

Nenagh Brown
Academic Senate

What are the potential advantages for students in having two shorter semesters of approximately 16 weeks with a winter intersession of four or five weeks?

Higher course success rates

- Santa Monica College report
“Success” defined as receiving A, B, C, and CR grades
Figure 1: Student success greater in 6 week courses (overall success at 78%) than 16 week courses (overall at 64%).
Report broke down success rates across the following metrics:
 - Greater success seen across all four ethnic groups (Asian, black, Latino, white)
 - Greater success seen in day and evening classes
 - Greater success seen with both full and part-time faculty instructors
 - Greater success seen across English and math courses
 - In English and math retention of course knowledge for second sequence class equal for students who took 6 or 16 week classes
 - Success differential similar for students both more and less mature in their academic paths
 - Success rate benefit both more and less academically successful – all drop less and achieve higher GPA
 - Success not because students take “easier” courses in shorter modules; the same pattern is observed for gateway 3 and 5 unit math classes and 3 unit English classes

Report does not attribute difference to the following factors they also checked, but with small samples:

- Not because faculty had different expectations for shorter courses: compared same faculty in different modalities and success rates stayed the same
- Not because of grade inflation: student success greater but not higher grades in 8 week classes; did have higher grades in 6 week classes but suspect because of different student population attending these summer classes

Report conclusion: students more successful in 6 week courses because they drop at lower rates

- Ohlone 2007 report
Higher success rates in first year but not sustained in second year when report written
- ASCCC
Attributes some of higher student success in shorter formats to “total immersion” in fewer courses
- Cerritos presentation
“Some but not substantial, improvements in retention and success after conversion . . . both retention and success did not decline upon converting.” Figures not given.

- San Joachim report
Student success rates rose from a mean of 66.0% to 67.5% (+1.5%)

- Chaffey report
 - Overall student success rates rose from the last year before the transition to a compressed calendar at 66.7% to 68.1% in the third year after the transition (+1.4%)
“Overall success rates do not appear to decline upon converting to an alternative/compressed calendar system.”
 - Success rates in non-basic skills courses stayed stable from 83.8% the year prior to the conversion to 83.9% in the third year afterwards
 - Success rates in pre-collegiate basic skills courses rose from 82.8% to 85.5% during these same time-frames
 - Success rates in basic skills courses stayed stable from 83.1% to 83.3% during these same time-frames but the sample is small (0.33% of all enrollments in study)

- San Francisco report
 - English: increase from average of 60% and 64% of units passed in Fall and Spring semesters to 74% in Summer (average + 12%); approx. 29,000 student sample
 - Math: increase from average of 51% and 54% of units passed in Fall and Spring to 57% in Summer (+ 4.5%); approx. 26,000 student sample
 - ESL: increase from average of 66% and 69% of units passed in Fall and Spring to 76% in Summer (average + 8.5%); approx. 17,000 student sample“In an era that requires colleges to publically account for student learning, the implications of this research for scheduling cannot be ignored.”

Higher course retention rates

- Santa Monica College 2000 report
Figure 2: Withdrawal rates lower in 6 week courses (overall 12%) than 16 week courses (overall 22%). Again this is seen across categories including FT and PT faculty; math and English; all ethnic groups recorded; day and evening classes.

- Ohlone report
Improved retention rates in first year but not sustained in second year when report written

- Cerritos presentation
“Some but not substantial, improvements in retention and success after conversion . . . both retention and success did not decline upon converting.” Figures not given.

- San Joachim report
Student retention rates rose from a mean of 82.7% to 84.2% (+1.5%)

- Chaffey report

Student retention rates rose from the last year before the transition to a compressed calendar at 83.7% to 84% in the third year after the transition (+0.3%).

“Retention rates do not immediately decline in the first year under an alternative/ compressed calendar system. However a decline . . . was observed in the second year . . . with a slight improvement noted in the third year. Even after experiencing a second year decline and very minor improvement in the third year, 2nd and 3rd year retention rates were slightly higher than in the year preceding conversion.”

Shorter time frame commitment for students

- ASCCC report
 - Many community students only able to make shorter commitments; particularly beneficial for CTE students
 - “Safety valve” without losing time: to retake courses, take pre-requisites; take review classes, add additional units for GE
 - Allows for Study Abroad opportunities
- Ohlone report
 - For adult learners fewer days from work and child care

Calendar improvements

- ASCCC report
 - Less childcare when correlate with school calendars in the Fall
 - More CSU students can attend intercessions when calendars aligned to CSUs
- Ohlone report
 - Fall start date after Labor Day matching many high school calendars allows for more parents to attend classes

What are the potential disadvantages for students in having two shorter semesters of approximately 16 weeks with a winter intersession of four or five weeks?

Shorter time frames for students

- Ohlone report (2007)
Shorter registration time for Spring semester
Shorter time to add or drop at start of semester
- ASCCC report
Condensed exam weeks
- Cerritos presentation
High contact hour programs will be challenged, eg Nursing

Student service concerns

- ASCCC report
 - Ensure researched consequences for financial aid for vets, etc.
 - Ensure offer adequate student services during intersessions

Reduced “academic value” or “academic quality”

- Santa Monica College 2000 report:
Is success the same as “academic value” and/or “academic quality”? Report not know what these common comments mean and hence how to define them for research; possibly unquantifiable.

Sources

By year of publication

Santa Monica College report, 2000

The Influence of Session Length on Student Success

Ruth Logan, Peter Geltner

Data drawn from 446,000 Santa Monica students from Fall 1994 – Summer 1999 (5 academic years)

ASCCC report, 2000

Alternative Calendars: Recommendations and a Progress Report

Educational Policies Committee

(For those that might remember the Committee included our own Elton Hall from Moorpark College)

Report drawn up in response to the state changes to the 175-day rule.

Evidence based on the two colleges who had moved before this date: Santa Monica and in 1999-2000 Riverside College. Thus small sample size for data.

San Francisco report, 2001

City College of San Francisco

Compression of Semesters or Intensity of Study: What is it that Increases Student Success?

Steven Spurling

Focuses on “intensity of study” vs “compression” as explanations for increased student success using City College of San Francisco data for basic skills English, math, and ESL courses from Spring 1998 through Fall 2000.

Chaffey report, 2005

Three-Year Study of Success and Retention Rates Prior to and After Converting to an Alternative/Compressed Calendar System

Study of 33 colleges over six years, three years prior to and three years after converting to compressed calendar; data drawn from Data Mart.

Ohlone report, 2007

An Ohlone Story: Calendar Conversion

Submitted by Ron Travenick

Description of moving from 18 week semester to 16 week over one year; no student success or retention data provided

San Joachim report, 2008

California Community Colleges on Compressed Calendars: FTES, Success, and Retention Rated Before and After Compression

Matthew Wetstein, Alyssa Nguyen

Data on 33 colleges taken from the CCCCO website used to answer whether the transition to a compressed calendar had any effect on rates of student success and retention looking at the three prior and three subsequent years to the change.

Cerritos report, 2018

Cerritos Community College District

Compressed Calendar Presentation

Presented to Board of Trustees by Fred Trap, Cambridge West Partnership LLC

Eileen Daniel, 2000, 'A Review of time-shortened courses across disciplines', *College Student Journal*, 34, 2, 298-306.