

A Year 'Round College Calendar: Advantages and Impediments

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Witness:

Virginia Hazen

Dartmouth

Director of Financial Aid

Testimony

Testimony of

Virginia S. Hazen

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Hanover, New Hampshire

Testimony Before the

Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee

United States Senate

Hearing on

Year Round Colleges

March 9, 2004

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss with you the advantages of year round college operation and the potential impediments to establishing such a system.

Dartmouth College implemented a quarter-based year round calendar in the fall of 1972. The implementation of year round operation allowed the College to expand its student body by ten percent without significantly expanding its facilities. Over the years the plan has evolved to address changes in the curriculum and the lack of continuity students felt they had in their relationships.

Today students are expected to enroll for twelve terms over four years and are required to be in residence during the fall, winter and spring quarters of their freshman and senior years and the summer between their sophomore and junior years. Beyond those requirements, students have the flexibility to arrange their attendance to best meet their needs. While students can graduate in three years if they have met the academic degree requirements and have secured special permission, this was not the intent of the year round plan and seldom occurs. The average Dartmouth student graduates in slightly fewer than twelve terms.

As mentioned above, one advantage to the College of Dartmouth's plan of year round operation is that it has allowed the College to increase the size of its student body without a corresponding expansion in facilities. It has also allowed the College to fully utilize its residence halls and other facilities during the summer without having to rely extensively on conferences and other outside programs. Finally, year round operation has given the Dartmouth faculty more flexibility and control in scheduling their research activities.

For our students, the greatest advantage of year round operation is the autonomy it gives them to create their own calendars to fit their academic, personal and professional needs. Without disrupting their education, Dartmouth students are able to participate in international study programs (60 percent of Dartmouth students study overseas, an important component of a liberal arts education in our ever changing world), unpaid internships, job opportunities to explore career possibilities, community service, and transfer terms at other institutions. Since Dartmouth students frequently take their “vacation” term during the fall, winter or spring rather than during the summer, there are job and internship opportunities open to them that are unavailable to students with traditional college calendars. Another advantage of the Dartmouth Plan is that it forces students out of their social comfort zones. As friends begin exploring different activities, their calendars rarely mesh, leading them to develop different relationships.

While Dartmouth’s year round operation plan has many attractive features, it has some challenges. Since facilities are fully utilized year round, maintenance can be problematic. Base staffing levels are required year round, making most nine-month positions obsolete and increasing compensation costs. Down time for planning is limited, and activities that do not normally overlap at other institutions frequently do under year round operation introducing a layer of complexity that would not otherwise exist. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, financial aid funding and administration can be problematic.

At Dartmouth a full academic year is three quarters. When financial aid recipients opt to enroll for four quarters, they have no Federal Pell Grant eligibility during their final term. In addition, their Federal loan eligibility is frequently insufficient to meet their needs. For a plan of year round operation to succeed, these issues must be addressed. While Dartmouth is able to replace the Federal Pell Grants in the final quarter with institutional grants and to supplement Federal loans with institutional loans, not all colleges are. However, Dartmouth’s solution is not perfect. Dartmouth loans carry higher interest rates than Federal loans; they cannot be consolidated with Federal loans; and they do not have the same forgiveness features. Students borrowing from both the Federal programs and the College have multiple minimum monthly payments. In addition to these problems, outside scholarships are frequently unavailable during the summer term. Donors often cannot grasp that the summer term is a parity term versus a remedial term. Even when summer funding is available, an additional application is frequently required.

Administering financial aid within a year round environment would be facilitated if: 1) the Federal Pell Grant could be awarded for all enrolled terms; 2) annual loan maximums were lifted (perhaps keeping the cumulative maximums in place) to address students’ increased needs during years they were enrolled for twelve months; 3) Federal Stafford loans could be distributed unevenly over terms to address differing costs associated with various programs; and 4) there was an educational effort beyond that offered by individual institutions to help the public understand the difference between a remedial summer session and a parity summer term.

I have appreciated the opportunity to speak to you and hope my remarks will be helpful

as you consider issues of capacity and access.

RESUME

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Education

Plymouth State College, Hanover MBA Program, Plymouth, NH. MBA, May 1983.
Major: general business.

Colby-Sawyer College, New London, NH. B.S. in Business, May 1978.

Dartmouth College, Community Special Student Program, 1975-76, Hanover, NH.

International Accountants Society (a Bell & Howell School), Chicago, IL. General Diploma with emphasis in Public Accounting, 1974.

Experience

Dartmouth College Admissions and Financial Aid, Hanover, NH

Director of Financial Aid 1988 - present

Responsible for the administration of all aspects of Dartmouth's \$41 million undergraduate financial aid program, including developing and implementing policies to ensure equitable distribution of financial aid funds; projecting annual and long-range scholarship and loan needs; overseeing services to students and their families, e.g. need analysis, packaging of awards, and counseling and advising; overseeing the creation, production and distribution of financial aid information; allocating and reporting on restricted scholarship and loan funds; applying for, disbursing and reporting on the use of federal financial aid funds; and managing the federal and College employment programs.

Responsible for institution-wide oversight of compliance with federal financial aid regulations.

Serve in a lead role in the implementation of the new student information system (BANNER), chairing the Financial Aid Working Group and serving as a member of the

Project Management Committee and the Steering Committee.

Represent the Dartmouth Financial Aid Office on College, state, regional, and national committees, including the Faculty Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid, Executive Officers, Enrollment Management Committee, Controller's Advisory Group, President's Administrative Forum, Ivy Financial Aid Directors, COFHE Financial Aid Directors, etc.

Director of Information Systems 1984 - 1988

Responsible for determining and satisfying the overall computer information needs of the Admissions/Financial Aid area. Also performed the functions of an Assistant Director of Financial Aid (see below), with responsibility for approximately 200 freshmen applicants and 150 upperclassmen.

Assistant Director of Financial Aid 1978 - 1984

Assisted in the administration of the College's financial aid program with direct responsibility for the following: administration of the Pell Grant Program; need analysis for about 350 returning students and 25% of the prefreshman class; provided financial counseling to students and their families; and participated in the design, development and implementation of computer systems and applications.

Dartmouth College Career and Employment Services, Hanover, NH

Intern 1977 - 1978

Other Experience

University of NH, School for Lifelong Learning, Lebanon, NH

Taught college-level courses in financial accounting and other business topics. 1983-1989

Johnson State College, Johnson, VT

Facilitated independent study groups in financial accounting. 1987-1989

Financial Aid Division Advisory Committee of the College Board 1995-1998

New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation, Concord, NH

Serve as a member of the Board of Trustees, currently as chair. 1994-present

Honors

Valedictorian - Colby Sawyer College - 1978

National Dean's List - 1978

Phi Theta Kappa - Colby Sawyer College

3/01

Heisel Testimony: no testimony provided