

MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty Senate Executive Committee

From: Elizabeth S. Chilton, Provost and Executive Vice President 

Subject: Proposal to Adjustment the Spring 2021 Academic Calendar

Date: October 6, 2020

After careful consideration, engaging in system-wide conversations with Chancellors and other administrators, and reviewing feedback to date from WSU Faculty Senators, I am writing to ask the Faculty Senate to consider a revised proposal to change the academic calendar for Spring 2021 for the WSU system. Chancellors Cillay, DeWald, Haynes, Netzhammer, and Pitre also support and endorse this proposal.

The following plan is being proposed for the Faculty Senate's consideration:

- Start the Spring 2021 semester on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 (rather than on Monday, January 11, 2021) and eliminate spring break.
- Identify and implement three (3) 1-day academic breaks (classes are not taught); the 1-day academic breaks will be allocated one day per month during the months of February, March, and April.
 - Pending proposal approval by the Faculty Senate, the dates will be identified in collaboration with the Vice Provost for Academic Engagement and Student Achievement, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and the Office of the Registrar.
- President's Day on Monday, February 15, 2021, will continue to be observed as a class holiday and University Offices will remain open.

The Spring 2021 semester will end as normally scheduled; final examinations will begin on Monday, May 3, 2021, and end on Friday, May 7, 2021. The above plan satisfies the requirement of 15 weeks of instruction required by federal guidelines as the week of examinations can be counted toward the total.

Attached to this memorandum is a frequently asked questions document that is meant to supplement and provide clarity to the request.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request. Please note, we are hoping to have a decision regarding Spring 2021 communicated no later than October 15, 2020. As such, an expedited review and response will be sincerely appreciated.

Cc: WSU Chancellors
Laura Hill, Senior Vice Provost
Mary Wack, Vice Provost for Academic Engagement and Student Achievement
Kristina Peterson-Wilson, Chief of Staff, Office of the Provost

POTENTIAL SPRING 2021 ACADEMIC CALENDAR REVISION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Updated: October 6, 2020

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL PLANS BEING CONSIDERED FOR A REVISED ACADEMIC CALENDAR FOR SPRING 2021? WOULD THE END DATE OF SPRING 2021 BE AFFECTED?

After careful consideration, engaging in system-wide conversations with Chancellors and other administrators, and reviewing feedback to date from WSU Faculty Senators, the following plan is being proposed for the Faculty Senate's consideration:

- Start the Spring 2021 semester on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 (rather than on Monday, January 11, 2021) and eliminate spring break.
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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR A POTENTIAL DELAYED START?

- Give WSU an opportunity to potentially adjust to changing federal decisions and requirements from the Department of Education regarding remote instruction. The current federal administration will decide what modes of instruction are permissible for Spring 2021. If there is a change in the presidency, it is possible that the new administration will prefer higher education to take a different approach. A delayed start avoids the potential of beginning under one model and needing to immediately switch to another. Additionally, failure to comply with the federal requirements could result in potential loss of financial aid for our students.
- Allow for a staggered move-in and time to ensure a rigorous testing/quarantining protocol.
- Elimination of spring break will minimize further exposure of WSU students and faculty to individuals outside the campus and hopefully prevent any new COVID-19 outbreaks.



WILL THE POTENTIAL ACADEMIC CALENDAR CHANGE ONLY BE APPLIED TO WSU PULLMAN?

No, Provost Elizabeth Chilton has discussed the revision of the academic calendar for Spring 2021 with the WSU Everett, Spokane, Tri-Cities, Global, and Vancouver Chancellors. With the exception of a few of the health science colleges, all are in agreement with the proposal.

HOW WILL GRADUATE STUDENTS BE AFFECTED BY THE DELAYED START? ARE THERE ANY CONSEQUENCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS WORKING AT RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTERS?

Graduate students taking 500-level course work will be affected in the same way as undergraduates with a condensed academic calendar for the Spring semester. For students on research assistantships, research fellowships, or scholarships, it is not anticipated that the change will affect student support. Assistantships would still start on January 1, 2021, and extend to May 15, 2021.

If research sites on campuses and REC Centers are able to sustain the ongoing progress for opening (ramping up) for research and scholarly activities, the ability of graduate students to make degree progress and perform assistantship duties should not be affected. Appointments for students on teaching assistantships can start on January 1, 2021, and extend to May 15, 2021, as normal; with the expectation that the work effort associated with assistantship duties during those weeks before classes begin can be directed to enhanced preparation for instruction in a condensed semester. This exception may be a significant benefit for graduate students that are teaching and taking graduate courses in the Spring 2021 semester.

WOULD THERE BE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THE REVISED ACADEMIC CALENDAR, IF APPROVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE?

Some variation in academic calendar will be necessary for the WSU Health Sciences Spokane campus as well as for the College of Veterinary Medicine because of pre-existing calendar variations, accreditation requirements, and due to critical instructional partnerships with other institutions. The Registrar's Office and Information Technology Services have both been consulted, and these exceptions can be accommodated as needed.

