

Adjusting the RIT Calendar to Support Work-Life Integration

I. Background Research: Academic Calendar Setting in Local School Districts

Each year, in the February-March timeframe, BOCES 1 Superintendent Dan White convenes a meeting of local superintendents. The Monroe County School Calendar Committee recommends a calendar of at least 180 shared school days to member districts for the upcoming school year. State law mandates that school districts set their own calendar, but member school districts adhere as closely as possible to the recommendations of the Calendar Committee. In recommending a calendar, the Calendar Committee follows “Calendar Design Core Principles” (see separate document with these principles). Coordination depends upon Regents exam schedules. Superintendent Dan White (Dan_White@boces.monroe.edu) volunteered that he would be happy to discuss more about how this process works with any member of the AdvanceRIT team.

The table below shows when the Board of Education of each public school district in Monroe County (as well as the Victor Central School District in Ontario County) approved the school calendar for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 academic years. As shown, the school calendar for most districts is approved between February and April for the following academic year.

Board of Education (BOE) Approval Dates for School Calendars, by District

School District	Approval Date for 2014-2015 Calendar	Approval Date for 2015-2016 Calendar
Board of Cooperative Education Services (Monroe #1 BOCES)	02/27/14	03/12/15
Board of Cooperative Education Services (Monroe #2 BOCES)	04/09/14	03/18/15
Brighton Central School District	02/11/14	01/27/15
Brockport Central School District	03/18/14	03/10/15
Churchville-Chili Central School District	02/25/14	02/10/15 (revision approved 03/24/15)
East Irondequoit Central School District	03/31/14 (revision approved 10/20/14)	03/17/15
East Rochester Union Free School District	03/18/14 (revision approved 12/17/14)	3/24/15
Fairport Central School District	04/14	04/15
Gates Chili Central School District	not available	03/10/15
Greece Central School District	03/11/14	04/07/15
Hilton Central School District	03/11/14	02/24/15
Honeoye Falls-Lima Central School District	03/25/14	03/24/15
Kendall Central School District	03/19/14 (revision approved 02/13/15)	01/21/15
Penfield Central School District	05/27/14	not available
Pittsford Central School District	03/10/14	02/09/15
Rochester City Central School District	03/27/14	03/26/15
Rush-Henrietta Central School District	02/14 or 03/14	02/15 or 03/15
Spencerport Central School District	02/28/14	01/27/15
Victor Central School District	03/20/14	03/19/15
Webster Central School District	04/24/14	03/19/15
West Irondequoit Central School District	03/06/14	03/05/15
Wheatland-Chili Central School District	04/07/14	03/09/15

II. Calendar Alignment at Other Academic Institutions Benchmarking to Address Work – Life Integration

1. Pollack, M. (2013). The University of Michigan Regents' Communication. Action Request (Approval of Academic Calendar for 2015-2016). Retrieved from <http://www.regents.umich.edu/meetings/05-13/2013-05-X-3.pdf>

In her cover letter, the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs states that they are in communication with the Ann Arbor Public School District, which in the past tried to schedule a winter break that coincides with the academic calendar of the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor campus). The document includes a list of the University of Michigan's Academic Calendar Guidelines. The academic calendar was adopted by the Regents on May 16, 2013.

2. Rice University. (March 25, 2015). Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes. Retrieved from http://professor.rice.edu/Template_FacultySenate.aspx?id=2147484689

The Faculty Senate of Rice University approved the Spring 2017 calendar. This includes a change that pushes Rice's spring break back to align with the spring break of the Houston Independent School District (HISD).

3. Boriack, C. Baylor University. Lariat Archives. (February 23, 2001). Spring break in line with WISD. Retrieved from <http://www.baylor.edu/lariatarchives/news.php?action=story&story=16391>

Baylor University sets its spring break to coincide with Waco Independent School District's spring break. Dr. Naymond Keathley, chairman of the committee that sets the calendar each year, stated that the decision on when to have spring break is swayed less by other Texas colleges and universities than by the Waco Independent School District. Keathley and Carolyn Monroe (a calendar committee member) both said it is important for faculty and staff to be off at the same time as their children.

4. University of Colorado Colorado Springs. (n.d.). Academic Calendar. Retrieved from <http://catalog.uccs.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=400>

The academic calendar of the University of Colorado Colorado Springs indicates that the university's spring break in 2014 was set "with local school districts' schedules in mind in order to coincide with our student, faculty, and staff family needs."

5. Waechter, J. (May 10, 2013). Adams State aligns Spring Break with local school district schedules. Retrieved from <http://www.adams.edu/news/may1309.php>

Adams State University in Colorado adjusted its academic calendar (after it had already been set) in order to align its spring break with that of local school districts. University President David Svaldi stated: "Although our academic calendar was already set through 2015, we believe aligning our break with the school districts' will eliminate a hardship for our students and faculty with school-age children."

Dr. Frank Novotny, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Adams State, stated: "This eases the child care burden for those in our campus community who have children in school. It will allow them to truly have a 'break.'"

6. Pukall, R. (March 7, 2014). Trouble with spring breaks; UWSP, point schools do not align. Retrieved from <http://thepointeruwsp.com/2014/03/07/trouble-with-spring-breaks-uwsp-point-schools-do-not-align/>

This article recommends that universities and local school districts form partnerships to align their spring breaks. It provides several quotes from parents about the work-life balance issues that arise when spring breaks are not aligned. This includes a lack of family time together, as well as a need to pay more for child care. To take vacations together in the spring, faculty parents either have to miss work or children have to miss school. When breaks are separate, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (UWSP) employees cannot make plans without compromising work or school attendance. Bill Carlson, the lead elementary principal for the public school district, stated that when they developed the 2014-2015 school calendar, they made sure that the district spring break lined up with the UWSP spring break. He indicates that communication between his local district and UWSP needs to continue.

7. Central Michigan University. (February 12, 2013). Academic Senate adopts academic calendar compromise. Retrieved from <http://www.cm-life.com/article/2013/02/academic-senate-passes-academic-calendar-compromise>

The Academic Senate of Central Michigan adopted a compromise to keep the academic calendar at 16 weeks with two modifications, with 60 percent approval. This compromise will move the Gentle Thursday/Friday days (in which classes are cancelled and many entertainment/leisure activities are offered) to coincide with the spring break calendar of local schools. In addition, the semester will start no more than one week before Labor Day.

8. Bernfeld, E. (May 14, 2014). Utah Valley University (UVU) Academic Calendar Committee. Letter to the UVU Board of Trustees. Retrieved from <http://www.uvu.edu/admin/docs/pdf/tab6.pdf>

In this letter to the UVU Board of Trustees, Eva Bernfeld (Chair of the Academic Calendar Committee) recommends changes to the 2016-2017 academic calendar. This includes: “The full week of Spring Break should align with the Spring Break designated by the local area school districts whenever possible, but only if it allows for at least two full weeks of instruction before final exam week.” These changes were approved by the President’s Council on May 14, 2014. In a unanimous vote, the Board of Trustees approved the calendar for the 2016-2017 academic year (see http://www.uvu.edu/admin/docs/pdf/6-19-14_trustee_minutes.pdf).

9. *Cornell University, Calendar Committee*. (n.d.). Rationale for key changes to Cornell’s academic calendar. Retrieved from http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/calendarcommittee/narrative_cc.html

This provides a rationale for changes to Cornell’s academic calendar (including scheduling a February weekend break to coincide with that of local schools). The rationale states, in part, “If Cornell holds classes during public school holidays, this creates difficulties for Cornell parents of school-age children who must work during that week. Thus, it was considered desirable to create a break that included the national holiday (the third Monday of February) and the next day.” Cornell has implemented this change in its academic calendar.

10. University of Central Oklahoma. College of Fine Arts and Design. (n.d.). Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from <https://www.uco.edu/cfad/faq/index.asp>

University of Central Oklahoma's spring break coincides with the spring break of the local school district (Edmond School District).

III. Literature Resources Supporting the Value of Work-Life Balance in Academia

1. Fox, M. F., Fonseca, C., & Bao, J. (2011). Work and family conflict in academic science: Patterns and predictors among women and men in research universities. *Social Studies of Science, 41*(5), 715-735.

This article reports upon data (from mail surveys) collected from faculty members at nine research universities. The authors found that women faculty report significantly higher interference of both family on work and work on family than men faculty do. The authors of this study assessed factors that affect work-family conflict.

2. Gardner, S. (2013). Women faculty departures from a striving institution: Between a rock and a hard place. *The Review of Higher Education, 36*(3), 349-370.

The author sought to understand how the striving aspirations of one comprehensive institution affected the departure decisions of women faculty. She conducted in-depth interviews with 11 women faculty who had left one striving institution (the University of Maine, identified in the article as "Land Grant University" or "LGU"). Women faculty who left LGU cited poor work-family balance as a factor (see pp. 362-363). For example, one woman faculty member had been explicitly told by her chair that "maternity leave and academic leaves were perceived as abusing the system" (p. 363). Another woman faculty member stated that she got the sense from the university that "it was one thing for you to be a parent but you have to do it on your own time" (p. 363).

3. O'Laughlin, E. M., & Bischoff, L. G. (2005). Balancing parenthood and academia: Work/family stress as influenced by gender and tenure status. *Journal of Family Issues, 26*(1), 79-106.

In this study, full-time tenure-track faculty (85 men and 179 women) who had at least one child younger than the age of 16 responded to a 36-item internet questionnaire on their experiences and perceptions regarding work and family demands. Results showed group differences based on gender but no group differences based on tenure status alone and no significant interactions between gender and tenure status. Compared to male faculty, women faculty reported greater academic and family stress, as well as perceptions of less institutional support for work/family balance.

4. Reddick, R. J., Rochlen, A. B., Grasso, J. R., Reilly, E. D., & Spikes, D. D. (2012). Academic fathers pursuing tenure: A qualitative study of work-family conflict, coping strategies, and departmental culture. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 13*(1), 1-15.

This qualitative study examined how male assistant professors with children negotiated work and family responsibilities. The authors analyzed in-depth interviews (n =12) and found three broad themes regarding men's negotiation of their various roles. These themes included tenure and family balance/conflict, coping responses, and attitudes toward policy and work culture. Respondents described their comfort level with discussing family and work-life balance as a function of their department's culture. Satisfied male faculty noted that their departments respected their multiple roles and welcomed discussions about family life.

5. Rosser, S. V., & Lane, E. O. (2002). Key barriers for academic institutions seeking to retain women scientists and engineers: Family-unfriendly policies, low numbers, stereotypes, and harassment. *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, 8(2), 161–189.

The authors of this study evaluated survey responses from nearly 400 awardees of NSF's "Professional Opportunities for Women in Research and Education" (POWRE) program from Fiscal Years 1997-2000. Respondents identified balancing a career and a family as the most significant challenge facing female scientists and engineers today.

6. Sallee, M. W. (2012). The ideal worker or the ideal father: Organizational structures and culture in the gendered university. *Research in Higher Education*, 53, 782-802.

This article is based upon interviews with 70 faculty fathers at four research universities. The author investigated the tension that many men feel navigating their home responsibilities while aiming to fulfill the norms of the ideal worker (which holds that employees are always available to perform work and have few home responsibilities). The data from this study suggest that academic institutions and those within academic institutions penalize male faculty who appear to be too committed to their families.

7. Trower, C. A., & Bleak, J. L. (2004). Study of New Scholars. *Gender: Statistical Report* [Universities]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The Study of New Scholars survey was administered to full-time tenure-track faculty at six research universities. This study reports on gender differences on a number of factors related to workplace satisfaction. Females reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the following factors than males: elements of work and expectations; relationships; and diversity, salary, and work-life balance.

8. Waltman, J., & Sullivan, B. (2007). Creating and supporting a flexible work-life environment for faculty and staff. *Effective Practices for Academic Leaders*, 2(2), 1-16.

The authors describe some of the most common policies and practices related to a flexible work-life environment. They discuss the benefits of a flexible work-life environment to faculty, staff, and their institutions (e.g., improvement in an institution's success in hiring, job satisfaction, retention, decrease in employee stress, improvement in diversity and equity, and improvement in faculty productivity). They describe several ways that department chairs can support work-life flexibility in their departments. They offer advice, based upon work-life policy research, on the factors to consider in creating policies and in shaping a climate in which faculty and staff feel safe using such policies. Finally, they present best practice ideas, as well as stories from faculty interviews.

9. Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2004). Academic motherhood: Managing complex roles in research universities. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(2), 233-257.

This article describes the work/family tensions that many female faculty experience and the ways in which they manage the conflict. Work/family balance affects female faculty members' career satisfaction, and the article provides quotes from some female faculty who provide reasons why they are considering leaving academia due to dissatisfaction with work/family balance.