

2016-2017 Year-End Committee Report

Committee:	Educational Affairs
Chair:	Baron Reed
# of Meetings:	6 (plus over two dozen meetings of the chair with other groups)

Completed Business and/or Accomplishments

In response to a request from the administration to examine the academic calendar, we considered a vast array of ways to change it. We conducted a survey to gather feedback from the Senate at large on early versions of the most promising proposals. The chair met with Senate leadership, people from the Provost's Office, and a large number of other groups on the Evanston campus. We formulated seven proposals for modifying the calendar—to alleviate student stress, to minimize problems caused by a mismatch between our quarter system and external internships, etc., and to ensure that the university continues to be a welcoming environment as the demographics of the undergraduate population passes. Those proposals were considered by the full Senate at the May meeting and passed unanimously. We are waiting to hear from the administration, which has promised to consult with the Senate as they study the resolutions and possibly move toward implementing them.

Unfinished/Continuing Business

We discussed several other issues this year. One of the central ones has to do with student stress levels caused by a culture of choice and maximization—i.e., students are admitted on the basis of a long list of accomplishments, and Northwestern continues to pitch the idea of combining excellence in every imaginable respect as the ideal for its students (“and is in our DNA”). This issue may need to be addressed through thoughtful changes to admissions and to the way in which we present the university's ideal—both to outside groups and to our own students.

We also discussed the Black Student Experience Task Force's report, especially its call for faculty to display greater cultural competence. The chair reached out to Jabbar Bennett (Associate Provost for Diversity & Inclusion) twice to see if the Senate could be helpful here but was not able to secure a meeting.

New Business for Next Year

A major issue for next year will be CTECs. The Registrar is currently putting together a group that will look at how the CTEC system can be improved. The chair asked her to include someone from the Senate on this committee, and she affirmed that she would do so.

Other issues include examination of the number of credits required for graduation. This is, ultimately, a matter for the different schools to decide, but the committee may nevertheless be able to play a constructive role in their deliberations, especially in conveying to each other the different schools' views of the matter.

The committee may also look into clarifying, and perhaps improving, the policies for team-teaching.