

To: E. James Potchen, ECAC Chair

From: R. Sekhar Chivukula, for the Academic Year Task Force

Re: Academic Year Task Force Status Report

Date: April 6, 2009

The Academic Year Task Force proceeded by reviewing the academic year calendars of a variety of universities nationwide, including other CIC and Michigan institutions, and gathered community input on the MSU Calendar through a survey of faculty and students and through a questionnaire sent to Colleges and MSU Administrative Offices. Using this input, the Task Force deliberated, constructed two models of the MSU academic calendar for further discussion by governance, and has drafted a 40-page report.

Highlights of the draft report and calendar models include:

- Based on widespread support revealed by a survey of the MSU community and on a comparative review of the MSU calendar with those of universities both nation-wide and in Michigan, the Task Force believes that MSU should adopt a fall semester with 14 instructional weeks and a one-week finals period, beginning after Labor Day. Such an academic calendar would align MSU's fall semester with Michigan State Law which requires that K-12 public schools begin after Labor Day and, in the view of the committee, provides benefits for all students and faculty.
- Based on strong support in the MSU community survey, the Task Force also believes that Fall Graduation should be held at the end of fall exam period.
- The Task Force has developed two models for the spring semester, one a two-week "J-Term" period followed by a conventional 14-week instructional semester (which leaves summer recess at the current length), the other a 14-week instructional period and a longer summer recess.
- The Task Force believes that Faculty and Academic Councils should also consider, noting the trade-offs which will be described in the final report, the following possible additions to the MSU calendar:
  - A two-day Fall Break.
  - A two-day President's Day Break and a delayed spring break.
- The Task Force believes that graduate professional programs that request to do so should be exempt from the changes to the academic calendar that follow from this process of calendar reform.

In reviewing and finalizing the report, the Task Force finds that there are a number of questions of detail that should be resolved in the possible implementation of a new calendar before wider discussion by university standing committees and Faculty and Academic Councils would be fruitful.

The Task Force therefore recommends the following steps to move forward:

- Prior to finalizing the report, the Task Force recommends that the Provost's Office comment on the implementation, budgetary, and procedural details of the calendar models that have been developed. We request that this input be provided to the Task Force by Sept. 1, 2009.
- Incorporating the results of this commentary, the Task Force would complete a final report by Oct. 1, 2009. This final report, after review by the appropriate university committees, could then be forwarded to Faculty and Academic Councils for action.
- Given the limited statistics in the student responses to the survey, the Task Force believes that special care should be taken to ensure that ASMSU and COGS be involved along with Faculty and Academic Councils in the final deliberations on the calendar configuration.