

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC SENATE

OLD BUSINESS: MAY, 10, 2011

**PROPOSAL FOR A REVISED ACADEMIC CALENDER: MADE UP OF
FOURTEEN WEEKS PLUS A FIFTEENTH EXAMINATION WEEK**

RESOLUTION

Whereas, at the Academic Senate of May 12, 2009, a proposal was put forward to amend the administration of final examinations during the final week of the fall and spring semesters in order to bring Queensborough into compliance with New York State Department of Education guidelines regarding contact minutes per class hours;

and

Whereas the amended practice, implemented in the Spring, 2010 semester, rendered the fifteenth week of each fall and spring semester a regular week of class, not designated exclusively for the scheduling of final examinations;

and,

Whereas, this amended practice has resulted in a variety of problems, including and not limited to:

- Complaints by students that they might find themselves taking as many as five finals on the same day with very little time (5-10 minutes) between examinations;
- Insufficient time available to students to study because they are attending classes full-time simultaneously;
- The compromise of adequate security regarding the content of uniform examinations (in departments where this is department policy) because examinations are administered in separate classrooms, at different times;
- The compromise of adequate rigor in departments where examinations were traditionally longer than the standard 50-minute class meeting;

And

Whereas the plan outlined below has received the unanimous support of the Department Chairs at Queensborough Community College;

And

Whereas the plan outlined below has received the support and assent and approval of the Committee on Curriculum of the Academic Senate;

And

Whereas the plan outlined below satisfies the requirements of the New York State Department of Education guidelines regarding contact minutes per class hours;

- **Be it resolved that the final, fifteenth week of each Fall and Spring semester at Queensborough Community College be used for final exams.**

Rationale and Background

In May 2009, the Academic Senate voted to change the semester calendar, as of Spring 2010, to have the same class schedule during the 15th week of the semester as during the previous 14 weeks. This change was made at the behest of the Curriculum Committee of the Academic Senate in response to a proposal from the academic department chairpersons, to correct the fact that some classes had not been meeting the NYSED requisite minutes during the final exam week (See Appended Materials, below).

The 15-week schedule has been in effect for several semesters now, and it has had some benefits, in that classes that previously did not meet during the fifteenth week (Basic Educational Skills classes, for example) had an additional week of instruction prior to critical exit from remediation exams. However, the new schedule has caused some difficulties, which call for an adjustment:

- The current schedule does not allow for two-hour finals in many courses, and the two-hour exam is regarded by many faculty as an important academic exercise.
- Those academic departments which need or prefer to offer uniform final exams, for pedagogical and/or security reasons, cannot do so.
- Students do not have adequate time to review for their finals since they are attending the regular schedule of classes simultaneously. They may, moreover, find themselves scheduled for a number of finals on the same day with extremely short breaks (5-10 minutes) between.

The department chairs have had several discussions of this problem, and Dr. Mona Fabricant prepared a proposal (March 8, 2011) for adjusting the calendar to go back to a schedule of 14 weeks of class plus a fifteenth week of exams, while allowing for the addition of instructional time that was previously missing prior to Spring 2010. The Office of Academic Affairs discussed a modified version of this proposal with the department chairs at the April 7, 2011, and it was agreed, as follows:

Classes will follow regular meeting times during 14 weeks; the fifteenth week will not follow regular class meeting times but will provide two-hour final exams for **all** classes. Classes for which the two hour time slot does not offer the requisite weekly class hour meeting time will provide for that time either during the previous fourteen weeks (with extra minutes added into the weekly schedule) or by providing review sessions or instructional support activities during the fifteenth week. The academic department chairs will notify the Office of Academic Affairs regarding how this time will be scheduled, and the Registrar will be notified if class times need adjustment.

- This proposal will support the design of rigorous summative assessments in courses where a 50-minute class hour did not allow sufficient time for an in-class final examination;
- This proposal will support the actions of the Mathematics department to act in accordance with the memo sent to Chief Academic Officers from EVC Logue on February 25, 2011 re *Changes in Standards for Placement Into and Exit from Mathematics Remediation* page 2, subparagraph 3, "... all departments must administer exams aligned with the CUNY-wide standards." As discussed at the Mathematics Discipline Council Meeting with EVC Logue, this statement assumes a uniform final exam in mathematics;
- This proposal will allow the Basic Skills Department, the English Department, and the Math & CS Department, to split some of their final exam allotted time into two time slots. For Basic Skills and English, one time slot can be used for conferences and advisement and the other for the actual exams. For MA 010 one time slot will be used for mandatory final review workshops (no increase in the Math Learning Center budget is needed). We expect this will increase the passing rate in MA 010.

APPENDIX: THE "HISTORY" OF THE FIFTEENTH WEEK DEBATE, IN SENATE DOCUMENTS

I. Background on the decision to change the fifteenth week of the semester into a regular class schedule that incorporates the final examinations

From January 2008 through May 2009, Queensborough's schedule of classes was the subject of discussion at many meetings involving the Office of Academic Affairs, Office of Faculty and Staff Relations, the Registrar, the PSC, the department chairpersons, the Curriculum Committee of the Academic Senate, and the Academic Senate.

The published schedule of classes has for many years included break time for classes that meet in any session that is longer than two instructional hours (100 minutes). One question arose, from the PSC, whether some faculty members, especially adjuncts, might be teaching too many

minutes. In response to this question, the Office of Academic Affairs asked the department chairs to continue to inform all faculty of the required time for their classes (i.e., 50 minutes for each instructional hour).

A second question emerged, raised by the Curriculum Committee, focusing on whether all classes were meeting the full number of minutes required by NYSED regulations. For example, a three-hour class should meet for 2,250 minutes during the semester (50 minute instructional hour x 3 weekly hours x 15 weeks), but during the fall and spring semesters, some three-hour classes were scheduled for three 50 minute sessions for 14 weeks and for the final exam (120 minutes) during the 15th week – thirty minutes short of the total required minutes. This schedule had been in place for many years.

Over many months during 2008 the Registrar and the Office of Academic Affairs looked at the class schedules at other colleges, sought advice from the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, and created a variety of models for adjusting the schedule of classes to ensure every minute was accounted for. Several scheduling schemes were presented to the department chairs for discussion. None was received with much favor. In one scheme for example, class times varied from 49 minute to 52 minute units, producing irregular breaks between classes. In another scheme, three hour classes could be offered in three sessions on MWF *or* in two sessions TTh, and four hour classes would have to meet at least three days a week. The “last standing” scheme was to extend the regular class sessions through the fifteenth week, which would include instruction and the final exams, as the practice has been in the winter and summer session classes. The department chairs voted on and forwarded this proposal to the Academic Senate and it was approved at the May 2009 Senate meeting, for implementation in Spring 2010.

The following pages document some of the actions taken regarding the fifteenth week change.

II. Queensborough Community College Academic Senate consideration and action regarding the class schedule spring 2009

Agenda for the April 21, 2009 meeting of the Academic Senate - excerpt from the Curriculum Committee Report for the April 21, 2009 meeting

Notice to the Academic Senate

On 9-23-08 the Committee reported in its monthly report to the Academic Senate the following:

"The Committee on Curriculum has communicated to the Office of Academic Affairs that in the Fall and Spring semesters the contact time for some classes is not in conformity with the NY State Education Department requirements (750 minutes per credit). In some cases the contact time in the last week of the semester has been shortened. This situation should be remedied through actions of the Office of Academic Affairs working with the Academic Departments involved and the Office of the Registrar."

We must now report that there has been no real progress on the resolution of this matter. Some time ago, the reasonable resolution discussed by the academic department chairs of scheduling the last week of the Fall and Spring semesters as with the previous 14 weeks was agreed to by all departments but one; Mathematics and Computer Science. It has not been explained as to why this matter has not since proceeded through governance for action by the Academic Senate.

**III. Resolution for the Academic Department Chairs presented at May 12, 2009
Academic Senate:**

QCC Chairpersons Committee

Resolution to Add a 15th Week of Classes

The Committee of Department Chairpersons recommends the following action for adoption by the Academic Senate:

Whereas, the Academic Senate has previously set college policy designating the final week of the Fall and Spring semesters for final examinations, and

whereas, current practice has resulted in the college's noncompliance with New York State Department of Education guidelines regarding required contact minutes per class hours,

be it resolved that beginning in the Spring 2010 semester the final (15th) week of the Fall and Spring semesters will be scheduled as the previous weeks, i.e., as a full week of class, and not designated exclusively for the scheduling of final examinations.

Explanation: In order to bring the college into compliance with the New York State guidelines the college must add the requisite number of missing minutes for every class, and the above resolution will satisfy that mandate in the least disruptive manner of all the current options. Departments and faculty may use the scheduled class time in the final week of the Fall and Spring semesters to provide instruction, to administer examinations, to perform other assessments, and/or to conduct other academic activities with their classes, as is done in the Summer and January Intersession semesters.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf

of the Chairpersons Committee,

Dr. Joseph Culkin

IV. Minutes of the May 12, 2009 Academic Senate - excerpt from May 2009 Senate minutes in September 2009 agenda:

Steering Committee: Chair Tai presented three resolutions:

The first was on the required number of contact minutes:

Whereas, the Academic Senate has previously set college policy designating the final week of the Fall and Spring semesters for final examinations, and

Whereas, current practice has resulted in the college's noncompliance with New York State Department of Education guidelines regarding required contact minutes per class hours;

be it resolved that beginning in the Spring 2010 semester the final (15th) week of the Fall and Spring semesters will be scheduled as the previous weeks, i.e., as a full week of class, and not designated exclusively for the scheduling of final examinations.

Explanation: In order to bring the college into compliance with the New York State guidelines the college must add the requisite number of missing minutes for every class, and the above resolution will satisfy that mandate in the least disruptive manner of all the current options. Departments and faculty may use the scheduled class time in the final week of the Fall and Spring semesters to provide instruction, to administer examinations, to perform other assessments, and/or to conduct other academic

activities with their classes, as is done in the Summer and January Intersession semesters.

A motion was **made, seconded, and approved** for the change. It passed with 40 yes, 11 no votes and 4 abstentions.