

Robert K Doolos

From: Andrea Houston <ahoust2@lsu.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 30, 2012 5:17 PM
To: Kevin L. Cope; Bill Daly; George G Stanley; Joan M King; Kenneth W McMillin; Lawrence J Rouse; Kenneth J Fasching-Varner
Cc: Andrea Houston; David Kurpius; Fakhri Al-Bagdadi; Gerald M Knapp; Graham D Bodie; Guadalupe M Lamadrid; Ioan Negulescu; Lawrence J Smolinsky; Maud M Walsh; Nicole S Dahmen; Robert K Doolos; Sarah J Bartolome; Tgilmour Reeve; William L Douglas; Patricia B Beste
Subject: Intersession Report
Attachments: Intersession Summary Report.pdf

To: Faculty Senate Executive Committee
From: Admissions, Standards and Honors (ASH) Committee

Attached is our report on intersessions per your request. ASH believes that it is the responsibility of the faculty in each department to determine which of their courses (if any) are appropriate for an intersession offering and to take the appropriate assurance of learning measures to ensure their departmental learning goals and outcomes are being met for any courses (where appropriate) offered during intersession.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea L. Houston on behalf of the ASH committee

Dr. Andrea L. Houston
Information Systems and Decision Sciences
E. J. Ourso College of Business
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Voice: (225) 578-4069

Recommendations:

1. ASH recommends that intersessions are left alone. We base this recommendation on the following points.
 - a. **Academic responsibility** - Ultimately, the academic units on campus are responsible for the content and rigor of the courses that they teach. ASH believes that it is the responsibility of the departments to monitor their course offerings and determine if certain courses should be added or deleted from intersession offerings or if the content and rigor of intersession offerings should be changed. Now that the responsibility for scheduling intersession courses has been moved from Continuing Education to the Registrar's Office, departments have move oversight and control of their departmental intersession offerings.
 - b. **Student benefit** – according to interviews with students and the senior colleges, intersession offerings provide many benefits to students. Students can use intersession courses to catch up if they fall behind, to stay on track, and to take special classes that they could not take during a regular semester. Students and the advisors in the senior colleges believe that intersession offerings are helping with retention and with staying on track to graduate in 4 years. Both are increasingly important metrics which are being used to determine state funding.
 - c. **Enrichment opportunities** – We were surprised at the number of intersession offerings that were special topics, internships, or involved some kind of directed research or study. Several of this type of special offering involved field work or travel abroad. This is the kind of student enrichment experience that LSU wishes to encourage and support. Many students who cannot take advantage of these types of courses during a regular semester or summer can do so during an intersession.
 - d. **Revenue** - Data from budget and planning shows that intersessions generate revenue for the university. Last year, intersessions generated over 1million dollars. Trend data from the registrar's office indicate that the offerings and the enrollments in intersession are increasing. It is likely that intersessions will continue to generate an increased amount of revenue in the future. During one of the budget cutting exercises with Academic Affairs, cutting intersession and summer term was discussed. Bob Kuhn immediately pointed out that LSU must keep the buildings open and heated or cooled during down times (labs and experiments must be kept going, professors and graduate students are conducting research during these times, and various administrative and student services are open during these times). Therefore, it is in the best interest of the colleges to find revenue generating opportunities during down times to help off-set these costs. Intersessions are one way to accomplish this.

ASH has several times during the last few years been asked to review intersessions. It is likely that this is due to the belief that the gpas and the percentage of A's and B's earned during intersessions are higher than during regular semesters. This is correct. However, there are many plausible explanations for the higher gpas and higher percentage of A's and B's besides a lack of academic rigor. Some other plausible explanations offered by students, by professors and by instructors who have participated in intersessions include:

1. **Size of the class** – most intersession classes are smaller than the same class offered during a regular semester. Students benefit from more individualized attention.

2. **Motivation of the student** – many students taking these classes are more motivated than their counterparts taking courses during the regular semester either due to the fact that they are paying for the course (as opposed to TOPS or other forms of financial aid and scholarships), or because they are taking advantage of the fact that the intersession course can help them catch up, stay on-track, get ahead, get off academic probation, etc. In some cases, the student is repeating the course, so has already mastered at least some of the material.
3. **Focus of the student** – professors who teach during intersession and summer term indicated that attendance is much higher than during the regular semesters. Students report that during intersessions, they focus on a single course, and do very little other than attend classes, study, eat and sleep. Most do not work during an intersession. This higher level of focus and lower level of distractions could be responsible for better performance.

There are probably many other plausible explanations, but the point is that without a controlled study it is difficult to say why students perform better. To single out any one reason without such a study is not based on any kind of scientific method.

Another concern sometimes raised about intersession courses is that there are certain courses which may not be appropriate to offer in a compressed time frame while still meeting the learning outcomes and goals of the course. A review of the course offerings suggests that certain colleges and department faculty agree with that. The intersession offerings vary from a low of 0 (Coast & Environment) to a high of 72 (Humanities and Social Sciences). ASH believes that the faculty of each department is responsible for determining which of their course offerings (if any) are appropriate for the condensed time frame and intensity of intersessions. In addition, we believe that the faculty is responsible for monitoring assurance of learning, and learning outcomes for their courses regardless of when or how (web-based vs. traditional methods) those courses are taught.

To sum, ASH believes that the faculty in the academic units are the ones who are responsible for the academic rigor of their course offerings, regardless of when or how those courses are offered. It is the faculty's responsibility to monitor course offerings and to determine which courses are appropriate for compressed instruction formats (such as summer term and intersessions), and which courses are not. There are many tools available to measure assurance of learning, learning outcomes and student success. If there is concern about academic quality in any course, we believe that the faculty should be the ones to use these tools and to conduct a study using a valid research methodology to determine the cause of the problem and the validity of the concern. We believe that intersessions offer a wide variety of benefits to the students and to the institution, and should be continued.

Analysis Methodology

1. Started with 151 courses that have been taught in at least 1 intersession over the course of the last 3 years (Budget and Planning was the source of the data). Budget and Planning provided gpa and grade distribution for those courses for all instances the course was taught during that time period. For example, if a course was taught during Fall, Spring, Spring Intersession and Summer, the data for all 4 instances was provided.
2. Removed all Graduate Courses (8) leaving 143 courses.
3. Removed all Special Topics, Field Work, Independent Study, Directed Research or Directed Study, and Internship courses (variable credit, small classes, usually individual work) – 30 courses leaving 113 courses.
4. Of those remaining:
 - a. 34 Were General Education Courses
 - b. 31 Were 1000/2000 level courses (not Gen Ed)
 - c. 48 Were 3000/4000 level courses (not Gen Ed)
5. Gpa and grade distribution between Fall, Spring, Summer, and Intersessions (all combined) was then compared. Note that due to the significantly larger number of students in fall and spring classes, what is compared is percentages of grades (% of A's, etc.). For example in General Education courses, fall has 50,376 students, spring has 41,789 students, summer has 5,378 students and intersessions have 2,239 students. The percentages for intersessions and summer could be strongly affected by just a few outliers.
6. On an ad hoc basis several professors and instructors who teach both summer and intersessions were interviewed. Several students who have taken intersession and summer school courses were also interviewed.
7. Data was collected from budget and planning to determine the amount of revenue generated by intersession courses.
8. This information was presented to ASH and discussed.

The distribution of these offerings by college is:

College	Graduate	Special Topics	General Edu.	1000-2000	3000-4000	Total
Agriculture	2	6	0	2	0	10
Art and Design	1	7	2	3	3	16
Business	2	0	1	4	8	15
Coast & Environment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Human Sci & Education	3	6	0	9	5	23
Engineering	0	0	0	0	4	4
Honors	0	0	0	0	0	0
Humanities & Soc. Sci.	0	8	24	12	28	72
Mass Communication	0	1	0	0	0	1
Music & Dramatic Arts	0	1	0	0	0	1
Science	0	1	7	1	0	9
	8	30	34	31	48	151