

FUTURE ACADEMIC CALENDARS

Texas Tech University

SUMMARY OF PROBLEM

The new THECB Common Calendar mandates the semester start dates for all public universities for the next 10 years. This Common Calendar differs from the previous calendar in that summer school can no longer start before the first week in June to accommodate public school teachers who desire to take summer courses. Texas Tech has been starting the first summer term in May immediately after Memorial Day, but now the summer schedule must be pushed one week later than usual. This in turn will cause classes to start later in the fall. The late start will cause commencement to occur the weekend before Christmas (beginning fall 2012), which will delay information about academic standing being sent to students in a timely manner (see Appendix).

THECB Common Calendar: www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=B476F1C0-DB8B-2A66-2B421EFB7A9C352B

APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

Initially assuming that a resolution to the problem might be achieved by changing the end-of-term grade process, the Office of the Provost appointed an Ad Hoc Committee of the Academic Council to study the problem and suggest a solution. Committee members are as follows:

- Dr. Cathy Duran, Associate Dean, Rawls College of Business
- Dr. Gary Elbow, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
- Dr. Greg Elkins, Associate Vice President and Dean of Students
- Tristan Griffin, Honors College Senator, Student Government Association
- Dr. Robert Henry, Associate Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts
- Paula Hunter, Assistant Registrar, NCAA Compliance
- Sue Jones (Chair), Director of Official Publications
- Bobbie Brown, Registrar
- Kim Mills, Unit Supervisor, College of Arts and Sciences
- DaNay Phelps, Senior Administrator, Office of the Provost
- Janessa Walls, Director, Academic Support and Facilities Resources

FINDING OF THE COMMITTEE

After studying all the factors involved in processing grades (see Appendix), the committee decided that the process requires at least 5 business days and thus the solution is not in streamlining the grade process but in moving commencement one week earlier by (1) starting classes three days earlier and (2) eliminating fall break. The Academic Council approved this solution for 2012-13, and the calendar has been posted online.



COMPLICATION

Adjusting the calendar to provide for the necessary processing of grades implicates Carol of Lights, which in turn implicates final examinations. Beginning in fall 2012 and continuing for three years, final examinations will fall on the same weekend as Carol of Lights, which is now a Saturday evening activity. Carol of Lights cannot be moved to another weekend in 2013 and 2014 because Thanksgiving is the preceding weekend and commencement is the following weekend.

Four Possible Solutions:

Option One — Final exams continue as they are. Provost approval would be required for an extracurricular activity on a full day of exams. The School of Music will not participate in Carol of Lights if exams continue for a full day. Campus lights cannot be turned off during Carol of Lights because exams will be in progress.

Option Two — Reduce finals to 120 minutes for 4 days (Friday, Monday – Wednesday). This would leave Saturday open for Carol of Lights and would allow participation by the School of Music. Eight universities in the Big 12 have finals of 120 minutes or less.

Option Three — Discontinue individual study day. Have 150-minute exams for 5 days (Thursday, Friday, Monday – Wednesday). Six schools in the Big 12 have no individual study days.

Option Four — Reduce the individual study day (Thursday) to one-half day and start 150-minute final exams in the afternoon. In addition, limit exams to only one-half day on Saturday. This would allow the equivalent of 5 days of exams from Thursday afternoon through the next Wednesday.



APPENDIX

End-of-Term Grade Process

- After all grades have been submitted, the Registrar's Office manually enters grade replacements prior to running Academic Standing.
- Registrar's Office must process Academic Standing and place on student's record. **Colleges must check their students' standings and then print letters for mailing and receipt prior to January.**
- **Colleges have five business days after commencement to post degrees**, but the posting cannot take place until after all grades are submitted and processed.
- The **Registrar's Office must wait for the five-day period to end** before sending out official transcripts. Students use these transcripts for acceptance into Graduate School in the spring and for job opportunities.
- Grade reports need to be processed and distributed in time for decisions to be made for spring semester.
- NCAA athletic compliance requires all athletic participants in postseason and between-term competitions to be certified for 6 degree applicable hours and have good standing prior to the last day of work for fall. Any delay in processing grades and determining Academic Standing will affect this certification and subsequent reporting to the NCAA. In addition, college officials may not be accessible during this timeframe (i.e., grade appeal/suspension/grade changes). Students are not allowed to compete if they are not in good standing.
- This process involves the Registrar's Office, key personnel in all colleges, MailTech, and IT, all of whom must be available.

