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# WWU Faculty Survey Concerning Semester versus Quarter Schedules, Fall 1995

Western Washington University. Office of Survey Research

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**WWU Faculty Survey Concerning Semester versus Quarter Schedules, Fall 1995**

1. Please indicate whether or not you have had each of the following types of experience with semester systems:

	YES	NO
a. Attended undergraduate or graduate school in semester system	1	2
b. Close friend or family member attended or taught in semester system	1	2
c. Taught in semester system	1	2

IF TAUGHT IN SEMESTER, How many years? \_\_\_\_\_ years

Most semester systems have some qualities in common, but there are also many variants. For the next question to be as unambiguous as possible, please assume certain characteristics of semester systems as given, even though they are not always present: two 15-16 week instructional periods, 120 credits for graduation and a 15 credit per semester full load in order to finish "on time" in four years, full-time students take more courses of fewer credits per course than in quarter systems, and each course lasts longer (15 weeks) but meets fewer days per week than in quarter systems, consistent with the smaller number of credits per course.

2. Recognizing that there is no single "semester system" and that many issues require debate before Western could ever move to a semester system, the Faculty Senate nonetheless needs to learn how the faculty feel, about the broad issue of semester systems versus quarter systems. Please use the scale in the box below to compare the semester system with Western's quarter system on the series of criteria listed below. (Answer by circling the appropriate numbers.)

ANSWER SCALE	
1	= Semester plan much better; definitely more desirable
2	= Semester plan probably somewhat better
3	= Both are equally acceptable
4	= Quarter system probably somewhat better
5	= Quarter system much better; semester plan objectionable
0	= Don't know

	Semester / Quarter					
a. Students' ability to master the materials in the courses you teach	1	2	3	4	5	0
b. Students' ability to complete your course assignments, projects, & labs	1	2	3	4	5	0
c. Students' ability to move through your department's course of study on schedule	1	2	3	4	5	0
d. The academic quality and completeness of your department's curriculum	1	2	3	4	5	0
e. The quality of your instruction	1	2	3	4	5	0
f. How effectively the courses in your department could be scheduled, both for students and for faculty	1	2	3	4	5	0
g. Your total teaching work load	1	2	3	4	5	0
h. How well your course schedule would allow you to manage your research and/or service activities	1	2	3	4	5	0
i. The overall desirability of the semester system vs. the quarter system	1	2	3	4	5	0
j. Other criteria (Specify): _____	1	2	3	4	5	0

The following questions ask for your comparative evaluations of certain variants among possible semester systems. The questions are in no way intended to imply that Western should change to semesters; they are intended only to clarify the debate if enough faculty desire a semester system to merit further debate.

3. **The early vs. the late schedule:** One major variant on the semester system involves the *early* versus the *late* schedule. The early schedule typically begins at the end of August or first of September, with the first semester ending in late December and the second in mid-May. The late (or "traditional") schedule begins in late September, with the first semester ending in late January and the second in mid-June. Please indicate below which of these two schedules you would prefer in the event that Western were to move to a semester system.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Early schedule is definitely more desirable | 1 |
| Early schedule is probably more desirable   | 2 |
| The two are equal / I am undecided          | 3 |
| Late schedule is probably more desirable    | 4 |
| Late schedule is definitely more desirable  | 5 |

4. **The 4-1-4 schedule:** An additional variant, common enough to merit inclusion, is the 4-1-4 schedule. This schedule includes one standard semester from early Sept. through late Dec., a special four week session for more intensive course experiences during the month of January, and a second standard semester from the end of January to early June. Please indicate below whether you consider the 4-1-4 schedule more or less desirable than semester systems offering only two standard semesters.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| The 4-1-4 schedule is definitely more desirable                 | 1 |
| The 4-1-4 schedule is probably more desirable                   | 2 |
| The two are equal / I am undecided                              | 3 |
| The standard two semester schedule is probably more desirable   | 4 |
| The standard two semester schedule is definitely more desirable | 5 |

5. **Higher credits vs. lower credits:** A major variant on the semester system involves the assignment of credits to courses. Most semester schools tend to emphasize either 3 credit courses, with 5 courses meeting 15 hours per week constituting a typical full load of 15 credits, or 4 credit courses with four courses meeting 16 hours per week constituting a typical full load. This creates the two variants below, each with different implications for how Western courses would be translated from their current quarter credit levels, with consequent implications for curricula and for teaching schedules.

◇ **Higher credits per course:** a 5 credit quarter course would typically change to a 4 credit semester course (4 hours of class per week for 15 weeks; a 4 credit quarter course might become a 3 credit semester course, etc.). An annual quarter system teaching load of, say, 30 quarter hours would presumably become a load of about 20 semester hours, which might translate to five four-credit courses, eight classroom hours one semester and twelve the next. (Courses need not all be four credits; this is an example only.)

◊ Lower credits per course : a 5 credit quarter course would typically become a 3 credit semester course (3 hours of class per week for 15 weeks); a 4 credit quarter course might become 2 or 3 credits, etc. A teaching load of 20 semester hours per year would translate to six three credit courses and one two credit semester course, nine classroom hours one semester and eleven the next. (Again, this is an example only.)

Please indicate below which of these two variants you would prefer in the event that Western were to move to a semester system.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| The higher credits per course variant is definitely more desirable | 1 |
| The higher credits per course variant is probably more desirable   | 2 |
| The two are equal / I am undecided                                 | 3 |
| The lower credits per course variant is probably more desirable    | 4 |
| The lower credits per course variant is definitely more desirable  | 5 |

6. **Summary Evaluation:** Questions 3-5 asked you to compare semester variants. More importantly, the next question asks for your summary evaluation of each of the five semester variants described by those questions with Western's current quarter system.

**ANSWER SCALE**

- 1 = Semester plan much better; definitely more desirable  
 2 = Semester plan probably somewhat better  
 3 = Both are equally acceptable  
 4 = Quarter system probably somewhat better  
 5 = Quarter system much better; semester plan objectionable  
 0 = Don't know

Please indicate how each of the five semester variants below compares to Western's current quarter system, in your opinion, using the scale boxed above.

	Semester / Quarter					
<b>Variant 1:</b> <i>Early</i> schedule, <i>higher</i> credit semester	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>Variant 2:</b> <i>Early</i> schedule, <i>lower</i> credit semester	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>Variant 3:</b> <i>Late</i> schedule, <i>higher</i> credit semester	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>Variant 4:</b> <i>Late</i> schedule, <i>lower</i> credit semester	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>Variant 5:</b> The 4 - 1 - 4 semester	1	2	3	4	5	0

7. In your opinion, should the Western Faculty Senate move to the stage of actively debating a possible change to some form of semester system?

1. Definitely      2. Probably      3. Undecided      4. Probably not      5. Definitely not

8. In your opinion, should Western change to some form of semester system?

1. Definitely      2. Probably      3. Undecided      4. Probably not      5. Definitely not

9. Please indicate whether you agree, are undecided, or disagree with each of the following statements about a possible transition from quarter to semester system:

	Agree	Undec.	Disagree
a. The disruption to my teaching and preparation would be very serious	1	2	3
b. Healthy curricular reform is a likely result	1	2	3
c. Teaching loads are likely to become lighter as a result	1	2	3
d. Teaching loads are likely to become heavier as a result	1	2	3
e. The disruption to my department's curriculum planning would be serious	1	2	3
f. The transition would probably stir up some valuable intellectual excitement	1	2	3
g. Student-faculty contact would be increased as a result	1	2	3

10. Please indicate whether your appointment is:

1. Tenured      2. Tenure-track      3. Non-Tenure-track      4. Temporary

11. Is your appointment:

1. Full-time      2. Part-time      3. Part teaching, part release for other duties

12. Which of the following best describes your collegiate unit?

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| College of Arts and Sciences, Humanities     | 1  |
| College of Arts and Sciences, Math/Science   | 2  |
| College of Arts and Sciences, Social Science | 3  |
| College of Arts and Sciences, Applied areas  | 4  |
| College of Business and Economics            | 5  |
| College of Fine and Performing Arts          | 6  |
| Fairhaven College                            | 7  |
| Huxley College                               | 8  |
| Woodring College of Education                | 9  |
| Off-campus programs (from any unit above)    | 10 |

13. How many years have you taught at Western? \_\_\_\_\_ years

14. How many years have you taught in higher education other than at Western? \_\_\_\_\_ years

15. If you have any specific concerns or comments either for or against considering a change to semesters, please include them on a separate type-written sheet.

Thank you for completing this survey. Please fold it so that the Office of Survey Research label is showing, staple it, and put it in the campus mail.

Note: It will take 1-2 months for all data to come in, the survey to be analyzed, and results made available to the Faculty Senate.

If you wish to receive a summary of findings, please include your name and mail stop below. This sheet will be removed from your questionnaire upon receipt.

Mail tracking number \_\_\_\_\_

Note: this page will be removed from the questionnaire upon receipt.

TO:

OFFICE OF SURVEY RESEARCH  
WWU CAMPUS MAIL  
MS 9081

----- Fold here and staple. Thanks. -----