

Editor's Introduction

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The summer session is a vital component of virtually every university, but it is often viewed as peripheral by faculty and administrators. Many see the traditional September through May academic year as the main part of the university calendar and the summer as filler between May and September. However, as summer session administrators and faculty who teach in summer know, this view is shortsighted and mistaken. Without the summer session many students would not graduate in a timely manner; many faculty would not experiment with new courses and new research; and significant revenue would not flow to college coffers.

Although summer session deans and directors champion the importance of the summer session to their superiors, the information they have available to them about the value of the summer session is often anecdotal or intuitive. Good research is seldom available to substantiate many of their claims. This makes the articles in this volume particularly important.

Section One of this volume includes two articles that have broad appeal across institutions. In "Motivations to Graduate in Less than Four Years and Summer Session Attendance," Alton Taylor and Dudley Doane study the connection between students' attendance in summer session and time to degree. They find that for students who want to

graduate early, attending at least one summer session is critical. The authors note “summer session plays an important role in supporting an acceleration graduation policy. Summer session administrators can provide the leadership in helping the successful implementation of reducing the time to graduate in less than four years.” (This paper is a result of a research grant Taylor and Doane received from the Theresa Neil Memorial Research Fund.)

In addition to helping students accelerate the pace of their education, summer sessions also serve as catalysts for change. In his essay “Summer at North American Universities and Colleges: Impacts and Influences” Howard Martin argues that “precisely because they are free from some of the strictures of the rest of the academic year, summer sessions are able to offer unique opportunities for faculty, students, and institutions to transform the learning experience. A spirit of experimentalism and entrepreneurship permeates the summer session, both of which create the opportunity and incentive for colleges and universities to offer innovative curricula, and to enrich the learning experiences of students.”

Section Two of this volume focuses on institution-specific research that has broad application and appeal. Administrators and faculty benefit greatly from understanding the efforts made by other institutions to improve summer session pedagogy, student life, and administration. Readers who want additional information about institution-specific research may contact the authors at the addresses listed at the end of each article.

Brian Bubenzer and Nancy Westphal-Johnson describe an intensive summer teacher-training program for graduate students in their article “Preparing Graduate Students for College Teaching Careers.” In this innovative program graduate students take advantage of the flexibility they have in summer to learn how to teach while earning graduate credit. This kind of program is an excellent example of how the summer session can help improve the quality of instruction at a university and play a key role in institutional progress. Because graduate students feel pressure to conduct their research and attend to myriad tasks associated with their plans of study during the traditional academic year, the summer is an ideal time to conduct teacher training.

In “Maymester Lessons Learned: The Implementation and Evaluation of a Summer Session Intensive Term,” Carol Mehls and Anne Heinz describe the process for creating an intensive early summer program, and how such a program was received and evaluated at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Administrators who are interested in developing short, intensive programs will benefit from the data provided in this article.

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The use of online technology to improve instruction is part of almost all university curricula. However, there is not much direct case-specific data available for the use of online technology to help with the accelerated format of summer instruction. Stuart Palmer in “Evaluation of Online Technology to Support Students Studying Engineering Management in Summer Semester” explains how online technology is used in summer at Deakin University, Australia, and what affect the use of that technology has had on summer instruction. This is a very useful article for anyone using or about to use online technology to aid in summer instruction.

Virtually every summer session administrator is concerned with increasing summer enrollment. In “A Summer School Experiment: Faculty and Student Satisfaction” Robert Barrett and Leslie Barnes-Young explain which efforts to improve summer session enrollment at Francis Marion University worked and which proved problematic.

The editors of *Summer Academe* appreciate the contributions that the authors have made to this volume. The accelerated format of the summer session, along with the many institutional nuances that influence summer session administration make enrollment management, maintaining good pedagogical practices, and keeping the university community in summer vibrant a very challenging task. The articles in this volume should help anyone involved in summer session teaching or administration gain new ideas about how to use the summer to improve the quality of their own institutions.