

# CALENDAR SURVEY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From November 14 through November 28, the Calendar Task Force conducted a survey of all voting faculty to discern their opinions on both the academic calendar and the weekly schedule. This was followed by a similar survey completed by students from December 5 through December 16. In addition to forced responses, both surveys allowed for comments related to each question. The results of these surveys are summarized below; a more complete analysis of the survey follows the Executive Summary.

### Faculty

Of 289 eligible faculty, 165 completed the survey for a response rate of 57%. The survey consisted of eight questions regarding the academic calendar and eight questions about the weekly schedule. Additionally, faculty were asked to indicate their division or school, the length of time they have taught at PLU, their sex, and whether they were tenure stream or not.

There was a strong preference for retaining the J-term model over three other models – May term, semester, and quarter. This preference held across all schools and divisions and length of tenure at PLU. However, over half of those questioned preferred not to teach in J-term if the J-term model is retained. Of the remainder, faculty preferred a heavier teaching load in the fall rather than the spring by a more than 5 to 1 ratio. In the May term model, an even greater number would prefer not to teach in May term and the remainder would prefer a heavier fall load by over a 15 to 1 ratio.

For both upper and lower division undergraduate daytime classes, faculty strongly preferred a TR/MWF schedule over alternative models. For upper division courses, the TR slots were slightly more preferred over MWF. Again, this preference ranking held across all schools and divisions. Over half the faculty expressed a willingness to teach at starting at 8:00 am or later; likewise, more than half (although not necessarily the same people) are willing to teach as late as 5:30 pm. Faculty were clear in expressing a desire for common time. Over two thirds would like at least two common times per week of at least one hour each.

### Students

516 undergraduate students completed the survey, almost equally split across class standing. Most questions were similar to those asked of faculty, modified to reflect student perspectives. Considering the strong negative faculty response regarding the semester and quarter models, students were asked to express preferences regarding only the J-term and May term models.

Students preferred the J-term model over a May term model by a 6 to 1 ratio. This preference ranking held for both on- and off-campus offerings. Almost three fourths of students have either studied abroad or intend to, speaking to the need to have a calendar model that accommodates these desires.

As with faculty, students preferred the current TR/MWF schedule over alternative course schedules for a wide variety of courses. Of the two, MWF was preferred over TR for all courses except lower division general education courses. Students' willingness to take early courses was not as strong as faculty's willingness to teach them: most students preferred a 9:00 am or later start time. Students also expressed a strong desire to accommodate at least two common times of one hour each per week, preferably in the late morning.

## Faculty

1. *This question is about ON-CAMPUS January or May courses only (assumes a 4-1-4 or 4-4-1 calendar, respectively.) Which of the following statements best represents your teaching preferences?*

22% of faculty responded that their courses were not well suited for a 4-week format. This percentage rose to 34% for the Division of Natural Sciences and 57% for the School of Business. Of those whose courses were adaptable for a 4-week format, 54% preferred the J-term format, 20% the May term format, and 26% had no preference. The preference for J-term was strongest among faculty in SOAC (61%) and SEMS (73%). The strong preference for J-term showed no apparent differences across length of service at PLU.

2. *This question is about OFF-CAMPUS January or May courses only (assumes a 4-1-4 or 4-4-1 calendar, respectively.) Which of the following statements best represents your teaching preferences?*

Regarding off-campus preferences, 24% had no interest in teaching a 4-week off-campus course regardless of calendar model; this percentage rose to 32% for faculty who have been at PLU for more than 20 years. Of those who would consider teaching an off-campus course for 4 weeks, 41% of faculty preferred the J-term model, 26% the May term model, and 32% had no preference. In written comments, many faculty said the prospects of travel in nicer weather were appealing, but expressed concerns about the higher cost of travel in May and the likelihood that students might be less likely to enroll in their classes, either because of cost or because they would like to start summer jobs earlier.

3. *This question is in reference to the 4-1-4 calendar model. If your schedule were to include a J-term teaching commitment, what is your PERSONAL PREFERENCE for teaching a 24-hour equivalent load?*

While 46% were indifferent to 3-1-2 or 2-1-3, of those with a stated preference, 87% preferred the heavier fall course load.

4. *This question is in reference to the 4-1-4 calendar model. What is your PERSONAL PREFERENCE for teaching a 24-hour equivalent load under the 4-1-4 calendar model—setting aside your current teaching schedule, course releases and departmental expectations?*

54% preferred not to teach during J-term; this proportion rose to 65% among faculty who have taught at PLU for ten years or less. Of the remainder, 85% preferred the heavier fall course load.

5. *This question is in reference to the 4-4-1 calendar model. If your schedule were to include a May term teaching commitment, what is your PERSONAL PREFERENCE for teaching a 24-hour equivalent load?*

Compared to the similarly stated J-term question, somewhat fewer faculty were indifferent to a 3-2-1 or a 2-3-1 teaching load. Only 34% were indifferent. Of those who expressed a preference, 91% preferred a heavier fall teaching load.

6. *This question is in reference to the 4-4-1 calendar model. What is your PERSONAL PREFERENCE for teaching a 24-hour equivalent load under the 4-4-1 calendar model—setting aside your current teaching schedule, course releases and departmental expectations?*

Compared to the J-term model, faculty expressed even less willingness to teach during a 4-week May session: 65% preferred not to teach in the May term. As with the J-term model, newer faculty were more likely to want to avoid the May term, in this case 71% preferring not to teach in May. Of those willing to teach a May term, 94% preferred a heavier fall course load.

7. *What is your PERSONAL PREFERENCE for the four calendar models? Please rank order.*

60% of faculty listed the current J-term model as their most preferred and an additional 20% ranked it 2<sup>nd</sup>. 44% ranked the May term model either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, a somewhat smaller proportion than the 49% who ranked the 4-4 semester model either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>. Likewise, the semester model received somewhat more 1<sup>st</sup> place rankings than the May term model, at 19% versus 16%. The quarter model was clearly least preferred, with 68% of faculty ranking it 4<sup>th</sup> among the four models.

This and the next question garnered by far the most written comments. Science faculty in particular were quite concerned about switching away from a J-term model that they said best fits student research in the capstone. While some faculty expressed a desire to move to a quarter model, most comments about that model were negative for reasons ranging from not enough time to cover material to having to revamp course content and lectures. However, many comments were favorable to either the 4-1-4 or 4-4-1 models as they were perceived to be more conducive to study away.

8. *Setting aside your personal preference, which model do you think PLU should retain and/or adopt?*

Despite the higher ranking in individual preferences, the May term model was deemed best by a slightly higher proportion than the semester model when faculty were asked to set aside their personal preferences (19% versus 13%). However, the J-term model was the clear favorite, with 61% selecting this option. Only 6% thought PLU should adopt a quarter system. The preference for the J-term model held across all schools and divisions, but was weakest in the social sciences at 50%, rising to 57% in business, 58% in the natural sciences, 64% in the humanities, 74% in SOAC, 82% in SEMS, and 100% in nursing.

While some faculty objected to the premise of the question, many faculty commented that study away, research time, and the “uniqueness” of PLU are best served by the J-term model.

9. *This question is about your lower division and daytime classes only. During a semester, what is your general pedagogical preference for teaching the majority of your LOWER DIVISION classes? Please rank order your top two only.*

Faculty expressed a clear preference for our current “typical” TR/MWF schedule. 46% ranked the current TR block 1<sup>st</sup> and an additional 35% ranked it 2<sup>nd</sup>. Similarly, 44% ranked the current MWF block 1<sup>st</sup> and an additional 39% ranked it 2<sup>nd</sup>. A negligible number ranked a five-day-a-week 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, but the Division of Natural Sciences was a bit unusual in that the MWF schedule received more votes than the TR schedule and almost half (48%) ranked a 4-day-per-week schedule 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> for their lower division courses.

10. *This question is about your upper division and daytime classes only. During a semester, what is your general pedagogical preference for teaching the majority of your UPPER DIVISION classes? Please rank order your top two only.*

Faculty tended to prefer longer blocks of time for their upper division courses. The current TR block was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> by 69% and 2<sup>nd</sup> by 23%. The MWF block was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> by 25% but 2<sup>nd</sup> by 65%. As with their lower division courses, faculty in the natural sciences preferred more times per week: 60% ranked the MWF block 1<sup>st</sup> and 35% ranked it 2<sup>nd</sup>. Although 68% ranked the TR block 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, 32% ranked the 4-day schedule 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>. Among all the schools and divisions, only the School of Business gave significant votes to the once per week schedule, with 14% ranking it 1<sup>st</sup> and 50% ranking it 2<sup>nd</sup>.

11. *What is the earliest class STARTING time you are willing to teach?*

Over half (53%) expressed a willingness to begin their classes at 8:00 am or earlier. However, 40% were unwilling to begin teaching prior to 9:00 am. These percentages did not differ substantially by length of service at PLU.

By far, most comments regarding this question referred to the difficulty of early classes owing to family, child-care, and commuting.

12. *What is the latest class ENDING time you are willing to teach your daytime classes?*

75% of faculty were willing to teach as late as 5:00 pm; over half (57%) as late as 5:30. Those who have been at PLU for 10 years or less are somewhat more likely to be willing to stay late, as 83% of these faculty were willing to teach as late as 5:00, but only 66% of those who have been at PLU for more than 10 years.

13. *During the semester, do you or would you consider teaching undergraduate evening courses at the following times?*

62% were willing to teach one night per week, but substantially less than half (43%) were willing to teach two nights per week. Faculty in the professional schools were a bit more likely to teach at night, with 71% of business, 75% of nursing, and 82% of education and movement studies faculty expressing a willingness to teach once per week.

Most comments spoke to the difficulty of scheduling night classes owing to family commitments. However, music faculty were particularly vocal about their evening commitments on campus that prevent them from offering classes at night. Both this question and the earlier question regarding early start times generated comments about a willingness to teach either night or early morning, but not both.

14. *How important is it having a schedule that includes common time for meetings?*

Having a common time in the schedule was deemed extremely or very important by over half (53%) the faculty; only 15% believed it to be of little or no importance. Several faculty commented that chapel time currently serves as *de facto* common time.

15. *How many common times should be included in the weekly schedule?*

Barely a quarter of the faculty (28%) believed that one common time per week is sufficient, but over half (52%) thought two per week would suffice.

16. *If the schedule were to include common time, what is the MINIMUM block of time required to be useful for meetings?*

60% of faculty believed one hour is sufficient time to be useful; an additional 17% think as little as 45 minutes will do.

Finally, faculty were asked to provide any other feedback for the committee. Comments were wide ranging, but some of the more frequent comments concerned chapel time, graduation over Memorial Day weekend, the non-observance of Veterans Day, and an appreciation of the Task Force's work.

## Students

1. *This question is about ON-CAMPUS January or May courses only (assumes a 4-1-4 or 4-4-1 calendar, respectively.) Which of the following statements best represents your preference?*

Less than 3% of students preferred not to take any type of on-campus 4-week term, but 77% preferred January over May, including 33% who said they would take a course in January but not in May. Only 7% had no preference.

In their comments, many students appreciated J-term for the opportunity to study abroad and for the fact that it offers a break between two semesters – whether as a break away from classes or the perception of a reduced course-work load in J-term. While many students liked the fact that a May term option would allow them to get a head start on the job market, many other students disliked the idea, saying that May term would be poorly attended.

2. *This question is about OFF-CAMPUS January or May courses only (assumes a 4-1-4 or 4-4-1 calendar, respectively.) Which of the following statements best represents your preference?*

While 13% responded they had no interest studying abroad in either 4-week format and 25% responded they had no preference, three times as many students preferred the J-term format as those who preferred the May term format (47% vs. 15%), including 15% who said they would study away in January but not in May.

In their comments, some students appreciated the ability to reintegrate into the on-campus experience immediately upon their return from J-term study away. Some also expressed concern that a shift to a May term would result in higher expected cost, more crowds and possibly lost opportunities to study in the southern hemisphere. Those who supported May term appreciated the possibility of study away in warmer weather and the option of extending travel into the summer.

3. *What is your PERSONAL PREFERENCE for a calendar model?*

The J-term model was the clear favorite, by a margin of almost 5 to 1. Students appreciated the break that J-term provides between semesters. They were also concerned that many students would not attend during May term, opting instead to take an extended summer break.

4. *For each kind of course listed please indicate which schedule seems best.*

Students were asked to select the best format in which to take a language, math/science, lower division general education, and upper division major courses. For all four course types, a three times per week for 70 minutes per class format, corresponding to our current MWF morning schedule, received more than 40% of the votes, rising to 65% for math/science courses. The current twice per week for 105 minute schedule was the favorite format for lower division general education (46% vs. 42%) and only slightly less preferred than the MWF schedule for upper division major courses (41% vs. 44%). One day per week schedules received less than 5% support among all course types and only language courses received more than 10% support for either a 4 or 5 day per week schedule (18% and 13%, respectively.) However, many of the comments spoke to the improved learning in language and science from meeting more times per week.

5. *What is the earliest class STARTING time you PREFER to take?*

Slightly less than 40% of students preferred to start earlier than 9:00 am; only 28% as early as 8:00 am. 20% prefer not to start until 9:30 am. Commuting, late-night activities and classes, and “not a morning person” were the most common reasons for wanting to start later than 8:00 am.

6. *What is the latest class ENDING time you PREFER to take?*

Students were given many options for this question, ranging from 3:00 pm until 9:30 pm. Most “day” classes currently end at 5:25; significantly, 58% of students preferred not to have class end that late. Only 15% preferred to take classes as late as 8:00 pm, the current ending time of our twice per week night classes, and only 2% as late as 9:30 pm, the current ending time of our once per week night classes. Commuters, athletes, and musicians in particular objected to late classes, although many also desired to have the evening hours available for study.

7. *How important is it having a schedule that includes common time for meetings, group work, and university events (fairs, celebrations, etc.)?*

Having a common time in the schedule was deemed extremely or very important by almost two-thirds (63%) of the students; only 10% believed it to be of little or no importance. This is an even stronger endorsement for common time than given by the faculty, among whom 53% rated a common time as extremely or very important. Many students appeared to use chapel time as a common time for meetings, but many others expressed regret at not being able to convene group meetings or attend university-wide fairs, conferences, and events.

8. *How many common times should be included in the weekly schedule?*

While a majority of faculty (52%) indicated that two common times per week would be sufficient, the same proportion of students expressed a desire for at least three. Indeed, 11% thought there should be five common times per week and only 36% thought two would be sufficient.

9. *If the schedule were to include a common time, what is the MINIMUM block of time required to be useful?*

As with faculty, a majority (55%) of students believed one hour is sufficient time to be useful; an additional 22% thought as little as 45 minutes will do.

10. *If the schedule were to include common time, what is the optimal time of day for it to be included?*

The middle of the day was the clear preference among students for a common time, with 44% selecting 10:00 am to noon and an additional 32.2% selecting noon to 2:30 pm. Significantly, many more thought late afternoon preferable to early morning (17% compared to 7%).

Perhaps all of the responses regarding common time should be tempered by acknowledging the number of students who commented that they were confused by the questions, including those who perceived chapel time as common time.

## **FACULTY DEMOGRAPHICS**

### **Division or School**

Division of Humanities	20%
Division of Natural Sciences	24%
Division of Social Sciences	22%
School of Arts and Communication	14%
School of Business	9%
School of Education and Movement Studies	7%
School of Nursing	2%
Not part of a division or school	2%

### **Longevity at PLU**

0 - 10 years	52%
11 - 20 years	24%
21 or more years	24%

### **Tenured or tenure track**

Yes	85%
No	15%

### **Sex**

Female	51%
Male	49%

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

### Division or School of primary area of study

Division of Humanities	12%
Division of Natural Sciences	20%
Division of Social Sciences	17%
School of Arts and Communication	18%
School of Business	9%
School of Education and Movement Studies	8%
School of Nursing	13%
Undecided	3%

### Age

18 or younger	18%
19	22%
20	20%
21	22%
22	7%
23	2%
24 or older	9%

### Class standing

Freshman (0 – 29 hours)	23%
Sophomore (30 – 59 hours)	22%
Junior (60 – 89 hours)	26%
Senior (90 or more hours)	29%

### Sex

Female	74%
Male	24%
Prefer not to identify	2%

### Studied away?

No and don't intend to	29%
No but intend to	50%
Yes, J-term at least once	10%
Yes, for a semester or year at least once	8%
Yes, J-term and semester or year	3%