

27 November 1995

TO Members, University Senate

FROM: University Senate Council

RE: AGENDA ITEM: University Senate Meeting, Monday, December 11, 1995. Proposal to change the University calendar to designate two mid-term reading days the first Monday and Tuesday of October.

Proposal:

Change the University Calendar (University Senate Rules, Section II) to designate the first Monday and Tuesday of October as mid-term reading days. No classes will be held.

Background

On February 8, 1995, the Student Government Association (SGA) Senate overwhelmingly approved two resolutions requesting the University of Kentucky create two new reading periods in the calendar. The first was to be a mid-term reading period in the Fall Semester. The second was a proposed two-day addition to the current reading period preceding final examination week in both the Fall and Spring semesters. To accommodate the lost teaching days, it was proposed that classes begin on a Monday rather than a Wednesday. Following their approval by the SGA, the proposals were forwarded to the Senate Council with a request for consideration and action.

The Senate Council considered these proposals at several meetings, and on September 25, 1995, approved them on academic merit with a proviso that they be reconsidered after the students had contacted non-academic offices to determine the impact of the proposals on other areas of the University. The students contacted Dr. Jack Blanton, Vice Chancellor for Administration, Dr. James Kuder, Vice President for Student Services, and Ms. Betty J. Huff, University Registrar, with a request that they review the proposals and “flag” problem areas. Blanton reported having no unresolvable difficulties with his schedule or the services his area provides if the calendar were changed; Kuder pointed out several problems, including effects on residence hall occupancy changes, earlier orientation scheduling, loss of some college orientation time, and changes in band and sorority rush. Huff cited similar issues. As a result of a subsequent meeting with Huff, Kuder and SGA representatives, a compromise was reached to withdraw the proposal for two additional reading days before final examinations and to go forward with the proposal for establishing two mid-term reading days in the Fall Semester. At its meeting on 20

November 1995, the Senate Council approved the proposed compromise. That proposal is before the Senate now.

Rationale

The members of SGA point out the following rationale for the proposed fall semester reading days: First, the fall semester currently has three more teaching days than the spring. They therefore do not find it unreasonable to request a two day break during the fall semester, particularly given the justifications that follow.

As the academic calendar stands, there are no breaks between Labor Day and Thanksgiving (12 weeks) in the Fall Semester. In contrast the spring semester has a break the ninth week of classes.

In addition, the students feel that the absence of a reading period prior to midterm exams during the fall semester is detrimental to both the students' psyche and grades. A midterm reading period would provide students with adequate study time prior to midterm exams and adequate reflection time prior to the midterm withdrawal date.

The SGA does not believe the students will use this time as a "party break" such as a spring break. Given that the period includes only 2 weekdays, they feel that this time would be responsibly spent by students in either going home or preparing for midterms. Further, we do not believe that the University should shut down in any respect. Residence halls should remain open, as should the eating facilities, and other university buildings (e.g., libraries). These reading days would be quite worthwhile and a practical intermission.

And finally, there are numerous other schools that have midterm breaks. Some examples include Transylvania University (3 days in October), Centre College (4 days in October), University of Virginia (4 days in October), Purdue (4 days in October), Duke University (6 days in October), and Washington and Lee University (4 days in October).

Note: If approved the proposal will be forwarded to the Rules Committee for codification.

Implementation: Fall, 1997