Memorandum

To:        E. James Potchen, Faculty Council Chair
           Academic Council

CC:        Kim Wilcox, Provost

From:      Sandie Stanley, UCSA Chairperson

Date:      9/23/2008

Re:        UCSA Response to Proposed Changes to Fall Welcome and Academic Year Start Date

By request of Executive Committee of Academic Council (ECAC), here is the response of the University Committee on Student Affairs (UCSA) regarding the Provost’s proposal to change the Fall Welcome schedule and the academic calendar.

UCSA is concerned with the speed and process of the proposal. UCSA feels that adequate time has not been given to address the issues surrounding a decision of this magnitude. As an example, UCSA, which deals with student affairs, was not consulted until the issue was raised at the ECAC meeting on September 9, 2008. UCSA members believe that student input is vitally important given that this proposal will greatly affect the student experience. UCSA also believes that students deserve ample time to collect and analyze data. For example, it would be useful to have data readily available on what our peer institutions’ fall welcomes and academic calendars look like. Similarly, data should also be made available which the administration has been citing as evidence on the extent of the associated health and safety issues. It is also clear from conversations with faculty that many faculty on campus are not aware of the proposal. Given the non-inclusive manner in which the proposal has been developed, we strongly believe that the proposal bears further investigation and a full vetting by the University community. We concur with University Committee on Academic Policy that the academic calendar should be only changed rarely and after a comprehensive review. Such a comprehensive review would require that the proposal not be implemented for Fall 2009.

UCSA has several concerns that they believe should be taken into consideration before the implementation of this proposal:

1. The impact on the arrival and departure of international and out of state students that need more time to get settled and packed up,
2. The implications of faculty instructional days overlapping with finals week;

3. Delaying the start of classes to Wednesday will likely prolong the welcome back activities of those students not choosing to live in dormitories that will be still arriving in East Lansing a week before classes start; and

4. The impact this will have on the desirability of dormitory living for non-freshman.

UCSA is concerned that academic quality will be compromised by adopting the changes. UCSA also believes that changes will not enhance the student experience consistent with the Boldness by Design Initiative.

Making such an important decision without adequately exploring the potential repercussions to students and viable options that satisfy the university community as a whole deprives all students of this university an outstanding Spartan experience.