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Faculty Judgments Concerning Expanding Western Washington University's Summer Session

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Faculty Judgments Concerning Expanding Western Washington University's Summer Session

Prepared by Carl Simpson, Linda Clark, Gary McKinney, and Joseph E. Trimble

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the Winter quarter, 1996, nearly three-quarters of the faculty (70.4%) responded to a questionnaire concerning the advisability of expanding the WWU Summer Session to constitute "year-round" operation. Generally, the faculty supports the idea, although only if the program is high-quality and fully supported, if the program operates with few temporary Summer-only faculty, and if pay for Summer Session increases. Most faculty, 71.7%, say Western "definitely" or "probably" should pursue an enlarged Summer Session, while only 16.4% oppose such a move.

Support for expanding Summer Session is, however, limited by two concerns. First, only about 45% of academic year faculty (FTE) would be available during any given Summer, with faculty supply unevenly distributed across disciplines. Second, faculty opposition would severely limit the acceptable number of Summer-only temporary faculty.

The policies under which Summer Session would operate are critical to faculty support for expanding it. Faculty are virtually unanimous that Summer pay should be equivalent or close to pay for the academic year, that courses of equal credit to academic-year courses should meet the same number of hours, and that departments should have full instructional support. In addition, if there were to be an expanded Summer Session, approximately 80% of the faculty say they should be allowed to teach any three quarters of their choice on a nine-month contract, that the Summer teaching load should be equivalent to the teaching load during the academic year, and that all departments should offer at least a core of classes.

If all the policies desired by the faculty were put in place, 74.9% would favor an expanded Summer Session, while only 6.4% would oppose it. If, on the other hand, none of the policies were in place, only 6.4% would favor the expansion, while 65.9% would oppose it.

INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Provost and the director of Western's Summer Session, The Office of Survey Research conducted two surveys during Winter quarter concerning the advisability of enlarging Western's Summer Session to constitute "year-round operation." This report presents the findings from one of those surveys: the survey of Western *faculty*. The companion report will present findings from the survey of Western *students*.

Our brief questionnaire was sent to all faculty; 70.4% responded. Part-time faculty responded at a slightly higher rate than full-time faculty. Results have been adjusted to eliminate any resulting bias. The questionnaire defined "year-round operation," asked faculty opinion of that option, asked whether faculty would envision teaching Summers under year-round operation, and explored a number of policy options regarding how Western's Summer Session should be conducted. Given the number of respondents and their proportion of the entire faculty, and assuming 95% confidence, the standard error term associated with any percentage reported here is approximately three percent.

An additional caveat to the findings is that despite pleas to the contrary, a disproportion of faculty least interested in teaching Summer Session may have decided against completing our survey. Research on surveys suggests that such biased non-response is likely, but that with a 70% response rate, the resulting distortion of findings is very likely to be small. To correct for this possible source of error, a reader wishing to err on the conservative side might subtract as much as 5% from reported estimates, although error is likely to be smaller than that.

The survey's particular definition of "year-round operation" is critical to an accurate understanding of findings and is therefore presented *verbatim* here:

- Western would offer a sufficient number of courses to allow students to "make progress" toward their degrees each summer, should they decide to attend all four quarters per year or to attend summers rather than some other quarter. This means
 - Nearly all majors would offer summer programs: most would be enlarged.
 - Summer course would to some extent take into account basic sequencing of requirements for each major, as do other quarters.
 - Summer courses would be included in annual course schedules, so that students could plan ahead.
- Sufficient numbers of students would attend to allow the enlarged Summer Session to break even as a self-supporting quarter, as it does at present. (Students are being surveyed to estimate whether this is a realistic possibility.)
- Sufficient staff would be present to offer required support services
- In addition, it seems that courses would need to include the same total number of contact hours as in the other quarters, and that faculty remuneration would be increased.

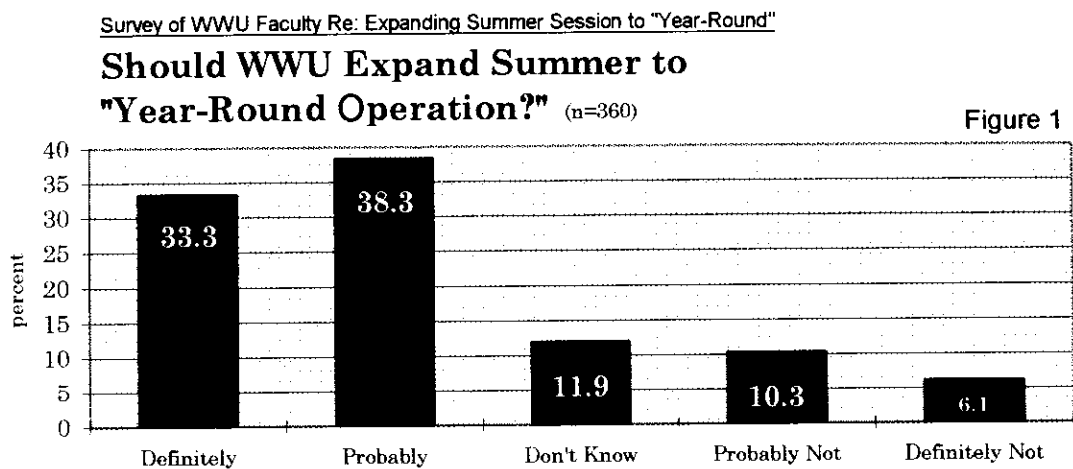
Moreover, it seems likely that courses would need to include the same total number of contact hours as in other quarters, and that faculty remuneration would be increased. In

addition, the cover letter to the survey used the following language: "Under this proposal, Summer would not become as large as other terms, but it would significantly increase both the number of students enrolled and the number of courses offered, so that students who wished to do so could attend and make good degree progress during all four quarters."

FINDINGS

SUPPORT FOR "YEAR-ROUND OPERATION"

Once its definition was established, faculty were asked: "In general, do you think Western should pursue enlarging Summer Session to allow 'year-round operation' of the university?" Responses are shown in Figure 1.



Western's faculty appear to be highly favorable to the possibility of enlarging Summer Session, although other findings make it clear that such support is contingent on particular Summer Session policies. A total of 71.7% say Western "definitely" or "probably" should pursue an enlarged Summer Session, while only 16.4% oppose such a move. The remaining 11.9% are undecided. While only one-third of the faculty reports "definite" support, the findings shown in Figure 1 indicate much more support than opposition.

One important proviso comes, however, from an analysis of faculty status. Among non-tenure track and temporary faculty, nearly half (48.1%) say we should "definitely" enlarge Summers and fully 89.6% believe we "definitely" or "probably" should do so. Yet among tenured faculty the corresponding figures are only 32.7% and 69.5%, and among tenure-track faculty 13.3% and 77.4% respectively. The major difference between these groups appears to be an emphasis on scholarship and long-term quality. Many faculty, for instance, are concerned that professional quality might be hurt by teaching four quarters per year. Open-ended comments (page 11) emphasized the need for time for research and field work, time for reflection, reading to stay up with the field, rejuvenation, and the likelihood that without these, teaching quality will suffer over the long haul. That concern was expressed by only 12.5% of non-tenure-track and temporary faculty, but by 43% of tenured faculty and by 52% of tenure-track faculty.

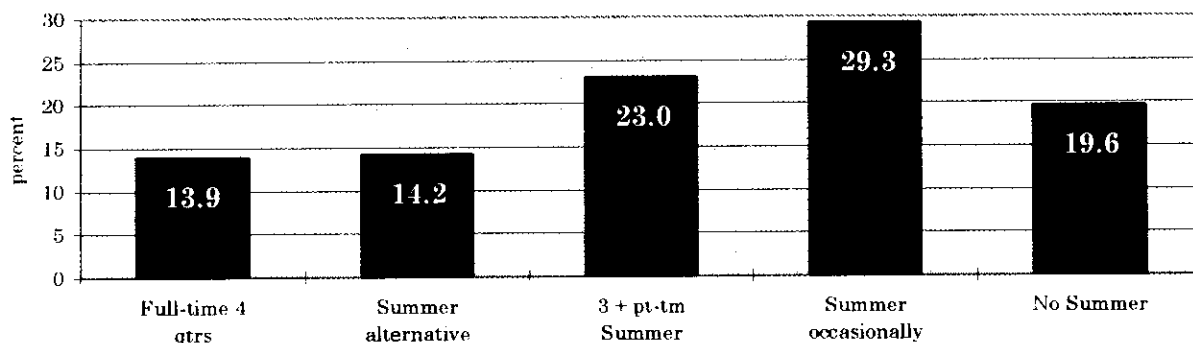
"SUPPLY" OF FACULTY FOR SUMMER TEACHING

Much of the faculty support for enlarging Summer Session is student-oriented. Over two-fifths (42.7%) of those faculty who added comments to their surveys offered observations recommending year-round operation as a way to improve student access or time-to-degree. A quite different, but perhaps even more important question is whether or not Western's faculty would plan to teach Summer Sessions in sufficient numbers to allow Western to offer a high quality year-round program. Figure 2 reports findings from the question: "Please indicate which of the following best describes your feeling about instructing in a Summer Session expanded for year-round operation, assuming the opportunity existed."

Survey of WWU Faculty Re: Expanding Summer Session to "Year-Round"

Personal Preferences for Teaching in Summer, If Expanded to "Year-Round" (n=360)

Figure 2



About 14% of the faculty responding to the survey wish to teach full-time all four quarters. Another 23.0% foresee teaching part-time during Summers, while 29.3% might teach Summers "occasionally." An especially interesting group of 14.2% of respondents say they would teach full-time Summers but take an alternative quarter off. The majority of these would take Winter (45%) or Fall (39%), with the remainder (16%) taking Spring. Only 19.6% report that they would never teach Summer Session. Even assuming that a disproportionate number of faculty with no interest in Summer Session completed the survey, and accounting for random error from sampling, it is extremely unlikely that more than one-fourth of the faculty foresee "never" teaching Summers under an expanded year-round operation. Adding the approximately 30% who foresee teaching Summers "occasionally" might lead to a reasonable estimate that about half the faculty would intend quite regular participation in an expanded Summer Session. (Note, however, that hypothetical marketing questions such as this one routinely overestimate interest in any given behavior, perhaps making 40-45% a safer estimate.)

To estimate the approximate faculty FTE available any given Summer requires some assumptions. We begin with the 13.9% who want to teach full-time all four quarters. Added to that are 14.2% who want to teach full-time during Summer, but would take a different quarter off. If we assume that "part-time" means about half-time, we add 11.5%. These three groups cumulate to FTE equivalent to 39.6% of the faculty in the sample. If "occasionally" means, say, one full-time Summer Session every fourth year, then this group adds 7.3%, for a total estimate of 46.9% of the regular faculty. If we reduce this estimate by 5% to account for possible bias in response rate and for the common tendency to over-estimate on hypothetical questions, the

resulting conservative estimate is 44.5% of the faculty. Finally, since these estimates include part-time Western faculty, we calculated the same findings for full-time faculty only. The results show slightly more wanting full-time Summer work and slightly fewer wanting part-time Summer work, with the total estimated faculty supply unchanged.

Estimating an available FTE Summer faculty of between 44.5% and 47.0% (or, accounting for likely error, between 43% and 49%) of the faculty teaching during the academic year indicates room to enlarge Summer Session considerably without needing to hire temporary Summer faculty. To translate percentages to numbers, we assume an academic year base of 475 faculty FTE, which produces an estimated 204 to 233 FTE faculty available from the academic-year faculty, including part-time and temporary faculty.

On the other hand, since Summer faculty need to be dispersed across all departments, even 50% of the faculty planning to teach would not be adequate to mount a year-round program if that number is concentrated in only some departments. When we analyze faculty members' interest in teaching in an expanded Summer Session by department, we find a total of eleven departments in which fewer than 33% FTE of respondents would plan to teach. (*This calculation counts all respondents who indicate a preference to teach Summers full-time regularly and 0.5 of those who indicate a desire to teach part-time. It omits those who say they might teach occasionally since they would not contribute to a predictable core Summer offering.*) Of these eleven, five departments, all in Arts and Sciences, would encounter particular difficulty offering even a small core of classes. In two small departments, none of the faculty who responded to the survey wish to teach any Summers full- or part-time. In two large departments and one small department, fewer than .16 FTE faculty would plan to teach. A large enough proportion of faculty in these departments responded to the survey to report with some confidence that offering more than a tiny core of Summer courses would prove difficult without hiring from outside.

In all other units, the survey indicates sufficient faculty to guarantee a core of classes and, in some cases, more faculty wishing to teach Summers than likely to be demanded unless Summer school enrollments increase dramatically. In particular, Woodring College of Education, with an especially large proportion of Summer enrollments even without enlarging Summers, has about two-thirds of faculty FTE expressing a desire to teach Summer school.

While this analysis indicates sufficient "supply" of faculty in nearly all areas, it is important to note that one of the large departments and one of the small departments that appear not to have sufficient faculty interest to guarantee a "core" of classes enroll a large number of majors. Also, four of the five departments with little faculty interest provide extensive GUR course offerings.

On the other hand, supply of faculty is sufficient for each of the major Collegiate units (each college, with Arts and Sciences broken into humanities, math/natural sciences, social sciences, and applied areas) to be well represented in an expanded Summer Session. While this finding does nothing toward guaranteeing a core of classes in the five departments with little faculty interest, it does mean that sufficient GURs can be offered during Summers.

One important final note to add concerns the supply of faculty for Summer Session courses. The inclination to teach Summers is much greater for non-tenure-track and temporary faculty than for tenured or tenure-track faculty. About 57% of non-tenure-track and temporary faculty would teach full-time in an expanded Summer Session, while only 33% of tenured

faculty and 27% of tenure-track faculty would do so. Thus, while non-tenure-track and temporary faculty make up less than 20% of Western's faculty, they compose about 30% of faculty interested in teaching Summer full-time. While the majority of those who would teach Summer Sessions are, in fact, regular, tenured faculty, concerns with the proportion of a Summer teaching staff that should be hired temporarily (see Figure 5, below) give poignancy to the presence of so many temporary people in our estimates of faculty supply. Without the inclusion of temporary and part-time instructors as approximately 30% of the faculty inclined to teach Summers, the faculty supply figures do not support an expansion of Summer Session.

SUMMER SESSION POLICY PREFERENCES

At present, Summer Session courses are somewhat shorter than academic year courses, typically somewhat smaller in size, and often taught with a more informal atmosphere. In addition, faculty teaching Summers face little by way of service obligations. On the other hand, faculty now teaching Summer Sessions full-time earn considerably less, teach somewhat more credits, and have less staff and T.A. support than during the academic year. These trade-offs formed the basis for a set of questions concerning preferred policies under which an expanded Summer Session should operate.

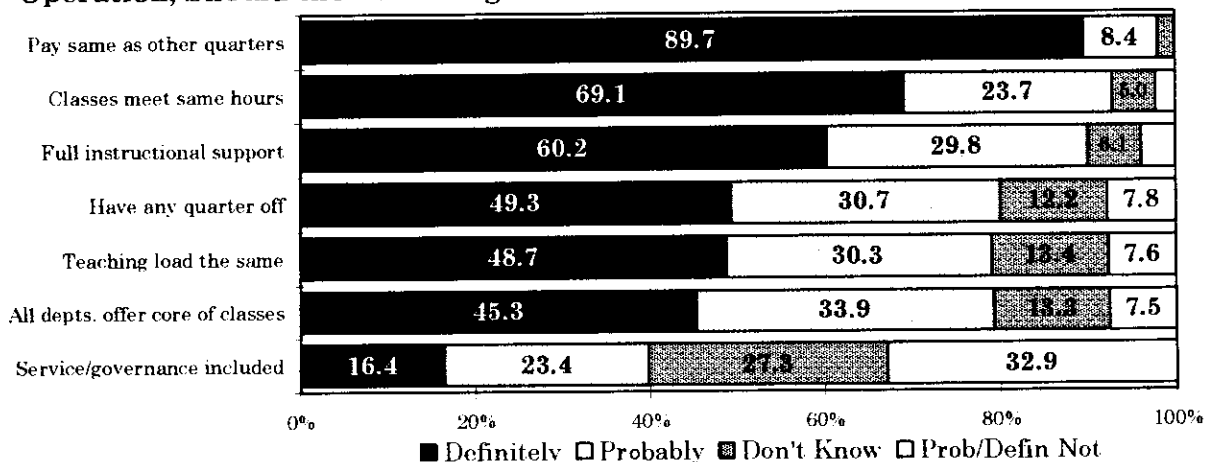
Of the seven policies included in the survey, three receive overwhelming support, with over 90% saying they "definitely" or "probably" should be put in place (see Figure 3). These three changes would go a long way toward reconstituting Summer Session as equivalent to any other quarter. Faculty pay would be the same as for any other quarter (i.e., 33% of the nine-month salary), courses would meet for the same number of hours as during the academic year (i.e., the equivalent of a 10-week quarter rather than the current 9-week quarter), and departments would have the same level of instructional support as during the academic year.

Survey of WWU Faculty Re: Expanding Summer Session to "Year-Round"

If WWU Were to Expand Summer Session to Allow "Year-Round"

Operation, Should the Following Policies Be Put in Place? (n=359)

Figure 3



Greater detail concerning faculty pay preferences is available from a direct question asking whether pay should remain as it is at present, increase to 33% of the nine-month salary, or fall somewhere in-between, assuming "the same number of class meetings as during academic year quarters, approximately the same class sizes, and no service duties." Only 3.5% of faculty

prefer no change, while 75.9% recommend full pay (i.e., 33% of the nine-month salary) and the remaining 20.6% recommend some intermediate level. Since recommending anything less than full pay is a vote against self-interest, the one-fourth of faculty who so recommend may perhaps be ascribed more importance than their numbers imply. To guard against the possibility that the votes for a compromise pay level came primarily from faculty who do not plan to teach Summers, we calculated pay preferences separately for those planning to work full-time during Summers, part-time, or not at all. Surprisingly, while all groups favor changing to full pay, those planning to teach the most are less likely than others to favor the change. Of those planning full-time Summer work, 26.6% recommend pay "in-between" full and present, and 69.1% recommend full pay. Among other faculty, the figures are 18.2% and 78.3%, respectively.

In two other cases, faculty opinion relevant to work load is somewhat more mixed. Although 79% of the faculty say that the Summer teaching load "definitely" or "probably" should become equal to the load for any other quarter, 13% are undecided and 8% oppose that change. These 21% apparently recommend some higher level of credits be taught during Summers--perhaps as at present, or perhaps at some other level. In addition, only 39.8% believe faculty governance and other service should become part of the Summer Session faculty workload.

Combining the majority opinion on these five policy questions produces a Summer Session that looks exactly like any academic quarter in terms of pay and work load except for the exclusion of service duties. Such a shift, essentially establishing a possibility of faculty working on the equivalent of a 12-month contract for four full quarters of work, raises fundamental issues since somewhere between one-third and one-half of faculty would seek involvement in year-round operation.

Two other policy questions were reported in figure 3 that tap issues other than the levels of work or pay for faculty. One of these asks whether, under year-round operation, the faculty nine-month contract should include the right to teach any nine months of one's choice--that is, to teach Summer rather than another quarter. This is an option about 14% of the faculty say they would like to exercise. A total of 80.0% recommend such an arrangement as part of year-round operation, while 12.2% are undecided and 7.8% oppose it. This policy is especially interesting for university planning because it would involve coordinating which quarters would be skipped by each faculty member and how to replace courses during the academic year. The "right" to teach Summer instead of another quarter would also presuppose priority availability of Summer teaching for those taking a different quarter for scholarship and reflection.

A large majority (79.2%) also recommend that year-round operation should include the policy that "all departments should offer at least a core of classes." This policy makes *prima facie* sense if Western is to operate "year-round," but also implies a particularly demanding minimum level of student demand and faculty involvement. Faculty willingness to teach must include at least some faculty from each discipline.

Figures 4 and 5 (below) report findings indicating how important the policies reviewed in Figure 3 were to the faculty responding to our survey. Figure 4 reports answers to the question: "How much, if at all, would your likelihood of teaching during Summers increase or decrease if each of the following policies were in place?" As would be expected, the factor most often

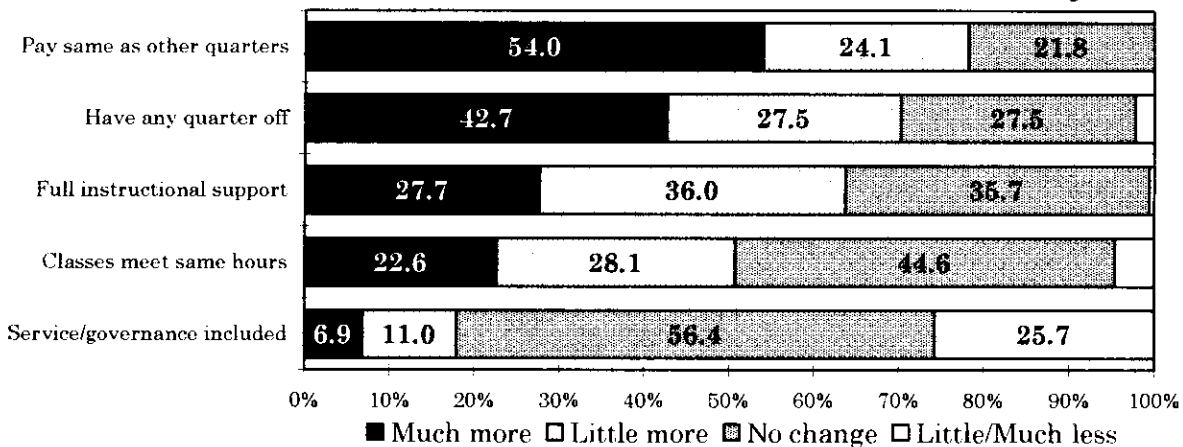
increasing likelihood of teaching Summers is pay level, with 54% “much more” likely and another 24% “a little more” likely to teach if pay levels are the same as during academic year quarters. Of the 22% who say increased pay would make no difference, one-third plan to teach and two-thirds plan *not* to teach regardless. The incentive value of pay levels is perhaps best indicated by the fact that 39% of those who initially indicated that they would not teach in an enlarged Summer Session say that raising pay to the academic year equivalent would make them “much more” likely to teach during Summers.

The policy of being allowed to choose which quarter, if any, to take off produces especially interesting results. It is almost as likely to increase openness to teaching Summers as increasing pay levels, with 70.2% much more or a little more likely to teach Summers under this policy and only 2.2% less likely to do so. The incentive value of this policy is particularly great among faculty whose initial preference is not to teach Summer Session. Fully 44.4% of those who indicated no plan to teach any Summers report that they would be “much more likely” to teach Summers under a policy allowing faculty to choose any quarter off.

Survey of WWU Faculty Re: Expanding Summer Session to “Year-Round”

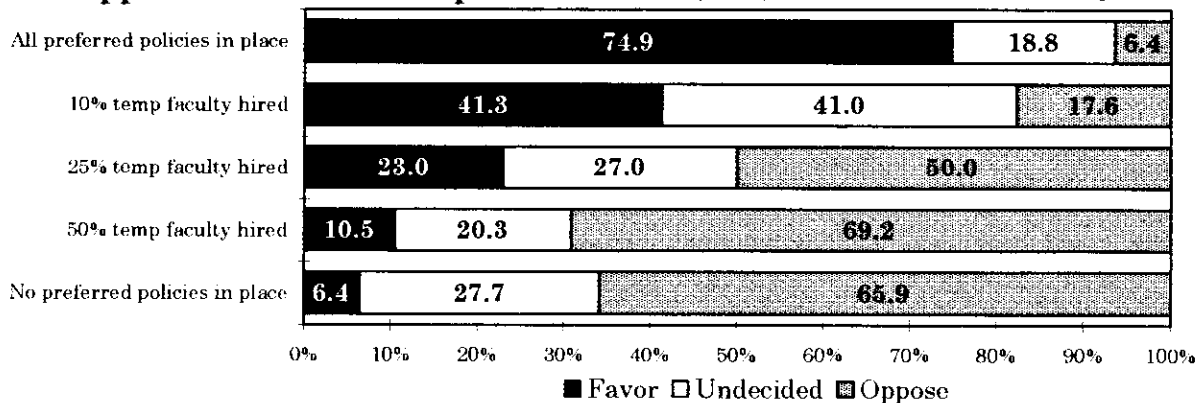
How Much Are Faculty More or Less Likely to Teach Summers if Each of the Following Policies Were in Place? (n=347)

Figure 4



Assuming Enough Student Demand, Would faculty Favor or Oppose “Year-Round” Operation If . . . (n=346)

Figure 5



The most common response to the policy of increasing the course contact hours to the equivalent of the academic year was "no change." On the other hand, 50.5% say they would be "much" or "a little" more likely to teach Summers under those conditions, a finding making clear that faculty are supporting a basic redefinition of Summer Session, not simply an increase in pay for the same work. Faculty clearly oppose, however, the full inclusion of governance/service into the Summer Session. As would be expected, the majority say they would be more likely to teach Summers with full instructional support, although the margin is not nearly so great as with policies of pay and choice of quarters to teach.

Figure 5 (above) provides dramatic evidence of how seriously faculty respondents take these policy issues. Fully 74.9% would favor year-round operation if all their preferred policies were put in place as part of Summer operation, while only 6.4% would oppose the change; with none of the preferred policies in place, the figures almost reverse, with only 6.4% favoring the change and 65.9% opposing it.

Figure 5 also shows faculty preference overwhelmingly clear in another arena. If Western had to hire a substantial number of temporary "Summer faculty from off campus in order to mount a sufficiently large Summer program," faculty become strongly opposed to enlarging to year-round operation. Open-ended comments also reflect this commitment to maintaining high-quality programs staffed with full-time faculty members.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS BY FACULTY

The types of concerns that motivate faculty responses to the questions in this survey are illustrated by the open-ended comments offered by about half the respondents. The most common types of comment focused on a) the threat to faculty professional quality from teaching year-round and b) the value of year-round operation for students, comments made by 40.8% and 39.1% of the faculty, respectively. Other frequent comments reiterated general support for expanding Summers or focused on the value of expanding the faculty base, the need to increase pay, the value of flexibility, and concerns about quality.

The major pluses faculty see for students are the possibility of completing the degree faster, greater access during the academic year because of pressures relieved during Summer, and greater total access to Western. On the other hand, a few faculty offered reasons why attending school four quarters per year might be disadvantageous to students.

The issue of professional quality represents the faculty's major hesitation concerning the year-round school concept. Many faculty indicated they need the Summer (or other term) for research, reading and reflection, class preparation, and rejuvenation. Some argue that Western should not allow, much less encourage, its faculty to work four quarters per year because doing so undermines the faculty roles of scholarly productivity and staying abreast of current developments in each field. Faculty are particularly adamant that teaching four quarters should not be required. Mutually reinforcing are comments placing value on faculty scholarly activity--including publication and reading to stay abreast of the field--and concern for maintaining high teaching quality over the long haul. Other comments emphasize the value of taking one quarter away from teaching, but express the value of flexibility as to which quarter is taken off.

As reported above, the concern for faculty quality and scholarship is much more often expressed by tenured and tenure-track faculty than by others. Non-tenure-track and temporary

faculty are more likely to support expanding the Summer Session and to offer comments encouraging the expansion of access to students.

Table 1. Open-ended Comments Offered by Faculty (n=135)

<u>Professional quality concerns</u>	40.8	<u>Improving access for students</u>	39.1
No time for research, field work	18.5	Use facilities more efficiently	12.6
No time for reflection, rest, rejuvenation	3.7	Improved class access fall, winter, spring	11.1
Faculty burn out/too much work already	3.7	Better degree progress	6.5
The quality of teaching would decrease	3.0	Increase # of students WWU can serve	5.9
Need Summer for research	3.0	Better support/rapport w/summer students	1.5
Should not be allowed to teach 4 qtrs.yr	2.2	Help K-12 teacher access	1.5
No time for class preparation	1.5	<u>Expanding faculty size</u>	12.7
No time for reading/staying current in field	1.5	Good to have more positions	3.0
No time to take classes/work other programs	1.5	Too many temp staff lowers quality	3.0
Other referring to negative affect on quality	2.2	Opposed if more temporary faculty needed	3.0
<u>Comments regarding pay</u>	13.3	General comments about expanding faculty	2.2
Pay must rise to same as academic year	11.9	Expansion positions = full-time/tenure track	1.5
Summer less demanding, pay less than full	1.4	<u>12-mo. not good for students</u>	8.8
<u>Choice of quarters to work</u>	10.4	Need summer income	5.9
Welcome flexibility of choosing quarter off	6.7	Better to take break (family, rest, etc.)	2.2
Would do only with choice of quarter off	1.5	Fee structure bad for summer students	0.7
Ability to work three or four quarters good	1.5	<u>Preferred summer schedule</u>	6.7
Choices should be planned ahead	0.7	Must be equal to a regular term	3.0
<u>Global/other comments</u>	n/a	Favor 2 five-wk or 1 six-week course	2.2
Like the idea	33.3	Good for field intensive classes	1.5
Teaching 4 quarters should not be required	11.1	<u>Summer session quality</u>	5.1
Don't like the idea	7.4	Should not be light-weight (pop culture, etc.)	3.7
Have taught summers and didn't like it	3.7	Quality problems at present	1.4
No good for my department	3.7	<u>Curricular flexibility</u>	3.7
Very good for my department	3.0	Opportunity to try new courses	2.2
Other comments	5.0	Able to provide more GURs	1.5

THE SUMMER COURSE SCHEDULE

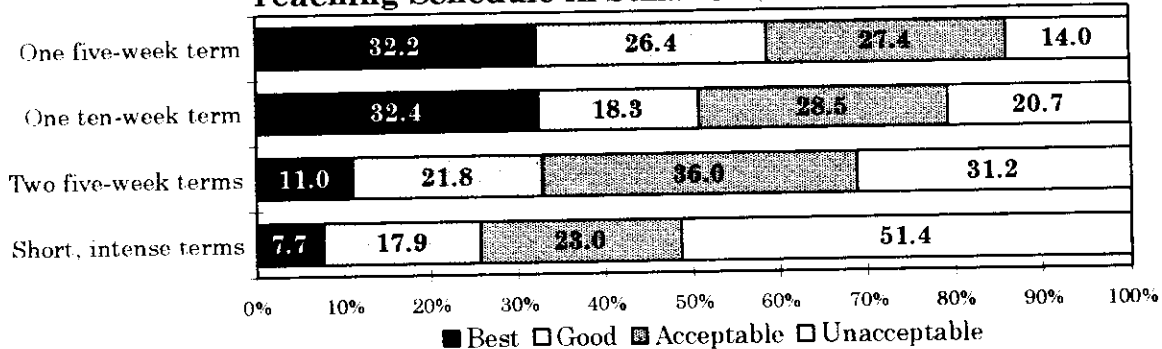
Finally, the survey asked for teaching schedule preferences. Given that terms would presumably expand to the equivalent of ten-week quarters under an expanded Summer Session but that many students and faculty might prefer a portion of Summer free, two five-week terms offer a reasonable alternative possibility. In addition, intensive, short courses have always been possible under Summer schedule, given lower enrollment pressures than during the academic year. Figure 6 shows faculty preferences for their own teaching schedules, confirming the value of offering both five- and ten-week schedules. While about one-third of faculty see ten-week

terms as the best schedule, an equal number see the best schedule as teaching a single five-week term. Others see teaching two consecutive five week terms as best.

Survey of WWU Faculty Re: Expanding Summer Session to "Year-Round"

Faculty Preferences for Their Own Teaching Schedule in Summer (n=329)

Figure 6



It is also of some interest that teaching in one ten-week session is of markedly greater interest to those who plan part-time than full-time teaching. Full-time teachers are much more favorable to teaching one five-week session. Whereas one might have thought that the "part-time" response referred to teaching one course two hours per day for five weeks and then having the remainder of the summer for other activities, in fact, part-time teachers more often want one hour per day for a longer period and full-time teachers more often envision teaching as much as four or five hours per day for a five-week period followed by, or preceded by, a Summer break.

CONCLUSION

While it may not be fair to reduce the complexity of concerns expressed by faculty responses to this survey, it appears that three major issues direct many faculty responses. The first is concern for student access and time to degree. The second is a concern that faculty receive appropriate remuneration for teaching during Summer Session. The third is that the quality of scholarship/creative endeavor and teaching is not undermined by teaching four quarters per year. There appears to be very widespread support for student access, as illustrated by the high levels of support for expanding Summer Session even among those who have no interest in teaching Summers. Beyond that, support or opposition to an expanded Summer Session and the intention to teach Summers or not seems to rest on the balance between the value on additional income versus the value of scholarly reflection and productivity. One sees this especially in the case of tenure-track faculty, for whom scholarly production is re-emphasized by formal organizational rules concerning achieving tenure.

The trade off between income and scholarship suggests one final caveat to the findings. The accuracy of the projections from this survey will probably be influenced by the proportion of faculty who are temporary in any given year and by the extent to which faculty salaries continue to lose purchasing power, as has occurred for the past half-decade. More temporary faculty and greater concerns about income will raise interest in teaching Summers, while the reverse will reduce interest.

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