

The Semester System: Implications and Questions for Continuing Education

When curriculum programs convert to the semester system in fall 1997, should ContEd also make the move? What is to be gained or lost by the move? What implications does such a decision in either direction have for the published class schedule, for class length, for fees, for FTE's, for ContED administrators, and, most importantly, for ContEd students? With FQ97 nearly two years away, you may assume that it's too early to start thinking about the potential impact on Continuing Education, but consider this: If your curriculum people are starting now to plan for the conversion, then it's now on your President's mind, and if it's on your President's mind, *you* should be ready to discuss it as well.

Should Continuing Education convert to the semester system? Before you answer a resounding "No!," can you explain *why not* to your President? Can you explain why—if your curriculum and ContEd schedules are now distributed together—your college should spend the extra money to distribute them separately at different times? Do you have "expert testimony" (perhaps from LERN) or figures to back up your arguments? Have you considered that there may be reasons why, to your President, having ContEd on the semester system might make sense?

One reason for remaining on the quarter schedule is that, at the very least, moving OCCU courses to a semester schedule would result in a small loss of FTE's. After all, an 11-week OCCU course offered in FQ-WQ-SpQ equals a total of 33 weeks; by contrast, a converted OCCU course offered for two 16-week semesters equals a total of 32 weeks.

On the other hand, a shared semester schedule—with all advertised courses beginning at the same time—means that the curriculum and ContEd schedules could be combined into a single course schedule for FS, SpS, and the Su session. This "neat and tidy" option might look very attractive to some presidents. The alternative, with ContEd beginning at different times curriculum, would mean that separate curriculum and ContEd class schedules would have to be published. For example, curriculum would have FS beginning in August, whereas ContEd's FQ would begin in September; curriculum would begin its SpS in January, but ContEd would begin its Wq in December and its SpQ in March. Both programs could share a brochure for their summer classes. The point is this: While you may feel that, *philosophically*, the quarter system is a better option for ContEd, the "separate schedules" issue moves the debate from the philosophical to the *budgetary*, and in the fiscal realm presidents have minds of their own.

In regard to beginning OCCU courses at the same time as curriculum, would ContEd students be willing to spend 16 weeks in what has previously been 11-week courses? If so, fine, but if not, FTE's would be lost. Or, worse, if classes began with the semester but continued on an 11-week schedule (with a large gap between semesters), then lots of FTE's would be forfeited since there would only be two 11-week periods (FS & SpS) instead of three (FQ, WQ, SpQ). Moreover, if we converted from 11-week to 16-week classes, would the legislative powers-that-be feel it necessary to increase our OCCU registration fee also by about 45%, from \$35 to \$51? And what effect could we expect *that* to have

on our registrations and FTE's?

Similarly, in ComServ ContEd, two registration periods (FS & SpS) rather than three (FQ, WQ, SpQ) would cut ComServ's ability to generate revenue by 1/3. Lengthening the courses to 16 weeks (and increasing the fees) is not a reasonable option for ComServ, which is not FTE-funded. In ComServ, the longer the course, the more money is expended without any FTE or monetary gain, so the goal is to run shorter classes, not longer. Again, as in OCCU, higher fees would likely result in a decline in registrations.

These are some of the many questions and a few of the arguments that will arise in the next fifteen months before budgets for fiscal year 97-98 will be finalized. While it is perhaps too early to become obsessed with the *answers*, it is *not* too early to start generating the right *questions*. You never know when your president may start asking questions, and you can't take for granted what his/her answers will be.

Submitted by Rob Everett

Partnerships In Haywood County

Education, employment and training is what partnerships are all about in Haywood County. Organizations have banded together to provide easily accessible services to JOBS participants. These partnerships help clients break down barriers and provide a direct route to self sufficiency.

Here's how it works. Recruitment, day care and transportation is coordinated by the Department of Social Services using Southwestern Child Development day care and Mountain Projects, Inc. county transportation van.

Haywood Community College provides a five week orientation and motivation class called "Alternatives" through the Human Resources Development program and ABE/GED classes through the Basic Skills Department. GED testing, developmental classes, learning lab assistance, and financial aid provided by the college help participants enroll in college curriculum programs.

Two churches have provided classroom space as well as utilities and maintenance for the class rooms. Church members have provided holiday gifts for participants and their children and served a free meal each week to participants. The Employment Security Commission provides job leads and other employment assistance.

In the beginning, "bugs" had to be worked out, but each partner was more than willing to go the extra mile to plan and administer a link of this partnership chain. These efforts have contributed to the beginnings of a one-stop center for the county.

Participant evaluations of the program have been excellent, and successful participants have been a major source of recruitment for the program. Haywood County organizations are putting the customer first and, as a result, providing success for partners as well as participants.

Submitted by Judith Smith, Chair