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## Proposal to the Senate Educational Policy Committee

**PROPOSAL TITLE:** Establish a formal Winter Session in the 2014-2015 Academic Calendar

**SPONSORS:**

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**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:**

The campus seeks to establish a formal Winter Session in the 2014-2015 Academic Calendar. The purpose is to offer a small number of high-demand undergraduate courses for students who are seeking an opportunity to meet degree requirements and possibly reduce their overall time to degree completion. All courses offered during the Winter Session will be delivered online by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign faculty.

**JUSTIFICATION:**

In recent years, online courses have been increasingly utilized by Illinois students, especially undergraduates. While online courses have long been the backbone of our distance learning graduate and professional programs, online course registrations by undergraduate students now outnumber graduate registrations. Our undergraduate students tell us they prefer Illinois online courses to other alternatives because of the high quality of Illinois courses, and because taking an Illinois course eliminates concerns about transfer articulation. While summer has been the most popular time for residential students to take online courses, Winter Session offerings provide students an additional opportunity to earn credit hours. Some students may be looking for ways to reduce time to degree, others may be looking to lighten a traditional semester course load, and others may be interested in access to a particular high-demand course. While the reasons for

choosing to take a course during the Winter Session may vary, students will have access to the high quality instruction they have come to expect from the University of Illinois.

Growing Winter Session offerings at other institutions suggest that a number of students are seeking opportunities to take courses between academic semesters. Students, in consultation with academic advisors, can determine if taking a course during the Winter Session is a good choice for them. The campus will continue to support other options for students to earn course credit, including concurrent enrollment with the area community colleges as well as transfer articulation agreements.

The 2014-2015 Winter Session is proposed as a pilot, and the campus is committed to providing a detailed evaluation of the session to the Senate before determining whether to propose future Winter Sessions. Factors to be considered include enrollment, student success, impact on college office operations, and costs. Feedback for students and faculty will be a critical element in the review process.

All proposed Winter Session offerings will be delivered online. High quality teaching and learning in a shortened format will be ensured by carefully following roadmaps in place from peer institutions. The Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning's Instructional Design team has conducted research on the best pedagogical and design practices in short-format (4-week) courses. Interviews with these peer institutions and independent research has produced a roadmap for high-quality course design, development and delivery. Best practices such as structured pre-course online orientation, highly detailed syllabi and course calendars, high-touch support, rapid assignment feedback, and student-to-student problem-solving forums are examples of strategies used by peers to achieve successful learning outcomes in short-format online winter courses.

CITL and the pilot colleges will communicate the expectations of online winter courses with faculty and students up front to ensure that contact hours, course learning objectives, assessments, and content are consistent with campus standards. CITL will work with faculty, as they do for all courses, to think carefully about measurable course outcomes for the given timeframe and appropriate assignments when designing winter courses. Illinois winter courses will be developed with each weekday (~17 days per Winter Session) having the equivalent amount of contact hours as a traditional course week (~16 weeks per semester). Illinois has been engaged in online education for over 18 years. Since online students do not sit in a "seat" to obtain their contact hours, the contact time in online courses are commonly defined as engagement in learning experiences including: videos, lectures, quizzes, group synchronous work, online research, and participation in discussion boards.

The list of proposed courses along with answers to various questions about implementation are included in the attached FAQ.

**BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS:** *(Please respond to each of the following questions.)*

1) Resources

- a. How does the unit intend to financially support this proposal?

Tuition assessed for the Winter Session will cover instructional costs and, as enrollment grows, the Winter Session will generate revenue. Tuition will be assessed on a per-credit-hour basis as it is in the Summer Session. The Summer Session 2014 rate schedule will be used for Winter Session 2014-2015.

- b. How will the unit create capacity or surplus to appropriately resource this program? If applicable, what functions or programs will the unit no longer support to create capacity?

Each unit opting to offer a course will need to determine how the Winter Session will impact the instructor's teaching load. The Summer Session tuition model distributes a higher percentage of the tuition back to the College to help cover instructional costs. Units will likely factor Winter Session teaching into instructors' workload and compensation using the models they now use for other online course offerings.

- c. Will the unit need to seek campus or other external resources? If so, please provide a summary of the sources and an indication of the approved support.

No, external resources are not necessary. However, the Winter Session offerings will be marketed to non-degree students as well as degree-seeking students.

- d. Please provide a letter of acknowledgment from the college that outlines the financial arrangements for the proposed program.

The specifics of the financial arrangements are determined by the college on a course-by-course basis.

2) Resource Implications

- a. Please address the impact on faculty resources including the changes in numbers of faculty, class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratios, etc.

We do not expect that units would hire any additional faculty to staff Winter Session courses. Degree seeking students will not be able to apply to begin studies during the Winter Session; therefore student-faculty ratios will not be impacted. Class sizes will be determined by the instructors and will be based on best practices for online course delivery.

- b. Please address the impact on course enrollment in other units and provide an explanation of discussions with representatives of those units.

Winter Session courses would typically be courses where student demand during the spring and fall semesters exceeds the capacity of the unit's offerings. Thus, Winter Session courses could relieve some enrollment pressure on spring and fall sections, and allow more students to take the courses they want and need. Any enrollment shifts between winter, spring, fall, and summer would be felt only within the unit.

- c. Please address the impact on the University Library.

Winter Session offerings, as currently proposed, will not require new library resources.

- d. Please address the impact on technology and space (e.g. computer use, laboratory use, equipment, etc.).

Technical support for the courses will be provided by CITL as well as support from the colleges who have opted into the pilot (ATLAS in LAS and the eLearning Office in the College of Business). Students opting to enroll in the Winter Session will need access to a personal computer.

For new degree programs only:

- 3) Briefly describe how this program will support the University's mission, focus, and/or current priorities. Include specific objectives and measurable outcomes that demonstrate the program's consistency with and centrality to that mission.
- 4) Please provide an analysis of the market demand for this degree program. What market indicators are driving this proposal? What type of employment outlook should these graduates expect? What resources will be provided to assist students with job placement?
- 5) If this is a proposed graduate program, please discuss the programs intended use of waivers. If the program is dependent on waivers, how will the unit compensate for lost tuition revenue?

**DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE:**

The campus proposed to pilot the Winter Session in the 2014 – 2015 Academic Year. If approved, student registration would begin in November, 2014.

**STATEMENT FOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY CATALOG:**

If approved, the Academic Calendar will be updated accordingly.

**CLEARANCES:** (Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval. **These signatures must appear on a separate sheet.** If multiple departments or colleges are sponsoring the proposal, please add the appropriate signature lines below.)

Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Unit Representative:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
College Representative:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate College Representative:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Council on Teacher Education Representative:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

Fall Semester 2014	
Instruction Begins	Monday, August 25
Labor Day	Monday, September 1 (no classes)
Thanksgiving Vacation Begins	Saturday, November 22, 1 p.m.
Instruction Resumes	Monday, December 1, 7 a.m.
Instruction Ends	Wednesday, December 10
Reading Day	Thursday, December 11
Final Examinations Begin	Friday, December 12
End	Friday, December 19

Winter Session 2014-2015	
Instruction Begins	Monday, December 22
Christmas Day	Thursday, December 25 (no classes)
New Year's Day	Thursday, January 1 (no classes)
Final Examinations (final class day or following day)	Friday, January 16

Spring Semester 2015	
M.L. King Day	Monday, January 19 (no classes)
Instruction Begins	Tuesday, January 20
Spring Vacation Begins	Saturday, March 21, 1 p.m.
Instruction Resumes	Monday, March 30, 7 a.m.
Instruction Ends	Wednesday, May 6
Reading Day	Thursday, May 7
Final Examinations Begin	Friday, May 8
End	Friday, May 15
Commencement	Sunday, May 17

Summer Session 2015	
SUMMER SESSION 1	
Instruction Begins	Monday, May 18
Memorial Day	Monday, May 25 (no classes)
Final Examinations (final class day or following day)	
Must End	Saturday, June 13
SUMMER SESSION 2	
Instruction Begins	Monday, June 15
Independence Day (obs.)	Friday, July 3 (no classes)
Beginning of 2nd 4-week period of instruction	Monday, July 13
Instruction Ends	Thursday, August 6, 12 noon
Reading Day	Thursday, August 6, 1 p.m.
Final Examination Begin	Friday, August 7
End	Saturday, August 8

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Will faculty be required to teach during the Winter Session?**

No, faculty will not be required to teach during winter session. Teaching a winter session course is voluntary and can be an opportunity to develop and teach in an innovative, short-format release.

### **Will all Winter Session courses be offered online?**

Yes, the pilot will be limited to online offerings.

### **When will students register for Winter Session courses?**

While specific issues of implementation are to be determined, registration is likely to be available in November 2014, during the same time period as early registration for Spring 2015.

### **How many hours can students take during the Winter Session?**

Students will be restricted to one course of no more than 4 credit hours. This will allow students to fully engage with the rigorous schedule required during short-format courses.

### **Will students be able to use financial aid for Winter Session courses?**

No, additional financial aid is not available for the winter session. Federal Financial Aid guidelines also require registration in at least six credit hours to be eligible for aid. During the 2014-2015 pilot students will be restricted to one course (no more than 4 hours).

### **How will tuition be assessed for Winter Session courses?**

Tuition will be assessed on a per-credit hour basis and will be based on the Summer 2014 rates.

### **How will the Winter Session impact the calculation of the campus' mean terms to degree?**

The calculation is the average number of terms of enrollment for students graduating in a given year. A student is considered enrolled for a term if the student's registration status is "registered" or "late registered" by the end of the term. If a student does not enroll in Winter term, then Winter term is not included in the calculation for that student. The Winter term is counted as 1/4 term (same as Summer 1).

### **How will colleges manage issues associated with academic standing for the Winter Session?**

The Office of the Provost will work with the Student Academic Affairs Office in each college to determine a common approach to addressing academic standing. It is likely that the colleges will treat the winter session as they do for the summer session.

### **How many courses will be offered during the Winter Session?**

The pilot will likely focus on 7 to 10 popular online courses. The current list of proposed courses includes:

ATMS 120 – Severe and Hazardous Weather

BADM 310 – Mgmt and Organizational Beh

BADM 320 – Principles of Marketing

ECON 102 – Microeconomic Principles

ECON 203 – Economic Statistics II

SOC 100 – Introduction to Sociology

### **Who will determine which courses will be offered during the Winter Session?**

Similar to summer session, the academic units will decide which courses they would like to offer during this term.

### **Are courses available for undergraduates and graduates?**

The pilot will focus on undergraduate courses. However, an academic unit would not be precluded from offering a graduate course.

### **Are peer institutions holding online winter sessions?**

Yes, quite a few, and the list is growing. For example, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, The University of Connecticut, Cornell University, The University of Maryland, The University of Iowa, and Rutgers University.

### **If the Winter Session continues in future years, will courses be offered in years when the time between semesters is only three weeks?**

At this point in the planning, the courses have been structured for a four week term. With this in mind, a Winter Session likely would not be offered in years when the time between semesters is only three weeks.