



Cornell University Student Assembly

Memo

To: Cassie Dembosky
From: Student Assembly
Date: February 13, 2014
Re: New Final Exam Schedule

On behalf of the undergraduate population at Cornell, the members of the Student Assembly urge the University Registrar to consider the following sentiments when determining the new final exam schedule in future years.

In 2012, the Student Assembly voted unanimously on a resolution denouncing the proposed changes to the academic calendar, citing various reasons. While the calendar changes have gone into effect anyway, the SA remains concerned that the changes surrounding the new final exam schedule actually cause more stress to undergraduate students than they were said to alleviate. The new calendar and subsequent final exam schedule eliminates the amount of time that students have to adequately prepare for exams. It should also be acknowledged that many students also have to complete large projects and/or final papers either immediately before the exam period begins, or during the exam period, further reducing the amount of time for studying. The move to fewer exam periods also yields more conflicts for students, and requires students to have to worry about trying to convince faculty members to make accommodations – a process that is already daunting and difficult for many students.

The SA remains concerned that the exam conflict policy that currently exists is not adhered to, often ignored, and largely unenforced by the various academic units. The policy is merely a recommendation and does not provide students with recourse if they are not given accommodations for conflicts. Though academic policy is outside of the jurisdiction of the SA, the SA Diversity Affairs Coalition recently reviewed a resolution that seeks to work with the Education Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate on the matter. It is requested that the University Registrar work very closely with the faculty and students to devise a means of enforcement of the policy.

The calendar changes also stand in direct contradiction to the promotion of inclusion at Cornell, particularly in regards to the vast international student population. Previously, this group would have been able to know the dates of exams at the beginning of the semester and make appropriate travel arrangements early. With the delay in the release of the final exam schedule, these students will most likely have to pay higher prices for their tickets home, which are typically sold at higher prices already. The unnecessary financial burden that is now being placed on students is troubling, especially given the already high cost of education.

While the SA readily acknowledges the difficulty in reconciling the perspectives of the different constituent groups, we firmly believe that the best interests of the undergraduate population were largely disregarded. Going forward, we hope that we can establish a better method of gathering feedback from the constituent assemblies and incorporating that feedback into any proposed schedule changes.