

Editor's Introduction

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This is the first issue of *Summer Academe: A Journal of Higher Education*. The purpose of the *Journal* is to provide a forum for exploring current research, case studies, and administrative and pedagogical issues that relate to summer sessions at colleges and universities throughout the world.

Summer sessions have become integral parts of the higher education academic cycle. Once thought to be placement fillers, today summer sessions are “big business.” They generate revenue beyond what institutions have traditionally come to expect, and largely for this reason, colleges and universities continue to grow and expand their summer operations. However, summer sessions are far more than money makers; they provide a variety of opportunities for students, faculty, and staff that would otherwise not be available to them. Because the summer is still seen as “vacation”—as a time when scholars and students can pursue their own interests outside the confines of the traditional academic year—the summer session allows students and faculty to experiment, to explore peripheral interests, and to pursue current interests in greater detail. Since the summer is seen by many central administrations as “surplus revenue,” there is more tolerance for non-traditional summer offerings—especially when those non-traditional offerings generate additional revenue.

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Furthermore, since the summer is not as entrenched in the highly structured academic curriculum as the September-to-May school year, there is more opportunity for new program development. Such development is also made easier in the summer, because it generally doesn't cost as much as comparable programming during the traditional year. One reason for this is that for teachers the summer is "overtime." In many institutions teachers are not paid the same per-course salary as during the rest of the year, and the university has more flexibility in hiring outside of its own tenured faculty.

In short, there is more administrative and pedagogical freedom in the summer. Like most things, however, this tendency toward liberalism has a negative component. Although it allows more creativity, program development, and experimentation, it also supports an image of lesser academic seriousness, greater frivolity, and diminished importance. Consequently, the summer session becomes a balancing act for faculty and administrators. Faculty must weigh the importance of research against their desire to teach and receive an additional salary, while summer administrators must fight to dispel negative images and justify their own existence within the college or university setting.

This *Journal* is a forum for all of us who are associated with summer sessions in one way or another. The articles in this first volume represent a wide variety of topics, research, and issues. We on the Editorial Board hope that these articles will aid in generating discussions and further research so that we may all share in each other's ideas and innovations.

The first article serves as a springboard into summer session administration and provides a brief look at the evolution of summer sessions over the past several decades. The article is placed outside of the two main *Journal* sections, because it introduces administrative issues as well as research issues. The author, Howard Martin, focuses on the "interconnection of summer sessions and the academic year as part of the academy's mission." He asks about the extent to which there can be some clear expression of this interconnectedness, and he explains events at the University of Wisconsin and at the 1994 annual meeting of the Association of University Summer Sessions that led to the formation of explicit mission statements. In many ways the material presented in the article highlights the purpose of this journal. The increasing centrality of the summer session in the workings of various institutions requires a central forum in which to exchange information and express various solutions to what are often common problems.

The research section of the *Journal* begins with an examination of non-classroom interactions between students and faculty. Research in

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the field indicates that informal interactions between faculty and students can play a key role in student development. Kristie DiGregorio furthers this research and finds that “discovering why students *do not* initiate contact with faculty may be primary to finding out why they *do*.” One reason students might be reluctant to initiate contact in the summer is the relative brevity of the summer session. However, the often smaller class sizes and the more intimate nature of the summer session can help overcome barriers and aid in essential faculty-student interactions. DiGregorio explores these and other deterrents/impetuses for developing student-teacher interactions.

The second paper in the research section examines a student satisfaction survey conducted at the University of Nebraska, the results and implications of that survey, and the proposed administrative changes as a result of the survey. In the article Elizabeth Grobsmith notes that “the main reason [students said they] take summer courses is so they can graduate on time, adding that this is the time they can take major requirements and get them out of the way, or graduate as early as possible.” Other frequently cited reasons for taking summer courses were lessening course load during the academic year and avoiding scheduling conflicts. Since the University of Nebraska offers four summer sessions, Grobsmith explains students’ views of the various sessions, and the advantages and disadvantages of each of the sessions.

In the final paper of the research section Victor Kobayashi looks at the role of the summer session in various institutions and the historical evolution of that role. He focuses on administrative proposals to make the summer session part of the regular university curriculum, thus effectively making the traditional academic year a 12-month enterprise. Kobayashi concludes his essay by listing connections in tuition rates between traditional academic year tuitions and summer tuitions at a variety of institutions.

The administrative section of *Summer Academe* is designed to give administrators a forum in which to explain administrative innovations, explore case studies, and examine specific projects. The first paper in this section addresses an area of increasing prominence at many institutions: that of the summer session as a self-supported, revenue-generating enterprise. In her essay, Sharon Alexander “describes a case study of [The University of Montana’s] experiment of adding self-support summer courses to more traditional state-supported courses to determine if it is economically, socially, and academically feasible to do so.” Alexander asks the question “Can summer sessions be used as an incubator for innovative program ideas which could be implemented during the academic year or in different venues?” Her answer is

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affirmative and quite positive, and she notes that the success of The University of Montana may prove useful as a model for other institutions.

Like Alexander's article, the second article focuses on another issue that is of current importance to summer session administrators and faculty, namely that of intensive courses. Kathy Peca explains and analyses her experience in teaching a "graduate level assessment course over four weekends." Her experiences were not only personally instructive, but they provide a number of helpful observations and suggestions for administrators planning to establish intensive courses or faculty intending to teach such courses. It is interesting to combine DiGregorio's article in the research section with Peca's article, because the two together provide strong support for the importance of faculty interaction with students.

The last article in the second section of the *Journal* elaborates on an area that is indicative of the innovative ways summer faculty and administrators can supplement or expand their summer offerings. William Barba notes that budgetary cuts in the New York university system have been combined with an increased sense of urgency on the part of those institutions to become more productive and innovative. As an example of an innovative way to use the less structured summer term, Barba describes his involvement with a Fulbright training program for Egyptian faculty and administrators. Barba explains how this program not only provided good utilization of university space, but has expanded the pedagogical and administrative horizons of Egyptian and American faculty and administrators.

The third and final section of this inaugural issue of *Summer Academe* lists upcoming conferences and names of individuals to contact for more information, as well as an indication of coming attractions in the next volume of the *Journal*. In future issues of *Summer Academe* other pragmatic issues can be included in this section, including book and article reviews, job postings, and so on. If you have information that you would like included in this section, kindly send it to the editor.