



Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness

Academic Calendar Survey Spring 2016

Executive Summary

Per the request of the Office of the Provost, Institutional Research and Effectiveness with the assistance of the Division of Student Life administered a survey to faculty and students to receive feedback regarding the future of the University's Thanksgiving break to inform the 2018-19 academic calendar planning process and beyond. The faculty survey consisted of four questions [see Appendix A] and four similar questions were included in the Residence Life & Housing Spring Reflection Survey 2016 [see Appendix B]. Approximately 1,237 faculty received an invitation to complete the survey between May 19 and June 13 with 514 faculty choosing to respond to the survey (41.5% faculty response rate). Approximately 7,200 students received an invitation to complete the Spring Reflection Survey between April 29 and May 13 with 1,273 students choosing to respond to the survey (17.7% student response rate).

Method:

Students and faculty alike were provided the following information about three and five day options.

Here are the impacts of each format:

With 3 days of suspended classes (November 21-23):

- There are 8 days of instruction after the break and before the end of the semester.
- Classes end on Wednesday, December 5th.
- **Reading days** are Thursday, December 6th, Saturday, December 8th and Sunday, December 9th.
- **Final Exams** are scheduled on Friday, December 7th and Monday, December 10th through Friday, December 14th.

With 5 days of suspended classes (November 19-23):

- There are 10 days of instruction after the break and before the end of the semester.
- Classes end on Friday, December 7th.
- **Reading days** are Saturday, December 8th and Sunday, December 9th.
- **Final Exams** are scheduled on Monday December 10th through Saturday, December 15th.

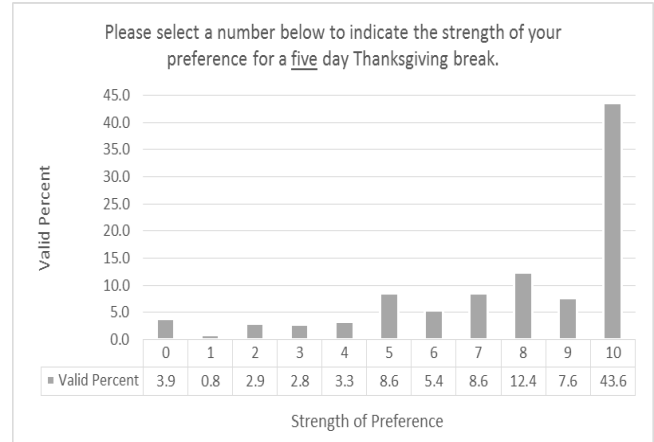
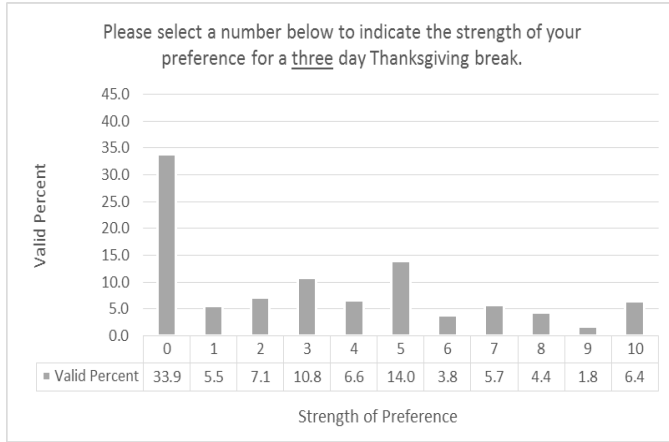
Please note there are 67 days of instruction scheduled for the semester for both the 3- and 5-day Thanksgiving break scenarios. Typically, classes that meet only on Mondays have fewer class meeting days than classes that meet on other schedules. A 3-day Thanksgiving break would allow for Monday-only classes to have an additional day of instruction.

Student and faculty respondents were then asked to indicate the strength of their preference for each of the three and five day schedules on a scale from “**Do not prefer**” (0) to “**Prefer a great deal**” (10). Students were then asked to indicate how much they minded having reading days only on weekends and how much they dislike or like having final exams scheduled on Saturday. Faculty were asked to indicate how detrimental (Very detrimental = 0; Very beneficial = 10) it would be to have reading days only on the weekend and final exams on Saturday. Note that weekend reading days and Saturday final exams

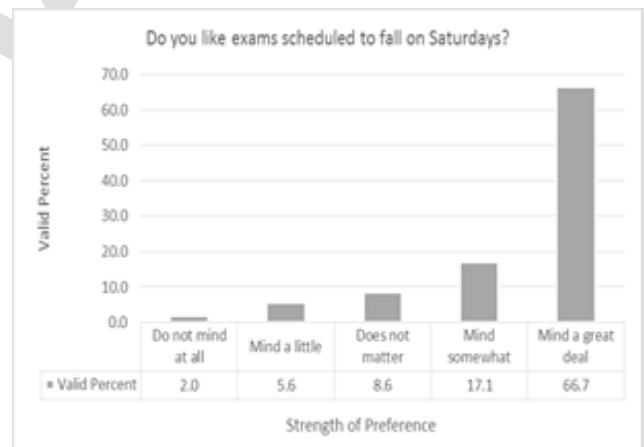
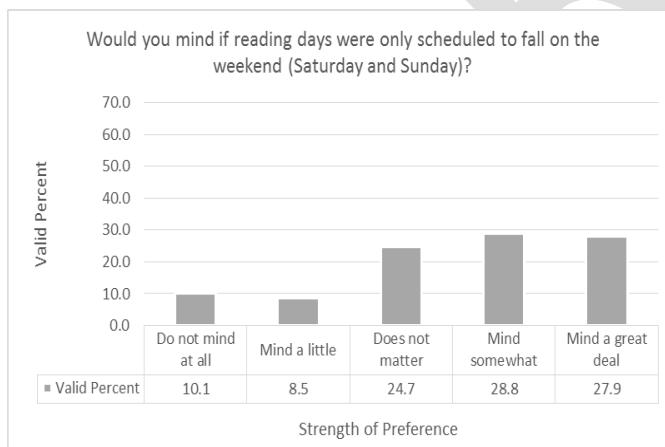
are relevant only for the five day scenario.

Student Results:

Students **“do not prefer”** the three day Thanksgiving break schedule, and nearly half of the respondents **“Prefer a great deal”** the five day Thanksgiving break schedule.



However, this preference is inconsistent with their attitudes about weekend only reading days and Saturday final exams. When students were asked if they would mind if reading days were only scheduled to fall on the weekend (Saturday and Sunday), more than half (56.7%) indicated they mind somewhat or mind a great deal. More than a third (34.8%) indicated it does not matter or they don't mind at all. The rest of the students (8.5%) would mind a little if reading days were only scheduled to fall on the weekend. When students were asked if they liked having exams scheduled to fall on Saturdays, more than half (66.7%) indicated they mind a great deal. Almost a quarter of the students (22.7%) mind somewhat or mind a little. The rest of the students (10.6%) indicated it does not matter or they don't mind at all.



The fact that reading days would fall only on the weekend (Saturday and Sunday) is only relevant for the five day Thanksgiving break scenario. When you take a look at the strength of preference for a five day Thanksgiving break and student attitudes about the scheduling of reading days and Saturday final exams, nearly half of those students who have the strongest preference for a five day Thanksgiving

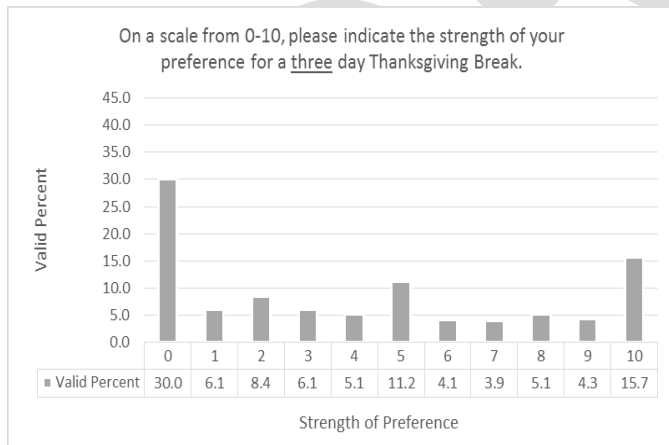
break mind somewhat to a great deal that readings are scheduled to fall on the weekend (40.0%) and mind a great deal that exams are scheduled to fall on Saturdays (48.9%).

Strength of preference for a five day Thanksgiving break versus Minding if reading days were only scheduled to fall on the weekend							Strength of preference for a five day Thanksgiving break versus Liking exams scheduled to fall on Saturdays								
% of Total	Mind reading days only scheduled to fall on the weekend					% of Total	Like exams scheduled to fall on Saturdays					% of Total			
	Do not mind at all	Mind a little	Does not matter	Mind somewhat	Mind a great deal		Total	Do not mind at all	Mind a little	Does not matter	Mind somewhat		Mind a great deal	Total	
Strength of preference for a five day Thanksgiving break	0	0.6%		0.9%	0.8%	1.6%	3.9%	Strength of preference for a five day Thanksgiving break	0	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	2.8%	3.9%
	1	0.1%		0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%		1			0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.8%
	2	0.1%	0.2%	0.9%	0.6%	1.1%	2.9%		2		0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	2.0%	2.9%
	3	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.9%	0.9%	2.8%		3	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	1.9%	2.8%
	4	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%	1.1%	0.9%	3.3%		4			0.3%	0.9%	2.1%	3.3%
	5	0.2%	0.6%	2.7%	2.8%	2.1%	8.6%		5	0.1%	0.4%	1.1%	1.9%	5.1%	8.6%
	6	0.5%	0.2%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	5.4%		6	0.1%	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	3.3%	5.4%
	7	0.5%	0.5%	2.2%	3.5%	2.0%	8.6%		7	0.2%	0.8%	0.5%	1.4%	5.7%	8.6%
	8	0.8%	1.3%	2.9%	4.2%	3.2%	12.4%		8	0.2%	0.7%	0.8%	3.1%	7.7%	12.4%
	9	1.0%	0.9%	1.3%	2.6%	1.8%	7.6%		9	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	1.6%	4.9%	7.6%
	10	5.9%	4.2%	10.8%	10.4%	12.3%	43.6%		10	0.9%	2.0%	3.9%	6.0%	30.6%	43.6%
Total		10.1%	8.5%	24.7%	28.8%	27.9%	100.0%	Total		2.0%	5.6%	8.6%	17.1%	66.7%	100.0%

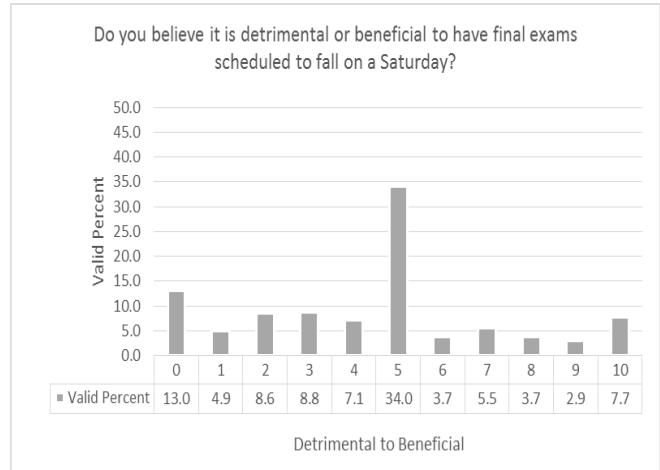
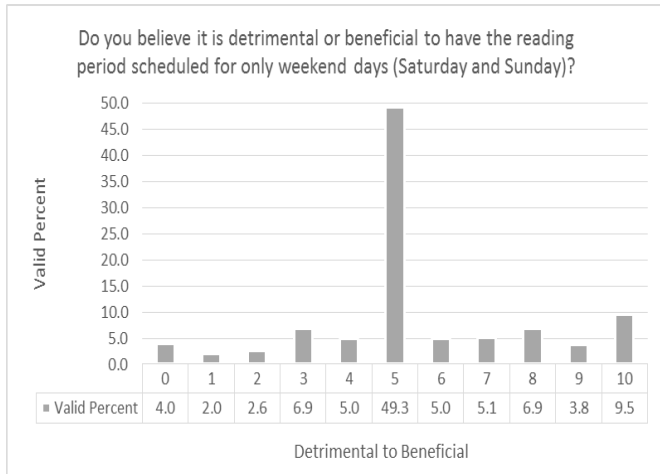
Thus students want a five day Thanksgiving break, BUT will be unhappy because it will require some final exams to be scheduled on Saturday and they will have to give up a weekday reading day.

Faculty Results:

Faculty preference for a three day Thanksgiving break is bimodal, but about twice as many faculty respondents do not prefer the three day break compared to those who prefer the three day break. In contrast, there is a strong preference for the five day Thanksgiving break.



Unlike the students, the faculty respondents were indifferent to having reading day only on the weekend, and to having some final exams scheduled on Saturday. When asked if having the reading period scheduled for only weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) is very detrimental (0) or very beneficial (10), most faculty indicated this option is neither detrimental nor beneficial. Similarly, when asked if having final exams scheduled to fall on a Saturday is very detrimental (0) or very beneficial (10), most faculty indicated this option is neither detrimental nor beneficial.



Conclusion

Both faculty and students have a stronger preference for a five day Thanksgiving break than a three day Thanksgiving break with students having the greatest preference for the five day Thanksgiving break.

While faculty are generally indifferent to reading day only being on the weekend and having some final exams scheduled on Saturday, students do not like not having weekend only reading days, and really do not like Saturday final exams.

Nearly half of those students who have the strongest preference for a five day Thanksgiving break mind somewhat to a great deal that readings are scheduled to fall on the weekend and mind a great deal that exams are scheduled to fall on Saturdays.

Thus, even though respondents were informed that a five day break will result in reading days being on the weekend, and some final exams will need to be scheduled on Saturday, having a five day Thanksgiving break is preferable. However students will not be happy with Saturday final exams.