April 22, 2011

To: RIT Community  
From: Dr. J. Fernando Naveda, Academic Calendar Conversion Director  
Re: Report from the Calendar Conversion Intersession Committee

Colleagues,

The attached report was submitted by the Calendar Conversion Intersession Committee; it was discussed by the Calendar Conversion Steering committee and sent to the Provost for his consideration.

In response, both President Destler and Provost Haefner are committed to the 5 x 3 semester calendar. They have also expressed their commitment to the January intersession component of our semester calendar with the expectation to start offering it in January 2014. An assessment of the intersession will be conducted during the 2017-2018 academic year.

The Provost is committed to identifying a financial model for both the summer and the intersession which appropriately incentivizes departments and faculty for their contributions to course offerings during these off-season periods.

This report can also be downloaded from the Calendar Conversion Website.
REPORT OF
THE
INTERSESSION SUB-COMMITTEE
SUBMITTED TO
J. FERNANDO NAVEDA
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
CALENDAR CONVERSION DIRECTOR
2 FEBRUARY 2011

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JOHN EDLUND, COLA
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DAN PHILLIPS, KGCOE
ZERBE SODERVICK, CIAS
JIM VALLINO, GCCIS
MAUREEN VALENTINE, CAST
PART I
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In August 2010, a sub-committee of the Calendar Conversion Steering Committee was formed and charged with developing guidelines and parameters to shape RIT’s three-week January intersession. Fulfilling this charge required the committee to conduct and analyze research on existing intersession programs; investigate the dispositions of current RIT students, faculty, and staff towards intersession; and identify any institutional constraints likely to affect the ultimate design of the RIT intersession.

Resources

The material provided in this report derives from the following sources:

- review of intersession models at > 20 colleges and universities (see pp. 16-17 for the list of schools);
- interviews with RIT staff managing those areas likely to be affected by the addition of intersession to the RIT calendar;
- review of the existing literature on current intersession trends;
- survey of 495 RIT students regarding intersession preferences;
- meeting with members of the Oracle team overseeing the SIS project;
- informal surveys of faculty regarding intersession preferences;
- continuing committee discussion.

Organization

The report is organized into five parts.

I. Introduction and Context
II. The Intersession Landscape:
   A. Activities and Models
   B. Administrative and Budgetary Approaches
III. Intersession at RIT
IV. Committee conclusions

Definitions

For the purposes of this discussion, we define “intersession” as a two- to five-week interval between academic terms or at the beginning of an academic term during which students may participate in a range of credit and/or non-credit educational activities on or off campus.

In the next section, we discuss intersession activities and intersession models. Activities are the various experiences available to students—for example, credit courses, research experiences, international travel. Models refer to that combination of activities that a particular school composes for intersession as well as the overall character and tone of the intersession.
PART II
THE INTERSESSION LANDSCAPE: ACTIVITIES AND MODELS

As of 2008, between 75 to 100 four-year colleges and universities included an intersession period in their academic calendar. The majority of intersessions occur in January, with a few taking place in late spring right before summer term. All the schools with which we consulted have a three- or four-week intersession period in January.

Activities

While our research revealed a considerable variety of intersession activities, that variety can be organized into four broad categories: credit courses; travel; non-credit experiences; and fee-based community offerings.

Credit courses. Most intersession schools offer credit-bearing courses, although there is considerable variety in the number of courses available, the format, and the status (new, experimental, existing). The University of Maryland offered approximately 140 courses from its standard catalogue this January; DePauw offered about forty—all of them unique to winter term; the University of Kentucky offered 27 standard courses. Many schools also offer online courses during intersession, in which case, the term can extend from the third week of December through the end of January intersession (Western New England College offers exclusively online courses).

Schools with more inventive intersession models encourage the offering of experimental courses, team-taught courses, student-run courses, and intersession-specific courses based upon student interest (these sub-categories are not mutually exclusive).

Travel. Travel is a popular intersession activity, and as with credit courses, there is considerable variety in the forms this activity takes. Most travel programs last only the three or four weeks of intersession, but it is possible to extend the trip length to five to six weeks if the departure date is immediately after final exams in December. Pacific University in Oregon and SUNY Geneseo are among those schools whose intersessions offer only travel activities.

Travel can be domestic or international, credit or non-credit, linked to a semester course or free-standing. Virtually all intersession trips are led by home-school faculty, although some schools welcome students from other institutions that share intersession dates.

Non-credit experiences. This is the most diverse activity category. Among the more common variants of non-credit experiences are

- community service;
- physical education courses/activities;
- academic support (tutoring, study skills, GRE/LSAT/MCAT prep);
- software instruction;
- coop/Internship;
- leadership experience;
- “how-to” workshops (massage therapy, weaving, drawing, playing an instrument);
- research projects;
- independent study;
- getting to know your city;

1 In a 2008 New York Times article, Stainburn puts the number at approximately 75. The 2001 AACARAO calendar study uses the figure 3.2%, but that figure includes 2-year colleges.
• Working independently on project, thesis, etc.:
• Training and professional development.

Outreach Education. With the exception of travel, any of these classes of activities can be made available to off-campus communities. In every example we reviewed, fees were charged to off-campus participants.

Existing Models

Many intersession schools combine at least two categories of activities in their intersession offerings. Some models are designed around a particular educational philosophy or institutional brand, while others appear to lack an informing rationale. We found it useful to view the various intersession models we encountered as occupying points along a “character continuum” that ranges from “traditional” to “inventive,” as below.

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traditional          hybrid         inventive
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For the purpose of illustration, we offer here three existing models occupying each of the three points, on the assumption that this conceptualization will aid further discussion of the direction RIT’s intersession will take.

Traditional: University of Kentucky. Kentucky’s “Winter Intersession,” which is administered through the College of Continuing Education is designed to provide students with a wide range of educational opportunities to concentrate on a single area of study or master a skill, enrich study beyond the normal curriculum, lighten fall or spring semester academic loads, participate in an internship or educational travel, accelerate academic progress, or remain on schedule for graduation (emphasis added).

A review of Kentucky’s January 2011 offerings suggests an emphasis on the three purposes italicized above: lighten academic load; accelerate academic progress; remain on schedule for graduation. Actual offerings (27 classes), on the other hand, appear to be limited to existing credit-bearing courses (see http://www.uky.edu/Winter/).

Other schools we place in the traditional model are Kansas State, University of Maryland, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Hybrid: Cornell University

Cornell’s “Winter Session,” administered through the College of Continuing Education, offers existing credit-bearing courses; credit-bearing off-campus study (international and domestic); and credit-bearing distance learning courses.

According to the Winter Session homepage, “Winter Session is a great opportunity to earn up to four credits in just a few weeks, enjoy small classes, concentrate on intensive study, and get to know your professor and classmates” (http://www.sce.cornell.edu/ws/index.php). While the majority of credit courses offered during intersession are standard existing courses, students are encouraged to design their own courses through independent study. A host of extracurricular activities are also included in Cornell’s model.
Inventive: DePauw University

DePauw’s “Winter Term” combines multiple activity categories, but every offering is unique to intersession. All offerings are mission-related, reflecting “DePauw’s serious commitment to non-traditional, experiential learning” and designed to provide “adventurous, intellectual exploration in an atmosphere with a reduced emphasis on grades” (http://www.depauw.edu/admin/winterterm/).

DePauw is one of the few schools we consulted that publishes intersession goals on its website. Students may

- study or work intensively on a specific problem or on a topic of significant personal interest and educational merit;
- explore a new subject;
- work collaboratively on a project with faculty members or professionals who have similar interests;
- study a problem or topic from a cross-disciplinary perspective;
- learn and practice a new skill;
- participate in a valuable group experience in a work, performance, or educational setting;
- explore a potential career or experience a field of work related or unrelated to one’s field of study;
- Learn about oneself in relation to potential majors;
- Work and live with others while providing a community service;
- Participate in an alternative community experience.

(http://www.depauw.edu/admin/winterterm/).

Examples of credit courses offered during the 2011 intersession are

- Soccer and Society in Europe;
- StarCraft and eSports: The Rise of Competitive Videogaming;
- Fishing in Literature (“Everything we read will connect, somehow, to fishing. Because, really, what else is there to write about? Nothing else matters”); and
- Kaffee und Kuchen (“Baking will be an important part of the course but students will also have daily reading assignments and will give reports on various aspects of food and the cultural significance of food (including the history of spices).”)

Off-campus study and service projects are similarly original

- Creativity and Culture in the Southwest: Ghost Ranch;
- Sundance/Slamdance (http://www.depauw.edu/admin/winterterm/studyservice.asp).

MIT, Hampshire College, and Colby College are also good examples of this more inventive approach.

PART II
THE INTERSESSION LANDSCAPE: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY APPROACHES

Intersessions are administered and financed in multiple ways, depending upon the volume and variety of offerings, the size of the institution, and financial resources.

Administration and Campus Operations

Responsible offices. In most large research universities with robust intersession offerings, intersessions are administered through a continuing/extended/professional education unit
(Maryland, Kansas State, University of Kentucky, UMass Amherst, Cornell, Boise State). In some cases, intersessions are run out of the registrar’s office (Adelphi) or a dedicated intersession office (MIT, St. Olaf, Oberlin). Activity offerings for January intersessions are listed early in the fall term and registration usually takes place by mid-October.

**Student participation.** Some schools require students to participate in an identified number of intersessions during their college career (St. Olaf, Williams). Others, like Hampshire College, strongly encourage student participation. In no instance did we discover a school that prohibits non-participating students from returning to campus after the December vacation; campuses appear to be open and fully operational during these periods with all matriculated students welcome.

Most schools limit students to a single three- or four-credit course (University of Kentucky, St. Olaf, Adelphi, Cornell, for example).

**Student housing.** Campus housing is typically available to students during intersession period, usually at a reasonable pro-rated cost. Some schools allow students to return to their own rooms/apartments; others consolidate participating students in a strategic location.

**Campus operations and staffing.** Regardless of the character and size of the intersession term, intersession campuses are fully to largely operational during this three- to four-week period.

**Term, interval, or session?** Regarding their status within the academic calendar, intersessions are categorized in one of three ways:

- as free-standing terms with stand-alone administrative processes—registration, billing, payment, and grading;
- as true intervals between academic terms with exclusively non-graded activities or pass/fail grading (Williams);
- as an academic session folded into the previous or following term (Boise State, University of Minnesota, Adelphi).

**Budget**

At most of the schools with which we consulted, intersessions are expected to break even financially. There are exceptions to this: Williams College appears not to charge students for any intersession activities. One school surveyed by the University Leadership Council makes intersession courses free to students while remunerating faculty.²

**Incremental costs.**

*Campus Operations.* For schools initiating intersession at a time when the campus has been historically closed, there are real incremental operating expenses (facilities, staffing, etc). Where intersession occurs during a period when the campus has historically been open (as with RIT), operating costs might be seen as unrealized savings opportunities, but not as incremental costs to the university.

*Faculty participation.* In schools where incremental operating costs are negligible, the single greatest incremental cost is faculty compensation for teaching credit courses. All eight of the large public universities surveyed by the University Leadership Council in 2009 provide additional compensation to faculty teaching credit courses during intersession, and all eight make intersession teaching completely voluntary. Compensation is calculated in one of the following ways:

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² Not surprisingly, intersession course offerings increased by 400% in the eight years following this decision. (This study did not identify the university’s it reviewed.) (7)
• based upon annual faculty salary (similar to summer teaching calculation at RIT);
• flat compensation equivalent to per course adjunct pay;
• adjustment of semester teaching load (one three-credit intersession course takes the place of one three-credit semester course that year).

Schools committed to successful intersessions must be willing to pay faculty a reasonable sum for what will likely be an intensive and challenging undertaking. Graduate students and adjuncts are also paid for intersession teaching.

Faculty, staff, and students facilitating workshops, non-credit classes, and travel usually receive additional compensation, provided the activity is truly additional to the unit mission or job description.

Additional staffing. Administering a robust, heavily subscribed intersession is time-consuming; a number of schools we studied have an intersession coordinator or director; some fold intersession oversight into existing position descriptions.

Revenues. The most significant revenue sources for intersession operation are student tuition and continuing education charges.

Tuition. How intersession schools set and manage tuition and fees depends upon a number of factors: faculty pay; anticipated number of participating students; revenue generated by off-campus participants; cost to the university of designing and administering intersession.

The list below represents the range of existing approaches to intersession tuition for matriculated students:

• no tuition charged (except for travel, in which case students always pay their expenses);
• discounted tuition;
• standard per-credit tuition charged with or without application of existing aid allowed.

Continuing Education/Professional Development. Intersessions have the potential to bring in significant dollars from non-university participants in credit courses and activities. (Maryland, UMass Amherst, Hampshire). Schools that are very aggressive about generating this kind of revenue not only open many of the courses and activities to non-students, but also develop seminars, workshops, and training courses designed for specific audiences.

PART III
INTERSESSION AT RIT

The intersession models and approaches discussed in Parts I and II reflect a wide span of exciting possibilities. But before RIT can move forward with its own design, we must recognize those constraints and opportunities that are peculiar to RIT and that will inevitably impact the ultimate model we design.

Budgeting/Operational Parameters

Not surprisingly, the most significant constraints are budgetary and operational. Based upon a series of interviews conducted by committee members with key RIT managers, we identified a set of governing parameters. Summarized in the following table, these parameters should be construed as guidelines, not as final intersession policies.
## Opportunities: Potential RIT Contributors

Committee members also interviewed representatives from those RIT offices/programs likely to contribute activities to intersession. While we doubtless missed some offices, the following summary of our interviews indicates considerable interest in intersession participation.

### Parameters in Brief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division/Office</th>
<th>Interviewee(s)</th>
<th>Parameters in Brief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance &amp; Administration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Office</td>
<td>Ross Koenig, Kerry Phillips</td>
<td>• Intersession must have a balanced budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No additional university funds for intersession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Deans may use summer teaching budget for intersession teaching, but no additional $ for those lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Howard Ward, Mary Niedermaier</td>
<td>• Campus housing will be open to full-time matriculated students (regardless of intersession participation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students may occupy their own rooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pro-rated housing fee will be charged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No additional expenses, though lost opportunity costs (of keeping housing closed).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Services</td>
<td>Charlene McMahon</td>
<td>• Will accommodate all students on campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Jan Reich</td>
<td>• Facilities will be open and operating as usual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No additional expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Financial Services</td>
<td>Mary Beth Nally</td>
<td>• Tuition must be billed based solely upon intersession credits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• System-wise, there is room for flexibility regarding tuition rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Billing based upon total credits during intersession and spring (where total credits &lt; maximum semester credits allowed) would require considerable customization and may be impossible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Participating students would have no financial holds and pay for intersession up-front.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar</td>
<td>Joe Loffredo</td>
<td>• New student system (SIS) must treat intersession as stand-alone term, with separate registration and grading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Registration for intersession should be in early October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• If differential tuition charged for existing courses, course names and #’s would have to be different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• If intersession should be administered through Registrar’s office, additional staffing may be necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Life</td>
<td>Chuck Lamb</td>
<td>• Dorms will be open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Possible need for additional RA’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pro-rated housing fee will apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students may occupy their own rooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMCS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>Verna Hazen</td>
<td>• No additional financial aid for intersession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Existing financial aid will not apply to intersession tuition or fees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Opportunities: Potential RIT Contributors**

Committee members also interviewed representatives from those RIT offices/programs likely to contribute activities to intersession. While we doubtless missed some offices, the following summary of our interviews indicates considerable interest in intersession participation.
We did not formally interview any college representatives. Committee members (1 faculty and/or administrator from each college) did informal surveys of their colleagues and in every case discovered some interest in offering credit courses, non-credit training (e.g., learning a new software), and professional development for community members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division/Office</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Additional Cost to Student</th>
<th>Additional Cost to RIT</th>
<th>Additional Revenue to RIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Learning</td>
<td>R. Osgood</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Standard tuition</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>Ty Stewart</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Travel expenses, tuition, fees</td>
<td>Faculty expenses, faculty pay</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>Committee members</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Tuition for credit courses; some fees for non-credit</td>
<td>Faculty pay</td>
<td>Possible (non-community members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach Education (CMS)</td>
<td>Kitren VanStrander</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>Faculty pay</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support Ctr.</td>
<td>Paula French</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None to minimal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Restoration Program</td>
<td>Dawn Herman</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None to minimal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Center</td>
<td>Chris Mook</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None to minimal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYE</td>
<td>N. Boulais</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None to minimal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEOP</td>
<td>Boulais</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, Community Serv.</td>
<td>P. Walker/G. VanLaeken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None to minimal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TriO</td>
<td>Boulais</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>Schrouder</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (modest)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMCS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Ed. and Coop</td>
<td>M. Contomanolis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance and Administration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Sarah Pillittere</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No (or to staff)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 We did not formally interview any college representatives. Committee members (1 faculty and/or administrator from each college) did informal surveys of their colleagues and in every case discovered some interest in offering credit courses, non-credit training (e.g., learning a new software), and professional development for community members.
Opportunities: Student Interest
At the suggestion of Student Government, the committee developed a short Clipboard survey
designed to gauge student interest in intersession. The survey elicited 495 responses, including a
number of thoughtful comments and suggestions. While many of these 495 students will have
graduated from RIT by 2014, we view these results as a useful bellwether of student opinion.

Responses to the general question about student interest fell out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would like to be at RIT during intersession.</th>
<th>Definitely Not</th>
<th>Probably Not</th>
<th>I would consider it</th>
<th>Probably</th>
<th>Definitely Yes</th>
<th>Did not answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= 78.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpreting answers from “I would consider it” to “Definitely yes” as indications of some interest,
we see a 78.5% level of interest among those students who answered this question.

Students were asked to indicate their level of interest in the following five types of activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following are appealing to me:</th>
<th>Definitely Not</th>
<th>Probably Not</th>
<th>I would consider it</th>
<th>Probably</th>
<th>Definitely Yes</th>
<th>Did not answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International trip</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= 79.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-major credit course in area of interest counting towards graduation</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= 92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit course required in major</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= 92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-credit activity</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= 73.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, we interpret these results as indicative of considerable student interest in exploring
intersession. (All student comments can be found in Appendix A of this report.)
PART IV
COMMITTEE CONCLUSIONS

The committee’s research and discussions extended over a period of almost 16 weeks, during which time

- 15 committee meetings were held;
- 17 meetings between sub-sets of the committee and RIT personnel took place;
- a student survey was designed and administered;
- half a dozen phone interviews with intersession school personnel were conducted; and
- the web sites of an additional 20 intersession schools were carefully reviewed and discussed.

Through the course of this intensive study, a set of first principles emerged that we deem to be critical to the success of an RIT intersession. Whatever form the RIT model may take, we strongly recommend adherence to these principles.

Principles

Principle 1: Student participation drives the success of intersessions.

In our review of intersession universities, those that struggled with, and in some cases eliminated, intersession were those that couldn’t bring enough students back to campus after the December vacation. Successful intersessions occur on lively campuses, which is another way of saying that successful intersessions attract student participation. We all know that even a fully-staffed campus lacking students feels anything but lively. There are any number of ways by which to attract students to intersession, but the first principle is, they must come.

We don’t know yet what the right level of student participation for RIT is, but if we allow non-participating matriculated students to return to campus—students who work in RIT offices or students engaged in a research, thesis, or design project—we will more likely draw a critical and diverse mass of students.

Recognizing that the total price tag for one 3-credit intersession class and pro-rated housing fees could easily exceed $3000, we urge the ultimate decision makers to be imaginative and thoughtful about ways to mitigate intersession costs for students.

Principle 2: Robust participation by faculty and staff in the design and delivery of intersession will drive student participation.

Causally related to Principle 1, faculty participation is also clearly necessary to successful intersessions, though the form this participation takes can vary. Intersessions are wonderful opportunities for students and faculty to interact (often in non-conventional ways), and it is unlikely that students would find appealing any intersession model that wasn’t popular with faculty. A corollary of this principle is that, in the view of the committee, intersession teaching should be both voluntary and rewarded, not, except in extraordinary circumstances, required of faculty as part of the annual load.

Principle 3: Limit credits. As the committee grew fond of remarking, completing a 3- or 4-credit course in three weeks is like drinking through the proverbial fire hose. A three-credit intersession course will likely meet Monday-Friday for three hours a day and a four-credit course, four hours a day. Any number of credits beyond four is certain to discourage learning, if not sanity. Most of the intersessions we studied limited students to one full-credit course per intersession, a requirement we hope would apply at RIT.
Principle 4: Try for something different. Intersessions that appear to be particularly appealing to students and faculty are those that manage a temporary “transformation” of the campus environment. A transformed campus environment is one in which the typical academic tone is somehow different from normal. Williams College manages this transformation by insisting that students do “something different” during intersession—something they would not do during the regular terms. Hampshire College lets undergraduates teach courses. DePauw develops intriguing experimental courses. Other institutions offer speaker series or film series. The common element of all these examples is that intersession is not just the “same old, same old” bottled in three weeks.

Principle 5: Intersession is about education. Obvious to some, this principle bears highlighting. Intersessions can be fun, exciting, and different, but their bottom-line intent is educational. However transformed the tone or character of the campus during intersession, the point is not for the university to depart from its educational mission. Rather, in the view of the committee, one of the major points of intersession is to highlight alternative educational forms and transactions.

General Framework

Although the committee was not charged to develop an intersession model for RIT, it was inevitable that a vision or multiple visions would emerge from our research and discussions. We started our work in September with a diversity of expectations regarding the RIT intersessions, but by the close of our work in January, we were 100% united in a broadly-stroked vision of what the RIT intersession could and even should look like. We exercise committee privilege by offering the general contours of our committee vision here.

Using the continuum introduced on p. 4 of this report, the committee’s preferred model rests about 2/3 of the way towards “inventive” on the “traditional/hybrid/inventive” scale. This model would include the following:

- a limited number of widely-required existing credit courses (e.g., data analysis, calculus, general education);
- an equivalent or even greater number of new, experimental, interdisciplinary credit courses (similar to DePauw and MIT);
- multiple opportunities for faculty-led educational travel (international and domestic, credit and non-credit);
- non-credit courses, workshops, seminars open to students and community members (with the latter paying a fee);
- environmental enrichment activities such as speakers series, entertainment, intramural tournaments, innovation tournaments, etc.

Members of all campus constituencies should be involved in designing the specific activities for each intersession, with the possibility of developing theme-based intersessions focusing on such topics as innovation, interdisciplinarity, or creativity. The RIT intersession would be stylistically in keeping with the current branding initiative—bold, imaginative, different—and would thus be a powerful reflection of our strategic intent.
Every effort should be made to make participation attractive to students, faculty, and staff. We believe there are a variety of pricing arrangements regarding credit courses that will satisfy students and faculty while still ensuring a balanced intersession budget.¹

**Next Steps: From Background to Design**

We recommend that sometime in early AY 2012-2013, a second intersession committee be constituted and charged to develop a specific intersession design, budget, and administrative model. This committee should contain faculty, staff, and students, and should devote considerable time to soliciting ideas from the community. Based upon our conversations with these constituencies, we know there will be abundant stores of imagination at the disposal of this committee.

We have specified AY 2012-13 as the beginning of this new committee’s work for two reasons. First, it makes sense to initiate the design phase at a time when there is a maximum number of students on campus who will be “living through” the first intersession and who thus will have a stake in its design. Second, there is, from our point of view, nothing to be gained by rushing to run the first intersession in January 2014. For the best likelihood of ongoing popularity, the first intersession has to be a smashing success, and an 18-month design period (with four of those months being our first experience of semesters), may not be enough time. If it turns out that there is student interest in taking required credit-bearing courses in January 2014, a limited model could probably be delivered then, with the full roll-out of the RIT Intersession in January 2015.

The intersession period provides RIT an exciting opportunity to design from the ground up a distinctive, exciting, and even irresistible educational model. RIT could cut new territory with its intersession, shaping it in such a way that it extends our distinctive, exciting, and irresistible “brand.” The committee was heartened by the enthusiasm and imagination we encountered in every conversation about intersession, and we are confident that the next committee will find abundant supplies of will, commitment, and ideas.

¹ For example, consider this calculation. If we paid faculty $5500 per 3-4-credit course (considerably more than the highest adjunct rate) and charged a flat tuition rate of $500 per 3-4-credit course, and required a minimum of 11 students in order for a class to run, tuition would balance expense.
References


California State University-Fullerton.  http://intersession.fullerton.edu/.


DePauw University.  http://www.depauw.edu/admin/winterterm/.


Kansas State University.  http://www.dce.k-state.edu/courses/intersession/.


RIT Interviewees

Nicole Boulais, Learning Support & Assessment
Manny Contomonolis, Coop and Career Services
   Paula French, Academic Support Center
   Verna Hazen, Financial Aid
Dawn Herman, College Restoration Program
   David Hostetter, ITS
   Ross Koenig, Budget Office
   Gloria Kunik, PeopleSoft
   Chuck Lamb, Residence Life
   Joe Loffredo, Registrar
Charlene McMahon, Dining Services
Chris Mook, English Language Center
Mary Beth Nally, Student Financial Services
Mary Niedermaier, Housing Operations
   Robert Osgood, Online Learning
   Kerry Phillips, Budget
   Sarah Pillitere,
   Jan Reich, Facilities
   Michelle Schrouder, Wellness
   Ty Stewart, Study Abroad
Kitren VanStrander, Outreach Education,
   Center for Multidisciplinary Studies