

Agenda Item Concerning 'Dead Week' and Compressed Courses

Background

Issues concerning compressed courses. During this academic year, the Senate Rules and Elections Committee has become aware of a number of issues concerning 'compressed' courses that are not addressed in the current University Senate Rules (policies on midterm grades, dead week, unilateral withdrawal, etc.). The SREC determined that resolution of many of these issues goes beyond its jurisdiction of interpreting existing Senate Rules, and involves substantive educational policy-making. The SREC has drawn the attention of Senate Council that these issues concerning 'compressed' courses may need consideration by an appropriate Senate committee.

Concerning 'dead week,' the SREC has previously interpreted that all undergraduate/graduate courses of any format must conform to the restrictions for 'dead week' of the 'regular' spring and fall semesters. E.g., just because a course is 'compressed' does not allow the compressed course to administer an exam during what is the 'dead week' of the regular semester courses. (At present, the Senate Rules do not require that any compressed course exam scheduling to 'yield' to the dead week of any other compressed course).

Number of days in compressed dead week. What is currently undefined in the Senate Rules, and what is beyond the reach of SREC interpretation, is how many days constitute 'dead week' for compressed courses of various lengths that are shorter than a regular semester. However, the Ombud has reported a present situation in which faculty developing their course syllabi for Spring Semester compressed courses cannot determine from the present Senate Rules what educational policy needs to be followed on 'how many days long is dead week for compressed courses of various lengths.'

Recommendation

The SREC Chair recommends that the Senate Council at its Jan. 13, 2020 meeting render an educational policy decision on behalf of the Senate, on 'what period of time constitutes dead week for the various length compressed courses?' This SC policy decision will apply until such time as the SC obtains more formal recommendations on what is the best long term 'compressed course' educational policies.