Resolution: 0603102015
Author(s): Andrew Menard, President; Hassaan Ebrahim, Chief of Staff; Nicole Schrad, Director of Academic Affairs; Providence Ilisevich, Greek Senator; Maariyah Patel, Assistant Director of Academic Affairs
Sponsoring Senator(s): Providence Ilisevich, Greek Senator; Logan Burkhead, Greek Senator
Date: March 10th, 2015
RE: Addition of a Fall Break to the USC Academic Calendar

WHEREAS, the University of Southern California’s Division of Student Affairs has outlined that USC’s “mission is to create a culture where wellness and health are valued and naturally incorporated into students’ lives”

WHEREAS, the current academic calendar has 11 weeks of continuous academic instruction with no break during the Fall semester between the Labor Day holiday and the start of Thanksgiving break;

WHEREAS, the longest period of continuous academic instruction without a break in the Spring semester is 6 weeks which creates a significant discrepancy between the Fall and Spring academic calendars;

WHEREAS, mental health issues have become a growing concern on college campuses across the country and specifically at USC, and continuous periods of academic instruction can reasonably be connected to increased stress and exhaustion;

WHEREAS, stress and anxiety are the severest impediments for academic performance for college students and the number of college students nationwide seeking counseling for severe psychological problems more than doubled from 16% in 2000 to 39% in 2012;

WHEREAS, in a survey recorded by the USC Engemann Student Health Center in the Spring of 2014, 88.7% of USC domestic students and 73.4% of USC international students have felt

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1 https://bewell.usc.edu/
“overwhelmed by all they had to do;” 56.1% of domestic students and 49.3% of international students have felt “overwhelming anxiety;” 61.2% of domestic students and 42.7% of international students experienced “more than average or tremendous stress;” and 6.4% of domestic students and 2.5% of international students have “seriously considered attempting suicide”\(^3\);

WHEREAS, a fall break in the middle of the Fall semester will offer a necessary reprieve for students to alleviate stress and reduce anxiety;

WHEREAS, in a survey of over 2,500 USC students, 93% responded they would personally benefit from a fall break and 96% responded that a fall break would promote mental health and allow students to de-stress\(^4\);

WHEREAS, a fall break could be used to provide students with extracurricular learning opportunities and allow for their success after graduation by enabling students to attend academic and professional conferences, participate in service-learning and field trips, and allow students to conduct graduate and professional interviews, all without having to miss instructional days;

WHEREAS, a fall break in the middle of the semester would enable students to prepare for midterm examinations and other large assignments during one of the most academically challenging times of the semester and also provide students an opportunity to travel home or have family visit;

WHEREAS, 24 of the top 30 U.S. World and News Report universities have at least 1 day off in the 11 week duration between Labor Day and Thanksgiving\(^5\);

WHEREAS, in the survey of USC students, 90% of students felt they would benefit from a 2 day fall break as compared to the 7% that preferred a 1 day break\(^6\);

WHEREAS, the addition of a fall break would preserve the 71 instructional days of the Fall semester;

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\(^4\) Based on a survey of 2,582 USC students by the Undergraduate Student Government from 11/24/14-12/3/14 and 2/12/15-3/4/15.


\(^6\) Based on a survey of 2,582 USC students by the Undergraduate Student Government from 11/24/14-12/3/14 and 2/12/15-3/4/15.
WHEREAS, 63% of students surveyed wanted to keep the 2 study days preceding finals week as part of the academic calendar;

WHEREAS, the USC Academic Calendar Committee has voted to approve this proposal to include a fall break in the academic calendar,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that a fall break consisting of 2 days be added to the academic calendar for the Fall semester beginning Fall 2016;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the addition of this break will not reduce the 71 instructional days of the fall semester;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the academic calendar be appropriately adjusted to preserve the 2 study days prior to finals week in the Fall semester;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be delivered to President C.L. Max Nikias, Interim Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Quick, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs Gene Bickers, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Ainsley Carry, Dean of Academic Records & Registrar Douglas Shook, Chair of Committee of Academic Policies & Procedures Steve Finkel, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees Mitchell Lew, President of the Faculty Academic Senate John Silvester, and USG President Andrew Menard by Secretary Isabelle Albert within 2 weeks of being passed by the Undergraduate Student Government Senate.

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7 Based on a survey of 2,582 USC students by the Undergraduate Student Government from 11/24/14-12/3/14 and 2/12/15-3/4/15.