Dear Colleagues,

This is the second edition of the QSU newsletter, which will update you each month on the issues involved in converting Ohio State’s academic calendar from quarters to semesters.

This month we will bring you the latest on the activities of a number of the groups at work on the calendar conversion. But first, we want to launch what will become a regular QSU item, a feature on matters of special interest to students.

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**QSU and You: The Quarter-to-Semester Update for Students**

*By Peter Koltak, former USG President*

*Member, Semester Conversion Communications Subcommittee*

A coordinating committee has been developed to help guide the conversion to semesters. The subcommittees that will tackle the big issues for our transition period include:

- **Advising:** How will you manage your academic career during the transition? This subcommittee will ensure that academic advisers are well trained and readily available to answer your questions about your coursework and the semester conversion.
- **Technology:** Ohio State’s information systems, including the SIS, will need to be transitioned to the new calendar. This subcommittee will ensure that you can continue to use Ohio State’s technological resources to successfully manage your academic career.
- **Curriculum:** The move to semesters means a major change in curriculum at OSU. This subcommittee will focus on the need to update our various academic programs, including the GEC.
- **Graduate Education:** Graduate students have important concerns about what semesters mean for them. This subcommittee will deal with those issues.

In addition to these subcommittees and others, designated representatives in
each academic unit will help guide the transition.

Questions? Thoughts? Concerns? We want to know what is on your mind. Please e-mail Assistant Provost Jay Johnson.

Updates:

**Coordinating Committee.** The Semester Conversion Coordinating Committee, now meeting monthly, will direct and monitor the calendar conversion process, interact with its seven subcommittees that are tasked with specific conversion issues, and be responsible for all key decisions. Key issues for its on-going discussions will include faculty and graduate student workload; the May term, both as it impacts workload and the types of courses to be offered; and a transition plan for student advising. A **Nine-Month Faculty Appointments Task Force** convened by Vice Provost Susan Williams will make recommendations concerning faculty workload, including the May term. We will report on the work of this task force and on the May term in an upcoming QSU.

The Coordinating Committee has agreed that as courses and programs are being redesigned, academic units should be encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to take stock of what they do in the classroom and to revise and rethink the curriculum. It may be that much of the new curriculum will look very much like the old curriculum, or that the curriculum will be substantially redesigned. In either case, Ohio State should move forward with pedagogical practices and designs that the faculty have collectively and consciously chosen, not simply inherited.

**Curriculum Subcommittee.** The Curriculum Subcommittee is made up of the curricular associate deans from all of the colleges. It meets on a biweekly basis to discuss how each academic unit is approaching semester conversion, to identify any cross-college issues that need to be addressed, and to advise the Coordinating Committee and the Office of Academic Affairs on important conversion process issues, such as templates for course/program submissions, the May term, and academic unit transition plans for students whose programs start on quarters but end on semesters. The subcommittee is not charged with approval responsibility because the steps in the review process for courses and program proposals will not change as a result of the semester conversion. After the conversion process is complete, this group intends to continue to meet for ongoing dialogue about curriculum development and change.

Working closely with the Curriculum Subcommittee is the **University-Level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum** (ULAC). This
subcommittee of the University Senate Council on Academic Affairs is charged with monitoring the GEC and making recommendations for improvements as warranted. In consultation with representatives from the Arts and Sciences Committee on Curriculum and Instruction and the Office of Academic Affairs, the University Senate faculty leadership recommended to the Council on Academic Affairs that ULAC make recommendations about the semester-based structure of general education. ULAC is meeting weekly during autumn 2009. Please see http://oaa.osu.edu/caa/ULAC-GECHome.php for meeting details and ULAC membership, which has been expanded to include additional helpful voices in the calendar conversion conversation.

Recommendations for a “shell” (the possible size and scope of the GEC) are expected to be completed by the end of autumn 2009, with additional details to follow as soon as possible thereafter. The proposed shell will enable departments to further develop their own semester conversion plans. The Provost has met with the committee and indicated that a financial buffer will be in place to hold departments harmless for any unintended consequences created by changes to the general education program.

**Space Subcommittee.** This subcommittee’s charge is to assure that Ohio State’s classroom environment can support a semester calendar. The groundwork for its efforts was laid in early 2008, when the university contracted with Ira Fink & Associates to do a comprehensive study of Ohio State’s instructional environment. In addition to working with faculty and students on how classrooms could be improved, the company also studied Ohio State’s current use of its classrooms and made suggestions that will assist in the transition to semesters. In the semester system — as in the quarter system — the most-needed spaces will be classrooms with technology, large lecture halls, and instructional labs. To be prepared for any changes in the size of individual classes and number of sections, the university has begun an initiative to install a projector and computer capabilities in all of its classroom pool spaces.

Moreover, a number of projects and partnerships have added seats to lecture halls, added available lecture hall space at prime instructional time, added a new 200-seat lecture hall to the classroom pool, and launched a partnership for classes in the Gateway Theater complex. As a result, the Fink & Associates study found that Ohio State is well equipped to manage such changes. The pattern of course offerings will be another important focus of the Space Subcommittee. The group will hold continuing discussions with colleges to gauge the impact of weekly course offerings on instructional space so that the university can respond as needed. The instructional space study may be found at: http://www.ureg.ohio-state.edu/ourweb/scheduling/spacestudyfinalreport.pdf.

As you can see, processes are being defined and orderly steps planned to ensure that the conversion to semesters is transparent and that the process moves
smoothly and expediently towards implementation in autumn, 2012. With that in mind, a set of town meetings will be held during winter quarter to provide all of you with opportunities for general discussion of the calendar conversion. The next QSU will contain details.

Meanwhile, please check the calendar conversion website for ongoing updates.

With warmest wishes for the upcoming holidays,

Sincerely,

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Questions or comments about the transition to the semester calendar?
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