reports during mid-terms indicating students might need a break.
- 4) Look how close Thanksgiving is to Finals. How does that week off benefit student learning?

I'd love a week off at Thanksgiving and if I want it off, I take vacation. My understanding is many classes are cancelled on the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving week. There's more nuance to this question than was asked on the survey.

3) Will the elimination of fall break be put in place for the 2020-2021 school year?

I don't think that's fair, since most of us who are already enrolled could have already made plans during fall break 2020. I know I and many of the people in my program have. If the committee decides to eliminate fall break, I suggest this change be made for the school year 2021-2022. Could you help me communicate this concern?

4) A full week at thanksgiving. Absolute no-brainer. No one takes advantage of current fall break. Full week gives students (if the wish) ten days to catch up. KSU went this way ten years ago, a great decision. (From a Professor)

5) Just curious, Fall break is listed on the Academic Calendar as Saturday through Tuesday (four days). If the date moves to Thanksgiving week would the dates be Saturday through Sunday (eight days)? Thank you.

6) Would this go into effect next year (2020-2021) or not until after next year?

7) I was wondering if you give me the date of when this change or not change will be finalized and announced?

8) Regardless of the results from this recent survey, would this change take place in 2020 or 2021?