



Student Schedule Preference Survey Results

Summary

- No clear majority appeared in calendar preferences between 18 and 16 weeks with many undecided students and many varied opinions
- ESL students may have a stronger preference for 18 week semesters citing work and childcare scheduling difficulties and too fast of a pace with a 16 week calendar
- Positive opinions about moving to 16 weeks centered around longer intersessions, later Fall start, ability to have a full load in two days, and having more time for work, family, and recreation
- Negative opinions about moving to 16 weeks included concerns about impact on work and childcare schedules and the more rapid pace
- It appears at least some students may be adversely affected by the change at least in the short term and so to mitigate these impacts, additional support services should be identified for these students to assist during the calendar transition if one occurs

Prepared by Terrence Willett, Director of Research
Kathy Campbell, ESL instructor
December 7, 2004

Introduction and Methods

Students were surveyed as to their opinion about moving to a 16 week calendar from the current 18 week calendar. Survey results include 6 ESL classes (ESL 510A, 510B, 523, 541, 553, and 562) and 11 non-Basic Skills non-ESL classes and 2 Basic Skills classes (ENGL440, MATH402) (AH180, CHEM1A, COS202, CSIS181, ENGL1C, HIST1 (2 sections), MATH205, MATH8A, SOC21, SPAN1A) and the Associated Student Body are shown here. For ESL students, the survey was given in either English or Spanish depending upon each student's native language, level, and preference. Classes were randomly selected within strata to represent a mix of times and locations as well as vocational versus academic. A total of 441 students responded with 322 non-ESL students and 119 ESL students. This results in a margin of error of least 5% overall and at least 6% for non-ESL respondents and 119 for ESL respondents.

Results

A total count of preference was created based upon ESL students comprising roughly 9% of the student population not taking into account member of the police or fire academies. ESL and non-ESL students showed quite different response patterns (Table 1) with ESL students being far less likely to support moving to a 16 week calendar. Basic skills and non-basic skills students had the same preference proportions.

Part of the survey asked respondents to rate their degree of agreement, if applicable, to a series of statements about moving to a 16 week calendar. Of ESL students, 64% (76 students) indicated they would have problems with their jobs, 53% (63 students) indicated they would have difficulties arranging childcare, 85% (101 students) indicated they would not attend classes between 1-4 PM, and 61% (73 students) indicated the 16 week semester would move too fast.

For non-ESL students, in general, results were varied with many issues being of concern to at least a sizable minority of students and only about 35% indicating they felt they knew how the change would affect them (Table 2). Reviewing the agreements, it appeared the strongest agreements were with liking the idea of having a longer winter intersession, a later Fall start, and being able to take a full load in two days. The issue of most concern appeared to be a 16 week semester being too fast. For those who indicated they had children or jobs, many indicated concern about impacts on childcare and work

schedules. There also appeared to be disagreement with attending classes between 1pm and 4pm but from some of the open response comments it appeared that at least some students misinterpreted the question and thought that classes would be offered only between 1pm and 4pm.

Two differences between basic skills and non-basic skills students were apparent in their agreements. Non-basic skills students were more likely to agree that taking a full load in fewer days would be a benefit of moving to 16 weeks ($t(288) = -2.54, p = 0.012$) while basic skills students were more likely to agree that a 16 week semester would move too quickly ($t(307) = 2.14, p = 0.033$).

ESL students wrote comments pertaining to the issues of jobs, childcare, the quicker pace, and length of time off school with selected statements shown in Table 3. Open response comments from non-ESL students are summarized (Table 4) and shown in full on the following pages (Table 5). Non-ESL student comments about changing to a 16 week calendar appeared to have five major themes. Many referred to the amount of time available with some focusing on having less time in the term to study and others noting more time outside of the term for work, family, and recreation. Others referred to the pace of the semester in both negative and positive terms. Some discussed scheduling and class availability hoping that more sections would be offered to offset the perceived impact of block scheduling. Finally, a few cited potential work conflicts while others noted the convenience of Gavilan's calendar being more similar to K-12 calendars.

Conclusion

Student opinions about changing Gavilan's calendar are quite varied. There would appear to be benefit in continuing campus dialogue about this potential change to give students more information and opportunity for input. In addition, it appears at least some students may be adversely affected by the change at least in the short term. To mitigate these impacts, additional support services should be identified for these students to assist during the transition if one occurs.

Table 1. Overall calendar preferences of Gavilan Students.

Calendar Preference	non-ESL Students		ESL Students		ESL Students and non-ESL students weighted by enrollment
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Weighted Total Percent
18 week calendar	85	26%	88	74%	31%
16 week calendar	134	42%	21	18%	39%
No preference	41	13%	4	3%	12%
I'd like more information before I decide	62	19%	6	5%	18%
Total	322	100%	119	100%	100%

The margin of error for non-ESL respondents is at least $\pm 6\%$, at least $\pm 9\%$ for ESL respondents, and at least $\pm 5\%$ for all respondents combined.

Table 2. Agreements with statements about moving to a 16 week calendar.

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree	NA	Mean Agreement
I would like starting the Fall semester later.	24%	4%	14%	16%	37%	6%			3.40
I would not be able to work at my job as much as I would like.	17%	12%	17%	8%	20%	27%			3.01
I would like having a longer winter intersession.	15%	4%	15%	14%	44%	7%			3.73
I would have difficulty arranging my childcare schedule.	16%	3%	6%	4%	12%	58%			2.83
I would like being able to take a full load in fewer days.	21%	7%	13%	16%	34%	10%			3.38
I think the semester would move too fast.	26%	14%	18%	12%	25%	4%			2.96
I would attend classes between 1 pm and 4 pm.	28%	10%	19%	12%	17%	13%			2.77
I don't think it would affect me very much.	29%	13%	21%	14%	16%	7%			2.74
I don't know how it would affect me.	25%	10%	21%	13%	16%	15%			2.83

Table 3. Selected open response comments by ESL students.

Preference	Comments
18 week	We need daily practice.
18 week	We will learn more in 18 weeks.
18 week	We won't have time for homework in the 16 week schedule.
18 week	I won't have time for lab.
18 week	I won't have time for lunch.
18 week	It's too much stress.
18 week	There's not enough time to see instructors for extra help.
18 week	Teachers would move too fast.
18 week	We need more childcare hours at the center – especially for single moms.
18 week	We want more time with Gavilan's good teachers!
16 week	I can work more on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
16 week	I'd have to pay more for childcare with the 18 week schedule.
16 week	I would have a longer summer vacation.
16 week	I can work more in the summer.

Table 4. Summary of comments by non-ESL students.

Affect of 16 week calendar	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Amount of time available	17		15
Pace	11		6
Class schedule	12	6	4
Work schedule	4		
Match K-12			6

Table 5. Open response comments by non-ESL students.

Preference	Comments
Unknown	Learning less.
Unknown	That we have less time for assignments and exams, which I do not like but overall I think 16 week is ok.
18 week	16 week is ok but 18 weeks allows enough time to study and learn comfortably. The more days we are in school, the more money the school receives, which is a good thing.
18 week	Benefit is longer vacation. Disadvantage is lesser educational knowledge.
18 week	Classes would go way too fast! I have trouble keeping up with them because I have a full time job 45 hours a week. I think a lot of people have full time jobs at Gavilan it would just make it harder for everybody.
18 week	Don't change to a 16 week semester.
18 week	I am in a 1600 program. The more time in a semester is critical we need the time to complete the program it would screw everything up!
18 week	I do better I classes that I have 3-5 days a week. I need the consistency and regularity.
18 week	I don't like having less time during the semester.
18 week	I don't like the idea to check to 16 week because isn't enough time for to study.
18 week	I don't see any difference. Extra two weeks is ok for some of us who are slow in learning therefore if shortened by two weeks it would affect me.
18 week	I don't see any other benefits for my classes.
18 week	I don't see any real benefit unless you're a student who could work full time for longer amounts of time. It makes classes longer and later if you go at night as I do.
18 week	I don't see benefits for the reason such as semester move too fast.
18 week	I don't think we should have block schedule.
18 week	I have a full time job and can only take classes after 5pm
18 week	I like the fact that I can work after school and go to the school in the morning. Nobody would be able to go to school because they work before their kids are out of school.
18 week	I like the way it is now. I don't think that it should be changed.
18 week	I think is no benefits with 16 week.
18 week	I think students would get overwhelmed and burnt out quicker if the semester is switched to 16 weeks.

Preference	Comments
18 week	I would just seem too rushed and overwhelming. I do not like this idea at all. (pre-nursing student)
18 week	I wouldn't want one rather go to school and get it done over with.
18 week	I wouldn't want it [16 week calendar]!
18 week	If you go block scheduling, I will transfer. It sucks as a teacher and sucks for students. I am both at this and another school.
18 week	I'm afraid that with the 16 week class I would have a harder time learning new things and I would be forced to take fewer classes because of my heavy work schedule.
18 week	Instructors review too long, there would be less new material learned. Block schedules do not give students options to work and be with families. One time offered for each class is absurd! Freedom of choice!
18 week	It will be harder when you miss a class to catch up. Less time to absorb the info over the semester. Compromising to my work schedule. I don't like afternoon classes.
18 week	It would make things more complicated! I feel it's fine the way it is.
18 week	Keep it the way it is!!!
18 week	Keep it the way it is.
18 week	Keep it the way it is.
18 week	Less time = subjects can't be covered as in-depth
18 week	Less time for people to grasp concepts. It would cause problems especially with math classes.
18 week	Need it at 18 weeks!!
18 week	No benefits having a 16 week semester.
18 week	The 2 additional weeks would aid in retaining the information better.
18 week	There are too many block classes.
18 week	Too much work to do in so little time.
18 week	Too much work, probably not have enough time to study for exams.
18 week	would classes that require prerequisites be offered and more instructors employed rather than waiting one year for the course to be offered
18 week	Yes, I like it the way it is, so keep it!
16 week	16 week would give me more free time. I would also have time to take care of my family and spend time with them instead of being stuck in school so long.
16 week	Benefit=more time for registration so people aren't still registering 2 weeks into the semester
16 week	Don't really like the fact that we would end right before Christmas.
16 week	Easier to transfer to other schools.
16 week	Faster moving classes may mean student grades may fall due to too much-too fast.
16 week	Having classes regularly will help me remember more of the material we go over I class.
16 week	How much more demanding will classes be?
16 week	How would this affect those receiving financial aide?
16 week	I disagree to change because I like more time and schedule that have now.

Preference	Comments
16 week	I have attended a JC with a 16 week schedule. MW or TTh classes enable students to have longer weekends with less class missed or "ditched". Semesters are very focused on completion and there is no lag time to lose track of the subject matter.
16 week	I just hope that more classes are offered (e.g. Biology) each semester.
16 week	I think it is a huge benefit. So the classes are 10 minutes longer? - perfect! Saves the students 2 weeks from school-the faster we move the better.
16 week	I think it would be nice to only go to school a couple of days a week.
16 week	I think it would benefit students because they tend to do worse if they have a lot of time to mess around. This will be a little more rushed and students will do it because they'll fall behind so quickly.
16 week	I think we should go to 10 week quarters.
16 week	I work at a public school before and after school. It would benefit me greatly to have a more similar schedule to them.
16 week	I work at a public school in before and after school care. It would be helpful to me to have a more similar schedule to them because when they have time off I work all day. If the schedule are very different I miss a lot of class.
16 week	I would like to be able to begin my semester at the same time my children begin school. In the way it is now, we begin earlier which leaves less family time during the summer break.
16 week	I would like to see the classes start at the same time in August and end earlier in December.
16 week	It allows me to achieve my goals faster with a 16 week calendar.
16 week	It would be great to have shorter semester but I cannot take courses starting at 1:00 to 4:00, I work full time 7:00 to 3:30. I would like classes that start later if more were offered.
16 week	It would just benefit us better for winter or summer sessions if we need to take classes, which I like.
16 week	It would move much faster and I think it is better.
16 week	Less time to fall behind.
16 week	Longer break between semesters.
16 week	Longer breaks-more motivation during school.
16 week	More like a university schedule (out when other friends are out)
16 week	More offers in classes for Winter/Summer break.
16 week	More time to ourselves.
16 week	More time to party.
16 week	More time to think about what we want/have to take.
16 week	More time to work or go on vacation.
16 week	More weeks off during the year is a plus, more time for work, family, vacations, and yourself.
16 week	My only concern is instructors don't seem to follow their existing syllabi as it is. How will we be able to catch up with 16 weeks as opposed to 18 weeks? Instructors need to follow syllabus.
16 week	My preference would be to begin in August as usual then finish earlier as

Preference	Comments
	December is always a really busy time.
16 week	No but I like the idea. Gives me more work hours.
16 week	Parking may be an issue since more students will be here at one time. I think that a little longer class would be ok because 50 minutes is a bit short. What would happen with 5 unit classes? Would they be a lot longer?
16 week	The 16 week calendar would benefit me by resembling the elementary calendar so I can be on the same track as my son's schedule.
16 week	The only concern I have about the 16 week semester is that I hope that evening classes would still be available because I have a daughter and I work and evenings are the only time I can take classes.
16 week	To work load being to intense
16 week	Too close in between exams etc.
16 week	We would have more free time to relax before another semester starts.
16 week	Would it make any difference to late start or short classes?
16 week	Yes, more class time and more time for registration.
No preference	16 week would allow more options for classes during summer and winter sessions. What would be best though are more online classes.
No preference	16 weeks should offer more classes for students to take and able to complete their program sooner.
No preference	It would provide me more time off for work and vacation.
No preference	Less time to study and complete course but probably not too much impact
No preference	no
No preference	No it sucks
More information	Having a 16 week semester would take away the beneficial time we have for each class. This time gives the students more room to take in the lesson. Instead of it being rushed through and not getting the information, which would happen in a 16 week semester
More information	I hope that the amount of courses offered in Morgan Hill will either increase or stay the same.
More information	I like the fact of 16 weeks. I don't like the scheduling though. Because I work too I would to be out of classes by 1 pm (still being able to take 16 units) but that can't be done with this 16 week style.
More information	I seriously don't know the difference only a few weeks short if it would affect test or the pace of the class it's self.
More information	I work from 9:30 to 4:00. I can't take classes from 1 to 4 and balancing school and work and children is so hard as it is. I hope you take this into consideration when you make your decision.
More information	I would also like more on-line classes. More summer and winter intersession classes o be added as well.
More information	I would not like classes to be over an hour in length.
More information	I would want the option of going from maybe 11 to 2 instead of the 1-4 as proposed above.
More information	If classes are only offered in certain block days, those of us who work full time and work evenings will be at a disadvantage.

Preference	Comments
More information	If the classes I wanted or needed were only offered between 1 and 4 I would not be able to play softball, which is important to me.
More information	Less time for courses and preparation of test.
More information	My main concern is for remedial and ESL students. I think the semester would move too quickly for them as well as students with disabilities. I don't think we should sacrifice these students for the extra money we will receive.
More information	No I'm not sure
More information	Not being able to work as much, more classes in one day. A lot more work with fewer days.
More information	Ok except for those with disabilities. Will they be able to adapt?
More information	Overall, it seems like a good idea However, I would miss taking morning classes but block scheduling would be good.
More information	The nursing program and other state regulated programs might suffer
More information	Work schedule would be my greatest concern.