

## Detailed Discussion of Spring 2021 Calendar Options

Given the unique constraints of the current moment, the Calendar and Schedule Committee has identified two potential options for the Spring 2021 calendar. These have been modified to reflect community feedback.

### **Summary of MODIFIED Option A: Continuous Model (Students remain on campus for the full duration of the semester, assuming the public health situation allows)**

W 2/17: Classes begin (Thursday schedule)  
Th 2/18: Claiming Williams Day, No Classes  
M-T 3/22-3/23: Reading Period  
W-Th 4/21-4/22: Health Days  
F 5/7: Health Day  
W 5/19: Last Day of Classes  
Th-Su 5/20-5/23: Reading Period  
M-S 5/24-5/29: Finals

### **Summary of MODIFIED Option B: 'Thanksgiving' Model (Most students vacate campus during Spring Break and finish out the semester learning remotely, as in the Fall)**

W 2/17: Classes begin (Thursday schedule)  
Th 2/18: Claiming Williams Day, No Classes  
S-Su 5/1-5/9: Spring Break  
**\*\*All classes are remote for the remainder of the semester**  
W 5/19: Last Day of Classes  
Th-Su 5/20-23: Reading Period  
M-S 5/24-5/29: Finals

In designing these proposed models of the Spring Calendar, the Calendar and Scheduling Committee (CSC) sought to balance the needs of:

**Students** (considering as fully as possible the range of social, educational, and financial needs represented among them, hailing from diverse locations, learning remotely and in person, seniors and underclassmen, including those who are applying for internships and employment over the summer, as well as those who have petitioned to stay on campus between fall and spring semesters)

**Faculty** (from all three divisions, teaching remotely and in person, using a variety of teaching formats including tutorials and labs, as well as parents facing issues of childcare)

**Staff** (in the full range of positions that they serve the campus community, including parents facing issues of childcare)

Some notes:

- For the sake of consistency, we aimed to maximize redundancy between the two models. Both have the same dates for the start of the semester, the end-of-semester reading period, and finals.

- We are taking into account the priorities that President Mandel articulated to us, namely that the first priority is health, then education, and then the other aspects of the college's operation.
- We note a fundamental tension between the mental health benefit of longer stretches of time off from classes and that the likelihood of travel (and therefore spread of COVID-19) is commensurate with the length of time off.
- The CSC was not charged with addressing policies or scheduling issues related to senior days, graduation, class reunions, or use of campus facilities over the summer, though we did try to keep stock of the potential ramifications of the spring calendar on these activities.
- The CSC endeavored to spread time off evenly throughout the days of the week so that classes meeting during different blocks would have the same number of contact hours. We were mindful of vacation days at area schools and did what we could to co-ordinate days off with these dates.
- These models operate on the following assumptions:
  - We will be offering some in-person instruction in the Spring
  - The class block grid we used for the Fall will remain in place in the Spring. This means that the suspension of the division of the day will remain in effect.
  - Health and safety protocols concerning quarantine, social distancing, and mask wearing will all remain in effect.
  - If we are able to complete the Fall semester as planned, we will have as many or more students living on campus in the Spring.

**Start date:** For both models, we recommend pushing back the start date of the semester for the following reasons:

-It will help us minimize contact during flu season and the likelihood of travel during inclement weather.

-It will give our staff a break before they have to begin preparations for onboarding students to campus.

-A later start date will mean more of our in-person time will take place during milder weather and optimize our ability to use outdoor spaces.

#### **Elimination of Winter Carnival:**

The CSC determined that the time off for Winter Carnival was best redirected toward a later start date to the semester and time off later on in the spring when fatigue is felt more acutely.

#### **Option A (Continuous Model) Reading Period/Health Days:**

The CSC took into consideration the fundamental tension between the benefits and drawbacks of longer breaks (as mentioned above). We determined that two consecutive days was the maximum allowable, given concerns and considerations voiced by the administration. The longest mid-semester break students have off is a Monday/Tuesday in March, which (including the weekend) gives students 4 days without classes. Structurally, this parallels the fall semester. We were intentional in making this a Reading Period rather than Health Days, with the understanding that the mounting workload in advance of midterms will encourage students to use this time off to focus on their coursework.

We ask that faculty respect the difference between reading period (a time for students to delve into their schoolwork intensively in preparation for midterms and finals) and health days (in

which students are encouraged to pause and take some time to tend to their physical and psychological wellbeing).

**Option B (Thanksgiving Model):**

This model includes a week of spring break. On-campus students would be required to vacate campus during this time unless they obtained permission to remain on campus. The remaining weeks of the semester will be taught entirely remotely, as with the fall semester.

Procedures for seniors for the end of the year fall outside of the directives of the CSC, but this plan operates on the general principle that seniors will be encouraged to remain on campus or return to campus to finish out the semester and phase into either graduation or some kind of graduation-like concluding ceremony. The registrar is working with the administration to minimize student lag time between the end of classes and graduation so as to discourage travel.

**Some Pros and Cons of the Two Models:**

**OPTION A (Continuous)**

**PROS:**

- Maximizes teaching time during mild weather when outdoor spaces may be usable.
- Allows students and faculty to have the greatest amount of continuity in the classroom experience for the full duration of the semester. (No switch necessary for classes using a hybrid or in-person model.)
- Avoids a possible equity issue: students who do not have access to an environment and resources for optimal work at home can remain on campus for the full duration of the semester without needing administrative approval to do so.

**CONS:**

- No substantial break from schoolwork within the semester, which may cause significant fatigue/burnout.
- Some may find that the intermittent health days are disruptive to their teaching/learning experience.
- Spring break is often a time of intensive work for senior thesis students. Without a break, thesis students would have to manage their time differently, and department expectations of thesis students may have to adjust depending on logistical constraints.

**OPTION B ('Thanksgiving' Model)**

**PROS:**

- Structurally similar to Fall semester and therefore familiar to both faculty and students.
- Provides a significant respite for students by giving them a full week off.

**CONS:**

- Introduces a major schism within the semester, involving relocation and (for students taking hybrid or in-person courses) a significant shift in course format.
- Absence of days off before the Spring Break may intensify feelings of burnout.
- Sends students home at precisely the point that we would be able to make best use of outdoor spaces.
- Students start off their spring break with the additional task of packing up and relocating off campus.
- Possible equity issues:

- Students who go home to time zones other than Eastern are faced with potentially very challenging circumstances
- Students who do not have access to an environment and resources for optimal work at home must seek administrative approval to remain on campus; not all requests to stay on campus will be granted.

### Option A Continuous Model Calendar Details

Feb.	17	Wednesday	First day of classes/Follow Thurs schedule
Feb.	18	Thursday	Claiming Williams Day, no classes
Feb.	19	Friday	Regular class schedule resumes
March	22-23	Monday-Tuesday	Reading Days
April	21-22	Wednesday-Thursday	Mental Health Days
May	7	Friday	Mental Health Day
May	19	Wednesday	Last day of classes Spring Semester
May	20-23	Thursday-Sunday	Reading Period
May	24-29	Monday-Saturday	Final Examinations
June	3	Thursday	Senior Grades due by noon
June	7	Monday	All other spring grades due

### Option B Thanksgiving Model Calendar Details

Feb.	17	Wednesday	First day of classes/ Follow Thurs schedule
Feb.	18	Thursday	Claiming Williams, no classes
Feb.	19	Friday	Regular Class schedule resumes
May	1-9	Saturday -Sunday	Spring Recess
May	19	Wednesday	Last day of classes Spring Semester
May	20-23	Thursday-Sunday	Reading Period
May	24-29	Monday-Saturday	Final Examinations
June	3	Thursday	Senior Grades due by noon
June	7	Monday	All other spring grades due