

# CHARTING the COURSE

How new, flexible course-scheduling options are helping students succeed

By Steven Blackburn

Community colleges and four-year institutions are offering more flexible schedules to accommodate the needs of today's college students—who are often working adults.

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Options include courses that begin later in the semester, mini-semester of various lengths, and block schedules that allow undergrads to enroll in just one course at a time.

But planning and implementing a flexible academic calendar requires significant communication and collaboration among multiple departments. Here's how several higher ed institutions have gone against the grain in scheduling courses. ▶

## Offices to involve in flexible course-scheduling efforts

- Recruitment/marketing
- Enrollment management
- Student success/retention
- Advising
- Registrar
- Bursar
- Academic schools



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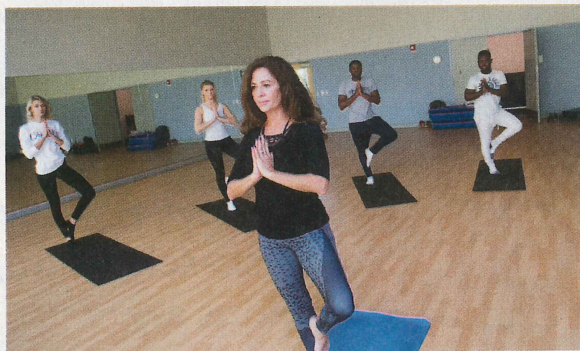


## Cabrini University (Pa.)

**What:** Accelerated courses in online or hybrid formats; offered in weeks six through eight of each semester

**Why:** By week three or four, students in the wrong class usually begin struggling—whether the problem is the content, other obligations or the professor’s teaching style not being compatible, says Kimberly Boyd, associate dean for retention and student success. Late-start courses allow students who drop a class to enroll in another course and stay on track.

**How:** Six years ago, Center for Student Success leaders



**NAMASTE, STUDENTS**—Besides academically rigorous accelerated courses, Cabrini offers lighter, one-credit late-start options, such as a yoga course that includes the discipline’s culture and history.

asked academic department chairs to redesign classes—often those without prerequisites—that would translate well into a new late-start, accelerated course format.

“Faculty chairs now know this is an option when they are setting up the course roster for the next semester,” says Michelle Filling-Brown, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. She shares the information with Boyd’s office early so the late-start courses are on their radar.

Students planning to withdraw from courses must now meet with an advisor. “It’s in this crucial advising moment when we are often encouraging students to pick up these late-start classes,” says Filling-Brown.

Boyd’s office advertises the late-start option via email, print, social media and digital monitors on campus to students who are withdrawing from classes. The registrar’s office manages course enrollment through the learning management system, which is overseen by a head instructional designer. The retention piece also gets attention. “We need to be mindful that these students could also struggle in this accelerated format,” says Boyd. “So we inform academic tutoring and make sure other support structures are in place.”

**Advice:** “Department chairs usually have a lot on their plates at the start of the year, so having the option to teach an accelerated course in the fall gives them breathing room, since they wouldn’t have to start teaching until later in the semester,” says Filling-Brown.

## Lone Star College (Texas)

**What:** Six-, eight- and 12-week “minimesters” embedded throughout the academic year, plus three-week minimesters in the winter and between the spring and summer terms

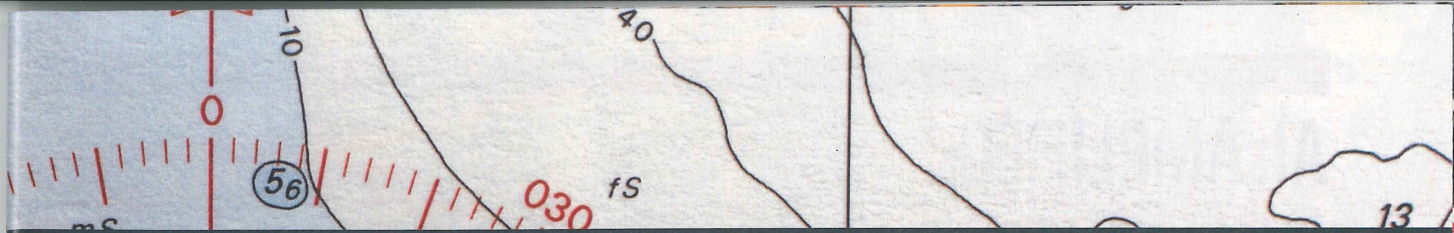
**Why:** Lone Star, a system of two- and four-year institutions, had received many inquiries from students about adding courses between semesters. When Chancellor Stephen Head was president at a single campus, the idea was piloted and officials decided to spread it systemwide. “Now, Lone Star basically functions 365 days per year, except major holidays such as Christmas or Thanksgiving,” he says.

**How:** The Office of Student Success & Completion reviews minimester course ideas from academic chairs to ensure they align with building schedules and have the appropriate start and end dates. “We also meet frequently with des-

ignated employees in enrollment management to provide enrollment data,” says Connie Garrick, executive director of records and enrollment services/registrar. Data analysis helps identify the time of day and the best method to offer these courses.

As an incentive for teaching these classes, faculty can choose between additional compensation and taking a semester off. Because Lone Star is well funded, officials are able to pay for that extra help, Head says.

**Advice:** Be sure to consider revenue implications of flexible scheduling options. When Lone Star tried reducing tuition for weekend courses, the courses didn’t pull in enough students to be financially viable. “To reduce tuition, you need more students taking these courses, and they weren’t enrolling,” says Head.



## Guilford College (N.C.)

**What:** The Edge curriculum, which launched this fall and combines a three-week block consisting of one class and a 12-week term of three courses each semester; fall semester begins with a three-week block plan and then switches to a 12-week format, and spring semester reverses that schedule

**Why:** “We wanted to somehow connect liberal arts education with more applied experiences, whether they be internships or travel opportunities,” says Provost and Academic Dean Frank Boyd. Students can travel during the three-week block and then take more traditional courses during the 12-week session. In a future three-week block course, students will study management at a nonprofit in India.

**How:** Officials decided to shift to a new academic calendar in January 2018. “Once we cleared that decision, things picked up steam quickly to finish in 18 months,” says Boyd.

A curriculum transition committee of nominated faculty worked closely with the registrar’s office and Boyd’s two associate deans. After it was determined that the fall semester should begin with a block, the committee began working out details such as sequencing and staffing.

Guilford administrators are providing stipends for faculty to restructure the entire gen-ed system and every major over



**INTO THE FIELD**—This fall, one course will explore the intersection of race, class and the housing market through literature. During the three-week term, students will visit the town of Greensboro to use GIS technology, map out foreclosures and talk with officials.

the course of three summers. Other supports include workshops to help faculty develop new pedagogical approaches.

**Advice:** Get administrators and faculty across campus involved in change. “This restructuring project was possible due to transparent academic leadership,” says Boyd. “An essential element in institutional change is that everyone has to be a part of that change.” This includes making sure faculty leaders are involved in the change management process.

## Tyler Junior College (Texas)

**What:** Two consecutive eight-week semesters of cohorts-based, associate degree courses, with the first block consisting of gen-ed courses and prerequisites to the classes in the second block; also, five-week mini-semesters of hybrid bachelor’s degree courses in applied and health care technologies that begin in September, October and November

**Why:** The bachelor’s degree mini-semesters target adults working in the health care industry. The two consecutive blocks are for more technical associate degree courses such as automotive and welding. For the latter, students can enroll in up to three courses during the first eight-week semester before moving on to the second. “This format allows working adults to get through these technical programs more quickly,” says Registrar Britt Sabota.

**How:** The college marketed these changes via email, social media and text to the best student candidates so they could create academic goals and plan work schedules accordingly.

Advisors and professors in the two eight-week semester associate degree program also communicate the addition of the five-week bachelor’s mini-semester program to students who first earned an associate degree at TJC and return for further study. Program coordinators report start dates for these courses to the registrar for course scheduling. While the first five-week semester begins later than the traditional 16-week semester, the last five-week semester ends at the same time. “The beauty of the five-week terms is that they all fit within our 16-week shell. It’s neat and tidy,” Sabota says.

**Advice:** “I don’t have magic advice except that you might have to be willing to work late and on weekends,” says Sabota. “Many of our students have classes on Saturday and in the evening, so our work schedules have had to adapt to mirror that.” **UB**

*Steven Blackburn is associate editor of UB.*

## Contra Costa CCD 2019-20 Academic/Classified Calendar

JULY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	H	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

4 Independence Day Holiday

JANUARY 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			H	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	H	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

1 Winter Recess/ Holidays  
2 Winter Classes Begin  
20 Dr. MLK, Jr. Day Holiday  
21 Winter Classes End  
22-23 FLEX Days (Optional)  
24 Mandatory Faculty Service Day  
27 Spring M-F Classes Begin

AUGUST 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

21-22 FLEX Days (Optional)  
23 Mandatory Faculty Service Day  
26 Fall M-F Classes Begin

FEBRUARY 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	H	N
N	H	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

1-2 S/S Classes Begin  
10 Census Date  
14 Lincoln Day Holiday  
15-16 No S/S Classes  
17 Washington Day Holiday

SEPTEMBER 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	H	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	H	28
29	30					

2 Labor Day Holiday  
7-8 S/S Classes Begin  
9 Census Date  
27 Native American Day Holiday

MARCH 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

29-31 Spring Recess

OCTOBER 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

APRIL 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

1-4 Spring Recess

NOVEMBER 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	H	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	H	H	N

11 Veterans Day Holiday  
28-29 Thanksgiving Day and Day After Holidays  
30 No S/S Classes

MAY 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	H	26	27	28	29	30
31						

16-17 S/S Classes End  
16-22 Finals  
22 Spring M-F Classes End  
25 Memorial Day Holiday

DECEMBER 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
N	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	H	21
22	H	H	H	H	H	28
29	H	H				

1 No S/S Classes  
9-15 Finals  
13 M-F Classes End  
14-15 S/S Classes End  
20-31 Winter Recess / Holidays

JUNE 2020						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

15 Summer Classes Begin

Instructional Meetiig Days	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Instructional Days for 175 Requirement	Mandatory Faculty Svc Day (FLEX)	Total Days	Flex Obligation (C & A/C)
FALL	14	14	16	16	15	14	14	94	1	95	Su, M, Th, F, Sa
SPRING	14	15	16	16	16	15	14	94	1	95	Su, M, F, Sa
										4	FLEX (Max 2 Var)
										194	Total Service Days

## University of California Term Dates 2018-2019 Academic Year

<b>Winter Quarter 2019 Spring Semester 2019 (UCB/UCM Only)</b>	<b>Berkeley</b>	<b>Davis</b>	<b>Irvine</b>	<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>Merced</b>	<b>Riverside</b>	<b>Santa Barbara</b>	<b>Santa Cruz</b>	<b>San Diego</b>
Earliest Possible Arrival Date	12/16	12/3	12/3	12/3	12/23	12/3	12/8	12/5	12/3
Latest Possible Arrival Date	1/16	1/6	1/3	1/6	1/17	1/2	1/3	1/6	1/6
Mandatory Orientation/Check-in	1/17	1/15	1/4	1/4 or 1/7 & 1/4 or 1/8	1/18	1/3	1/4	1/7	1/8
Program Start Date *	1/15	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/22	1/2	1/7	1/4	1/2
Instruction Begins	1/22	1/7	1/7	1/7	1/22	1/7	1/7	1/7	1/7
Acad/Administrative Holidays	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18, 3/29	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18	1/21 2/18
Spring Holiday	3/25-3/29	3/30	3/30	3/30	3/25-3/28	3/29	3/29	3/29	3/29
Instruction Ends	5/3	3/15	3/15	3/15	5/10	3/15	3/15	3/15	3/15
Final Exams	5/13-5/17	3/18-3/22	3/16-3/22	3/18-3/22	5/11-5/17	3/16-3/22	3/16-3/22	3/16-3/20	3/16-3/23
Term Ends	5/17	3/22	3/22	3/22	5/17	3/22	3/22	3/22	3/23

\*Arrive no more than 30 days prior to this date

<b>Spring Quarter 2019</b>	<b>Berkeley</b>	<b>Davis</b>	<b>Irvine</b>	<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>Merced</b>	<b>Riverside</b>	<b>Santa Barbara</b>	<b>Santa Cruz</b>	<b>San Diego</b>
Instruction Begins		4/1	4/1	4/1		4/1	4/1	4/1	4/1
Acad/Administrative Holiday	5/27	5/27	5/27	5/27	5/27	5/27	5/27	5/27	5/27
Instruction Ends		6/6	6/7	6/7		6/7	6/7	6/4	6/7
Final Exams		6/7-6/13	6/8-6/13	6/8-6/14		6/8-6/14	6/8-6/14	6/10-6/13	6/8-6/14
Term Ends		6/13	6/14	6/14		6/14	6/14	6/13	6/14

**Note: All dates are subject to change; TBA = To be announced (Updated 11/2/18)**

## University of California Term Dates 2018-2019 Academic Year

<b>Fall Term 2018</b>	<b>Berkeley</b>	<b>Davis</b>	<b>Irvine</b>	<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>Merced</b>	<b>Riverside</b>	<b>Santa Barbara</b>	<b>Santa Cruz</b>	<b>San Diego</b>
Earliest Possible Arrival Date	7/16	8/18	8/25	8/25	7/23	8/18	8/28	8/22	8/25
Latest Possible Arrival Date	8/13	9/16	9/23	9/25	8/19	9/16	9/23	9/20	9/22
Mandatory Orientation/Check-in	8/14	9/17	9/24	9/14,9/21,9/26	8/20	9/17	9/24	9/21	9/23
Program Start Date*	8/15	9/17	9/24	9/24	8/22	9/17	9/27	9/21	9/24
Instruction Begins	8/22	9/26	9/27	9/27	8/22	9/27	9/27	9/27	9/27
Academic/Administrative Holidays	9/3, 11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23	9/3, 11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23	11/12 11/22-11/23
Instruction Ends	12/7	12/7	12/7	12/7	12/7	12/7	12/7	12/7	12/7
Final Exams	12/10-12/14	12/10-12/14	12/8-12/14	12/10-12/14	12/8-12/14	12/8-12/14	12/8-12/14	12/10-12/14	12/8-12/15
Term Ends	12/14	12/14	12/14	12/14	12/14	12/14	12/14	12/14	12/15
Administrative Holiday	12/24-12/25	12/24-12/25	12/24-1/1	12/24-12/25	12/24-12/25	12/24-12/25	12/24-12/25	12/24-12/25	12/24-12/25
Administrative Holiday	12/31-1/1	12/31-1/1		12/31-1/1		12/31-1/1	12/31-1/1	12/31-1/1	12/31-1/1

\*Arrive no more than 30 days prior to this date

**Note: All dates are subject to change; TBA = To be announced (Updated 11/2/18)**

# Cal Poly Pomona

## Semester Conversion Student Pledge

### Our Pledge to Students

In Fall 2018, Cal Poly Pomona will convert from a quarter-based academic calendar to a semester-based academic calendar. The continued success of our students is the highest priority during this conversion. The faculty and staff at Cal Poly Pomona commit to a two-way partnership with students to achieve a conversion that does not adversely affect the time to degree or cost of the degree.

### The University's Commitments

- There should be no loss of credits applied to students' degree requirements earned before the semester conversion.
- The time to graduation should be the same as would have been the case had Cal Poly Pomona remained on the quarter system.
- The university will provide timely and focused advising support and assistance to prepare an Individual Academic Plan (IAP) for undergraduate students (a) who wish to graduate prior to the conversion to semesters and (b) whose programs span the quarter-to-semester transition.
- It will provide timely and focused advising support and assistance to prepare a Conversion Master's Contract (CC) for graduate students whose programs span the quarter-to-semester transition.
- Changes in policies and procedures shall be communicated to students in a timely manner.
- Annual student tuition and fees under the semester system should not be greater than they would be under the quarter system. (CSU tuition fees, as well as campus based fees, may be adjusted as deemed necessary and authorized by the Board of Trustees and/or the campus president.).
- Conversion should not adversely affect students' financial aid.
- Tuition and fees payment schedules as well as financial aid and scholarship disbursements will be aligned with the semester calendar in a manner consistent with the schedules that exist under the quarter calendar.

### Students' Commitments

- Undergraduate students should remain until graduation in the major selected by the time they have completed 45 quarter units. Undergraduates who change their majors after completing 45 or more units may extend their time to graduation.

- Graduate students are expected to submit a master's contract no later than the end of the second quarter of attendance.
- All students should:
  - Develop an Individual Academic Plan (or a Conversion Master's Contract if you are a graduate student) if you have the BroncoDirect To Do List item.
  - Follow the IAP/CC timeline and revise as necessary to maintain the expected time to degree.
  - Meet minimum grade requirements.
  - Consult regularly with an advisor and follow advising instructions.
  - Satisfy all other graduation requirements as specified in the catalog.
  - Be flexible with choices of classes and times.
- All students should keep informed about university policies and procedures. Email is the university's official form of communication.

The university shall make a good-faith effort to support students through the conversion process. The university is not be responsible for consequences that occur as a result of students not meeting the above commitments.

## **Benefits of Semesters**

### **Humane Pace of Learning**

Semesters offer a more humane pace of learning for students. Semesters allow you more time to absorb and understand difficult material, as well as a better chance to recover from illness or adversity without having to drop courses and fall behind in your degree completion.

### **Deeper Learning**

Semesters make a richer and more reflective student learning experience possible. A 15-week semester allows more time for reflection and review of material, and a greater chance for you to engage in the material in a deeper and more meaningful way.

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### **Improved Teaching**

Semesters allow faculty to shift pedagogy mid-semester if their teaching is not working, if students are not engaged, or if student feedback indicates such a need.

### **Increased Depth of Learning**

Students have argued that conversion to semesters would result in them taking fewer courses overall. However, the breadth of the curriculum cannot be measured simply by the number of courses students take (a curriculum in which students take 50 courses is not necessarily twice as broad as one with 25 courses, for example). The crucial consideration is the topics, ideas, theories, content, etc. that students are exposed to, and there's no reason to suppose that this exposure is narrower on a semester calendar than on a quarter system. Higher levels of learning



such as integration and application are possible in a semester system, not just content delivery. Calendar conversion will require curricular re-organization, not curricular reduction. In addition, the reorganization can be minimized if the large number of existing 4-unit quarter courses are converted directly to 3-unit semester courses.

### **Increased Ability for Learn-By-Doing**

The short time for classes under the quarter system undermines Cal Poly Pomona's learn-by-doing philosophy. In many cases, 10 weeks is insufficient to engage in productive partnerships with communities, and real-work opportunities outside the institution. Actually planning and implementing applied, constructed and community-based projects, as well as creating working relationships with community partners, will be easier in a longer semester system.

### **Better Identification of Students with Special Needs**

Longer contact with students in a semester system makes it easier for faculty to identify students who need learning help of many kinds. Students who require remedial learning opportunities, students with learning disabilities, and students with special needs, including veterans, are easier to identify and serve in a semester system. The fast paced quarter system creates greater biases against special needs students.

### **Better Mentoring for Students**

Because students' initial exposure to particular faculty members is longer on a semester calendar, there is a greater likelihood for informal mentoring or advising relationships to arise. Such relationships are likely to contribute to better student retention and engagement.

### **Later Add/Drop Dates**

The later add/drop dates offered in a semester system allow students to better acclimate to the material and to choose courses that better suit their program or interests. Students can 'course-shop' for a week to better understand their interests and their 'fit' with faculty in a semester system.

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### **Student Finances**

In a semester system, student financial aid matches federal and state funding timelines more closely and aligns with other university systems. A two-semester system results in fewer schedule changes for you, thus easing your ability to work or intern outside of school and coordinate school and a job.

### **Community College Transfers**

A semester calendar will ease the transition for students who transfer from our semester-based community and junior colleges, as well as maximizing the likelihood that all transferred units satisfy Cal Poly Pomona degree requirements.

## **Degree Progress**

Students in a semester system have greater ability to adapt to difficult circumstances without becoming forced 'off-schedule' for their degree. It has been argued that students learn more on a quarter system and make faster progress toward their degree. However, no evidence supports these claims. Students at CSU quarter campuses do not graduate faster or with greater frequency than at CSU semester campuses. (See [calstate.edu](http://calstate.edu) for comparative data about graduation times and rates.)

## **Increased Summer Opportunities**

On our current quarter system, students get a late start on the summer job market and are shut out of worthwhile opportunities, such as summer internships, that begin in late May or early June. A semester-based calendar will make students more competitive for these opportunities.

## **Study Abroad**

Semesters create improved opportunities for students to participate in study-abroad activities. Most universities worldwide follow some version of a semester system. While the CPP International Center has managed to find ways to deal with the calendar difference, it is often a problem. Students often go abroad for the fall quarter, which is more or less equivalent to the first semester in most institutions. However, if they wish to go in January, they use up two quarters for one semester abroad, and they cannot attend only for the spring quarter since institutions overseas are halfway through the second semester. Conversion to a semester system would be beneficial for expansion of study abroad opportunities beyond the fall semester. Cal Poly Pomona students are currently limited to.

## **Cocurricular Activities**

A semester calendar will provide you with more time for event planning and allow you to spread out their activities throughout the semester and take advantage of more cocurricular activities. Off-campus activities such as conferences, student leadership conferences, semester-at-sea, internships, mock trials and attending CPP athletic events are normally scheduled based on a semester calendar. Converting to a semester calendar will allow more Cal Poly Pomona students to participate in such activities.

## **Student Athletes**

If you are a student athlete, a semester system will make your academic schedule align better with the semester-driven schedule of athletic competitions and begin practicing earlier. (The NCAA does not allow athletes to begin practice until classes have actually begun.) Also, you will not have to negotiate your final examinations schedule as you do in the quarter calendar where finals week coincides with the NCAA finals.

## **Lower Process Losses**

You will have only two, rather than three, loss periods of 'ramp-up' in first week, wind-down in the final week of classes, line-ups for financial aid, registrar, parking passes, etc.

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# Cal State joins national trend to switch to 15-week semesters

March 24, 2016

Credit: Larry Gordon/EdSource Today

At Cal State Los Angeles, a mainly commuter campus in the hills east of downtown, the winter quarter is ending – likely forever.

The 25,000-student university is joining a Cal State system and national trend to abandon the quarter term calendar, with its three speedy terms a year of 10 weeks each. In its place, it is adopting the less hectic system of two 15-week-long semesters a year.

The Los Angeles campus and its sister Cal State in Bakersfield are making the change this fall. Similar switches are expected to follow over the next four years or so at the four other Cal States remaining on quarters – East Bay, Pomona, San Bernardino and San Luis Obispo. The change is aimed at creating a unified time system across the CSU, since its other 17 campuses long have been on semester calendars.

The change is controversial, complicated and expensive – at least \$40 million for all six campuses. But backers insist it will bring educational benefits, particularly to the many students who are in the first generation in their families to attend college and to the many who are placed in remedial or developmental courses at Cal State campuses. For them, educators say, the quarters move too quickly. The semester system, proponents contend, will allow students more time to master course material and to get to know professors better. Officials hope it ultimately will improve retention and graduation rates.

Melina Madrigal, a third-year social work student at Cal State Los Angeles, said she is looking forward to the conversion. With quarters, “midterms come too fast and then the finals. Everything goes too fast,” she said during a lunch on a campus patio. That pace is especially tough for the many students like her who also work 40 hours a week off campus, in her case at a McDonald’s restaurant. “Semesters would be better for us,” she said. “We would have more time to study.”

“You’ve got all the kinds of social, financial, emotional as well as intellectual challenges to adjust to in the university. Then it’s a big shock when you get into this fast-paced 10-week period.” – Rennie B. Schoepflin, Cal State Los Angeles history professor who is its director of the semester conversion effort

In addition, the change to the semester schedule will make it easier for students to transfer from community colleges, almost all of which are on semester calendars, and from one Cal State to another, officials said. Semesters align better too with many internship schedules. And the

semester system reduces the hassles and expenses of three registrations, course catalogs, report cards, financial aid packages and book purchases a year.

For CSU, the quarter system “created some inefficiencies,” explained Rennie B. Schoepflin, the Cal State Los Angeles history professor who is its director of the semester conversion effort.

Most important, he said the change will help Cal State L.A. students, 82 percent of whom are first generation, many from Latino and Asian immigrant families. Many freshmen struggle with the unforgiving pace of quarters.

About 20 percent of Cal State L.A. students do not return after their first year, and just 45 percent of entrants graduate in six years, campus statistics show.

“You’ve got all the kinds of social, financial, emotional as well as intellectual challenges to adjust to in the university. Then it’s a big shock when you get into this fast-paced 10-week period,” Schoepflin said. “It takes a week to get your bearings. Second week you recognize you had better pay attention. Third week you can be a week behind. You can be lost at midterms and you get an F at that first exam. And then what?”

(Eight of the University of California’s 10 campuses are quarter holdouts. At UC, where incoming students generally have stronger high school academic records than Cal State students, faculty say quarters allow them to teach more specialized courses and that it is easier for them to take a quarter off for research than to miss an entire semester. Only Berkeley and Merced are on semesters, and no change is expected at the others, officials say.)

The semester calendar doesn’t guarantee success but provides “more time for them to catch up and get the help they need,” Schoepflin said. His campus adopted the quarter calendar in 1967, when colleges were making room for an influx of Baby Boom college students.

Making the change will cost about \$7 million at his campus for such things as a revamped computer systems and student records, increased counseling and changes in faculty assignments, he said.

Still, the quarter system has its fans. It allows students to take a wider variety of classes – often 12 courses a year versus 10 during semesters. If a course proves to be a turkey, students get through it faster. Boosters say the schedule better prepares students for the workplace, where procrastination isn’t tolerated.

“The quarter system makes you more efficient. You can’t drag your feet on assignments,” said Cal State junior Mitchell Tran, a biology major. “For high school students who struggle, it’s a good adjustment for them. Growing up we have to adjust, and this is one of those adjustments you have to make.”

Those in the sciences and engineering tend to like quarters’ speed in getting through required courses. That is partly why many faculty and students at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo tried to rebel against the Cal State system’s pressure to switch by 2020. In a 2012 survey at that campus, one

student wrote: “The semester system is an unrealistic model of the real world . . . It allows time for slacking and gives students the chance to develop poor study habits.”

Besides, opponents argue, any benefits would not be worth the estimated \$18 million cost at San Luis Obispo.

Interviews and documents indicate that \$40 million is a rough baseline for possible system-wide costs. But Cal State System spokeswoman Toni Molle said there is no solid estimate yet, and she cautioned that expenses will include curriculum changes not tied to semesters but introduced simultaneously.

Cal State system officials say the San Luis Obispo change will happen although timing remains under discussion. Cal Poly Pomona and Cal State East Bay are set to convert in 2018, with San Bernardino and SLO later.

Certainly, SLO swims against the academic tide. Federal statistics show that only 12 percent of 2,340 U.S. four-year public and not-for-profit colleges and universities were fully on the quarter calendar in 1994; that dropped to just 6 percent by 2014. A small number of colleges use various other schedules.

The Ohio State University system, which enrolls 66,000, switched from quarters to semesters in 2012 after much debate and more than \$12 million in costs. Registrar Brad A. Myers said it is not clear whether the change aided a recent 2 percent uptick in freshmen retention rates. Still, he said it appears to bolster learning since “there is a little more time to allow things to sink in.”

Academics bemoan the lack of a wide-ranging national study comparing student outcomes between the calendars. A planning report at Rochester Institute of Technology, which switched to semesters in 2013, said claims for improvement seem “sensible and intuitive” but “hypothetical” until such a comprehensive survey is done.

Conversion planning is underway at CSU East Bay, which enrolls 15,000 at its main campus above the San Francisco Bay in Hayward and two satellite facilities.

Janeesha Jones, an East Bay business major who is a student government vice president, said she has seen first-generation students like her without family experience of college life drop out as freshmen in part because of the fast schedule. In addition, being on a semester calendar will make it easier to apply for internships since spring semesters usually finish in May while East Bay’s spring quarter ends in June. “It’s going to be good to be on the same system as everyone else,” she said.

# **CSU San Bernardino – Semester Conversion To Begin Fall 2020**

CSUSB is moving to semesters in FALL 2020

In his Fall 2014 convocation address, President Tomás Morales identified the conversion of CSUSB from a quarter to a semester academic calendar as a critical step for the University. Currently 109 of the 112 California Community Colleges (CCC) reside on a semester calendar. By switching to a semester calendar, CSUSB will better align with the CCCs improving articulation into CSUSB. The vast majority of transfer students come from the CCCs. Local CCC are on semesters, and moving to semesters will help us recruit students and simplify many of our administrative processes. When CSUSB begins the semester calendar in the fall of 2020, we will join 21 other CSU campuses. The semester conversion will align our academic calendar with the other CSU campuses, our CCCs, and more than 90% of colleges and universities nationwide.

A clear benefit of semester conversion is a smooth transition for transfer students, enabling them to transfer course credits more easily and apply them towards degree completion. Moreover, Chancellor Timothy White has agreed to pay a substantial proportion of the funding for quarter to semester conversion ("Q2S").

As of Fall 2019, 21 of the CSU campuses are on semesters, with CSU Bakersfield, Los Angeles, East Bay and Cal Poly being the latest to join semesters. CSU San Bernardino will join the ranks fall 2020 leaving Cal Poly San Luis Obispo as the only quarter calendar campus in the CSU system.

In the 1980s, approximately 25% of the U.S. colleges and universities followed a quarter calendar. Today, less than 10% use quarter terms. Despite a majority of University of California campuses observing the quarter system, the national trend is moving from quarters to semesters. For example, in 2012, to align with other state universities, all state institutions in Ohio were converted to the semester system. Then, in 2013, The Rochester Institute of Technology also completed conversion to semesters.

When CSUSB becomes a semester calendar campus, there should be an increased number of summer internship opportunities for our students because the calendar will allow CSUSB students to become more competitive nationwide (many internships have start dates in late May or early June). Also, graduating students will be able to start in their positions earlier rather than late June or early July.

# Letter from President Morales and Provost McMahan

Dear Members of the CSUSB Campus Community:

In response to a decision made by the CSU system, our university is transitioning its academic calendar to the semester system, beginning in Fall 2020. This is an opportunity for the campus to work together to re-imagine the best pedagogical and learning experiences that we might provide for our students. So, while this undertaking is a challenge on many levels, once achieved it will certainly benefit the entire CSUSB community.

Under the semester system, our students will continue to receive a strong educational experience. The expanded timeframe will provide additional study time and increased interaction with faculty while allowing for more in-depth projects, quality research and expanded internship opportunities.

Faculty will also have more classroom time to engage students in active discussion and research and to provide more substantive feedback to students on their work. Such additional support and greater opportunities for mentoring are sure to contribute positively to student learning and retention.

This change will also better align CSUSB with other colleges and universities. It will offer greater opportunities for collaborative efforts with CSU-member institutions and provide an easier transition for those students entering from community colleges or other semester-based schools.

The transition to a semester calendar is a long and intensive process. It will involve nearly every aspect of campus life and operation, requiring extensive curriculum revision, cost analysis, budgeting, and procedural review. While some areas will require relatively minor adjustments, others will be making broad changes to better meet the needs of our students, faculty and staff.

Staff will be key partners in this initiative, as they provide support for campus processes and logistics as well as supporting the work that our faculty do and ensuring that our students receive the best educational experience that we can offer.

Student success remains our top priority at CSUSB. We pledge to help students stay on track and supply guidelines for how to graduate on schedule. Faculty and professional advisors will be available to assist students in outlining an individualized plan to attain their academic goals. However, along with the faculty and staff, students are encouraged to be active participants in this process including meeting regularly with academic advisor(s), openly discussing goals and asking questions, and remaining aware of timeline to graduation.

We want to emphasize that CSUSB is committed to making this a smooth transition for all involved. This dedicated website has been established to provide access to details involving the process and its progress. It will also serve as a resource where information will be made available in a timely fashion.



This important transition calls for a collaborative investment of time, energy and dedication by all sectors of our university. We are confident we have the talent and the capability to meet this challenge and establish a legacy that will benefit our campus for generations to come.

**Tomás D. Morales**



President  
Affairs

**Shari McMahan**



Provost and Vice President, Academic

## Quick Facts about Conversion

- Cal State San Bernardino is in the process of transitioning our campus from quarters to semesters, which will begin Fall 2020.
- There will be two semesters in the academic year. It is anticipated each semester will be 15 weeks of classes and one week of finals. The Steering Committee is evaluating the appropriate structure for a summer session. Traditional breaks will carry forward in the semester calendar. There will be time off for Thanksgiving, a break between the fall and spring semesters, and a spring break.
- On average, students will need to take 15 units per semester to graduate in 4 years. This does not include remedial courses and may include both 3 and 4 unit courses.
- Annual academic year student fees for two semesters will equal annual academic year student fees for three quarters. The cost per academic term will be higher because there are only 2 terms (semesters) vs. 3 terms (quarters). More information can be found on the California State University [system website](#).
- Financial aid will not be negatively affected. Informational Workshops will be shared with the campus as we get closer to 2020. Students who receive financial aid should plan on attending a workshop in order to stay informed.
- Students should contact their academic advisors, declare a major, and work with their advisor through the transition on an Individualized Advisement Plan. See the [Student Pledges](#).
- Students, faculty, and staff should regularly visit the Semester Conversion website to stay up to date. Questions and answers can be found on each page: students, faculty & staff, and parents & community.

## **Information**

In his Fall 2014 convocation address, President Tomás Morales identified the conversion of CSUSB from a quarter to a semester academic calendar as a critical step for the University. Currently 109 of the 112 California Community Colleges (CCC) reside on a semester calendar. By switching to a semester calendar, CSUSB will better align with the CCCs improving articulation into CSUSB. The vast majority of transfer students come from the CCCs. Local CCC are on semesters, and moving to semesters will help us recruit students and simplify many of our administrative processes. When CSUSB begins the semester calendar in the fall of 2020, we will join 21 other CSU campuses. The semester conversion will align our academic calendar with the other CSU campuses, our CCCs, and more than 90% of colleges and universities nationwide.

A clear benefit of semester conversion is a smooth the transition for transfer students, enabling them to transfer course credits more easily and apply them towards degree completion. Moreover, Chancellor Timothy White has agreed to pay a substantial proportion of the funding for quarter to semester conversion.

As of Fall 2016, 19 of the CSU campuses are on semesters, with CSU Bakersfield and Los Angeles being the most recent to transition to a semester calendar. Cal Poly Pomona and CSU East Bay will transition in fall of 2018. CSU San Bernardino will join the ranks fall 2020 leaving Cal Poly San Luis Obispo the only quarter calendar campus in the CSU system.

In the 1980s, approximately 25% of the U.S. colleges and universities followed a quarter calendar. Today, less than 10% observe quarters. Despite a majority of University of California campuses observing the quarter system, the national trend is moving from quarters to semesters. For example, in 2012, to align with other state universities, all state institutions in Ohio were converted to the semester system. Then, in 2013, The Rochester Institute of Technology also completed conversion to semesters.

When CSUSB becomes a semester calendar campus, there should be an increased number of summer internship opportunities for our students because the calendar will allow CSUSB students to become more competitive nationwide (many internships have start dates in late May or early June). Also, graduating students will be able to start in their positions earlier rather than late June or early July.

### **Guiding Principles for Quarter to Semester Conversion Steering Committee (Q2SCSC)**

The Q2SCSC adopts the following guiding principles for their work regarding CSUSB's transformation from a quarter- to semester-based system process. Throughout our work we will:

- Create and maintain a student-centered approach, always considering the needs of our diverse student body;
- Focus on the needs of our diverse students, faculty, and staff, and remain dedicated throughout the process to the academic mission of the university and to the core values

outlined in CSUSB's strategic plan: inclusivity, innovation, integrity, respect, social justice and equity, sustainability, transparency, and wellness and safety;

- Commit to an inclusive, faculty-driven process whereby we recognize that faculty have primary responsibility for curriculum and its associated scope and sequence, respect the existing structures of shared governance, and collaborate and coordinate with the Faculty Senate, the CFA, college, department, and program committees, and the various business and student support units on campus;
- Provide professional development and support to assist faculty as they develop innovative pedagogy and transform curriculum to incorporate high impact, evidence-based practices, address the learning needs of our diverse students, map and connect the learning among courses, and improve overall learning, engagement, and success for all our students;
- Provide professional development and support for staff as they develop and implement new policies, processes, and procedures in each of their areas;
- Create opportunities for on-going collaboration among faculty, staff and administration across traditional department, program, college and division borders to enhance and integrate the learning environment for faculty, students, and staff;
- Seek to balance departmental/division autonomy and collaboration;
- Seek a balance between adequate time for meaningful discussion and deliberation regarding decisions and recommendations with the need to complete specific tasks on time, so that faculty and staff are able to complete their work on a more reasonable timeline and with a more reasonable workload;
- Provide compensation for efforts that go beyond the usual expectations of faculty and staff both during and following the conversion, while carefully considering workload issues;
- Consider equity among departments, programs, colleges, and units with respect to the impact our recommendations could have for departments, programs, colleges, and divisions both during and after the conversion; and
- Inform and consult meaningfully with all campus constituencies through clear, open, on-going, and up-to-date communication.

## Q2S Elsewhere

Over 90% of the U.S. colleges and universities are on a semester calendar. The schools below have either recently transitioned or are transitioning to semester calendars.

- Ohio State University
- [Ohio University](#)
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- [Wright State University](#)
- [California State University, Bakersfield](#)
- [California State University, Los Angeles](#)
- [California State University, East Bay](#)
- [California Polytechnic University, Pomona](#)



# CSU Syncs Up for Increased Student Success

9/26/2016

## Two of Six Campuses Switch to Semester Schedules

In an effort to speed up students' path to graduation and meet the goals of Graduation Initiative 2025, a gradual conversion to the 16-week semester system is now underway across the California State University system.

Most campuses have been using the semester calendar since their founding, with the exception of six that chose to adapt the shorter 10-week quarter system to accommodate the flood of new college students—the Baby Boomer generation—following World War II.

However, after extensive collaboration with campus administrators, student and faculty governing bodies and students, and based on a current nationwide trend, CSU Chancellor Timothy White says the pros far outweighed the cons when the decision was made to convert the six remaining quarter campuses to semester terms.

Beginning this fall, Cal State LA and CSU Bakersfield will transition to the semester system, with four additional campus conversions in the future.

### What benefits are envisioned for the conversion?

- It will contribute to the success of CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025, an aggressive program designed to increase graduation rates for incoming freshmen, community college transfer students, and low income and underserved students.
- It better aligns the CSU with other semester campuses—CSU, community colleges, high schools and others—to ease the student transfer process (nearly half of the 474,600 CSU students transferred from other schools).
- Quarter schedules often interfere with student internship schedules and require additional registration periods, financial aid applications, book purchases, resident costs and other related expenses.
- It allows students more time to adjust to college life, improve study habits, master course material, get help from faculty and support centers on campus, and take advantage of the numerous academic assistance centers and peer tutoring. It also provides greater opportunities for faculty to conduct research and work more closely with students to give them the help they need.
- Semesters provide greater scheduling flexibility for working students and those who are parents.

"Eighty-two percent of our students are first generation, many from Latino and Asian immigrant families and many freshmen struggle with the unforgiving pace of the quarter system," said

Rennie Schoepflin, history professor and semester conversion director at Cal State LA. "In addition to the many social, financial, intellectual and emotional issues they must deal with when entering college, they are also faced with the shock of the quarter system's fast-paced 10-week period."

He also added that as many as 20 percent of Cal State LA students drop out after their first year, and only 45 percent of the entrants graduate in six years, under the 10-week schedule.

"The semester calendar doesn't guarantee success but provides more time for students to catch up and get the help they need. The university has made a pledge to students that, during the conversion process, it will maintain the quality of education and academic programs and that it will have no impact on their progress toward their degrees."

Jason Singley, co-director of the semester conversion set for fall 2018 at Cal State East Bay, said the process is allowing faculty "to rethink and, in many cases, completely redesign their curriculum, including deeper connections with our Intuitional Learning Outcomes and more high-impact practices that improve student retention and success."

CSUEB colleague, Associate Professor Linda Ivey, added that the semester system is "a chance for faculty to be creative and innovative as we come up with ways to challenge our students to be more creative themselves."

Meanwhile, each of the transitioning campuses are establishing dedicated areas where students can meet with academic and faculty advisers to plan for both general education and degree courses. The goal is to put students' minds at ease, knowing that with the right planning and resources, they will be able to graduate on time.

"We don't want students to think they have to start over with a new semester-based general education plan," said Cal State East Bay Advising Director Larry Bliss. His department has been working all summer on a plan that he calls an "electronic road map" that allows students to meet with both their academic and faculty advisors to "help them figure out how to graduate in the most expeditious way possible."

Bliss added that "it is important for students not to panic, it's important for them not to feel like this is going to be a San Francisco earthquake. It is certainly going to be a change for all of us, but it's a manageable change and we're trying to make it as easy as possible for every student."

Nationally, only six percent of American colleges and universities are on the quarter system and the number is dwindling as the trend toward semesters continues. As one of the largest university systems in the country, with the most diversified student body, CSU is ahead of the curve going above and beyond to support students on their path to graduation.