

# Drake University Faculty Senate Minutes

September 23, 2020

President Shelley Fairbairn called the special meeting of the FY21 Faculty Senate to order at 3:30 pm, Wednesday, September 23, 2020. The following senators were present for all or part of the meeting: Natalie Banta Lynner, Klaus Bartschat, Michelle Bottenberg, Dan Chibnall, Renée Cramer, Debra DeLaet, Matt Dore, Catherine Gillespie, Anisa Hansen, Matthew Hayden, Sandy Henry, Paul Judd, Doug Stilwell for Kevin Lam, Peter Levi, Yasmina Madden, Joan McAlister, Lynn McCool, Erik Maki, Chip Miller, Jimmy Senteza, Priya Shenoy, Ron Torry, Jill VanWyke, Neil Ward, Matt Zwier, Shelley Fairbairn, and Carrie Dunham-LaGree.

## New Business

21-02 Motion: Move Spring Break from March 15-19, 2021 to January 25-29, 2021. Motion by Carrie Dunham-LaGree, seconded by Jimmy Senteza.

Erin Lain, Associate Provost for Campus Equity and Inclusion, shared a tool to help decision making become more equitable and inclusive of diverse ethnic and racial communities.

Adam Koch, Student Senate President

- This decision is highly important to students. More than 400 responded to the Student Senate poll
- Polled on three potential choices for moving Spring Break:
  - January 25-29: 15% favored
  - April 26-30: 75% favored (week after Drake Relays) with rest of semester virtual
  - 2 or 3 days at start of semester and the rest to be used throughout semester: 10% favored
- Biggest concerns expressed:
  - Impact on mental health: this is not just a physical health issue, it's a mental health issue
  - Spending 6 – 7 weeks at home would be difficult for some students
  - Impact on academics due to both mental health and ability to take finals at their best

## Discussion

- A number of Senators expressed that they were pleased to have student input, and were inclined to support them by moving Spring Break to April dates
- Concerned about mental health, particularly having students confined to their dorm rooms any longer than they need to be. With the April dates, students would be in dorms for online classes at both the beginning and end of the semester.
- Using the January dates remove a colder week from their schedules.
- Waiting another week may push us that much closer to a vaccine or better treatments.
- Concerned about the overlap with flu season. Better to be off campus that week in January.
- J-Term: The single most difficult part of J-term is ending the January class, and then the semester starting on the following Monday. This is a reason more students and faculty don't participate. The motion as written would solve this. Without travel during this J-term, this won't be such a big issue.
- Senator brought concern from a colleague: It's better to end earlier.
- SOE input: Most didn't care one way or another. Most were concerned about the students.

21-02 Motion to amend by Catherine Gillespie, seconded by Debra DeLaet: Move Spring Break from March 15-19, 2021 to ~~January 25-29, 2021~~ April 26-30, 2021.

- Discussion-
  - Would the subsequent weeks be online? Yes
  - Why was the first option the motion put forward? If there were three options, why was only one on the agenda? This was the one the most well developed. We don't know what the Relays will actually look like, athletically or socially.
  - Concern expressed for the number of days necessary for program experiences
  - Moving to April means last week or two will be online. Concern that many students don't like the online version of classes.
- Catherine asked to withdraw the motion
- Parliamentarian advised: The motion cannot be withdrawn without a vote.

21-02 Motion to amend: Withdrawal of motion to amend approved on a voice vote, with one abstaining.

### Discussion

- Senate can make changes to Spring Break dates, and the Provost can say classes will be online. If the January dates are used, as the students come back they will be tested for COVID, and they will have their first week remote
- J-term options have not been announced. We are checking with faculty to see if they wanted to take their classes online, or if they wanted to propose a new J-term class that includes first year students. The official announcement will go to students after faculty has made decisions.
  - Retention considerations: There is no evidence that having a J-term that FY students *can't* participate in has an effect on retention, but if they can take part, it may be a boon.
  - Registrar: we have control over when we publish the spring schedule, but students are already asking, and we publish as quickly as possible so students can meet with advisors well before registration. Registration starts Nov. 2. We can delay, but every day or week will compound the advising appointments of faculty.
- Concern expressed about moving students out of the dorms the weekend of the Relays. It will be done on a schedule, just as move-in was done.
- If Spring Break is in January, we would do any required virtual classes then. We could spend more time outside in the spring, and we don't have to go virtual at the end. If Spring Break is in April, we will have to "bookend" the semester with virtual classes.
- Questioned Student Senate poll: would there be selection bias in survey – may or may not be – those who want "normal feeling" spring break might have been more inclined to respond.
- Will dorms be open during J-term and during a January Spring Break? Yes, we will never turn away a student who needs to be on campus.
- What we seeing around the country is that a great plan can fail if it's unpopular with students. How will we get them invested so they will accept it?
- Spring break could be moved to the end of the semester, May 10-14.
- Ryan Zantingh: Moving Spring Break to the first week of semester would have an impact on distribution of financial aid. If the semester starts on Feb. 1, we would have to move back distribution of funds by one week. This might present a hardship for students if they have need for it for rent or other bills. Right now, they will be distributed Jan. 13 – 14. We would have to move it back to Jan. 20 – 21.
  - Could field experiences start early? If OT started field experiences Jan. 25, they could continue to receive their aid.
- Concern that moving Spring Break would be solving one problem to create a whole lot more. Can we just leave things the way they are now. Let's do nothing.
  - Most important: public health approach and health safety – resist keeping things the way they are. No evidence this will go away and no change needed.
  - Prediction of the course of the pandemic is we will be in this situation for at least

through next summer.

- We need to act now. We have not lived through a pandemic in winter in Iowa, confined to dorm rooms
- Are we really shortening the semester? Same number of weeks and weekend, just rearranging when we have them.
- Student teachers – would start whenever they have that planned now; independent of Spring Break move
- Do we have enough information right now that we could be supportive of moving forward?
  - We have to make a decision based on incomplete information.
  - Another week or two weeks will not give us more information

20-02 Motion: Voice vote is divided. Roll call: 11 Yea and 12 Nay. Motion rejected.

20-02 Motion: Move Spring Break from March 15-19, 2021 to April 26-30. Motion by Catherine Gillespie, seconded by Jimmy Senteza.

### **Discussion**

- Will graduation be a problem if students move home?
  - Typically seniors don't live in the dorms, but if they do, we would meet their needs to the end of the semester if they needed to stay to attend graduation.
  - Commencement will be masked and socially distanced, with limited guests
- Concerns – If there are Relays gatherings or parties, will students then be spreading cases into their home communities when they go home on Spring Break?
- Moving to April means the first two weeks would be remote, and the last week be remote, as well as final exams. That's 4 weeks of remote.
- Too many uncertainties – not clear to me what will happen; better to publish and then change it if necessary; can't figure out what potential consequences will be. Even if we vote, we may change it anyway
  - Provost Mattison: We cannot leave it as it is. Leaving it in the middle of March and coming back, this is not an option.
  - Irresponsible when the implication of Spring Break are known. We don't know what's going to happen, but we must make our best judgement.

Extend time of meeting by 15 minutes– approved on voice vote

20-02 Motion: Voice vote is divided. Roll call: 10 Yea and 13 Nay. Motion rejected.

20-02 Motion: Move Spring Break from March 15-19, 2021 to January 25-29, 2021. Motion by Renée Cramer, seconded by Matt Zwier.

### **Discussion**

- This is no Spring Break at all; it is cancelling spring break
- There are good reasons on both sides. I have taught a J-term, and that extra week would be a very welcome reprieve. Also see there is a student choice, and we need to take that mental health into account for them and us. I am not in favor.

20-02: Motion: Voice vote is divided. Roll call: 12 Yea and 11 Nay. Motion carried

Shelley Fairbairn adjourned the meeting at 5:15 pm.