REPORT OF THE SENATE AD HOC COMMITTEE
TO EXAMINE SUMMER SESSION
SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY SENATE
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
NOVEMBER, 1998

I INTRODUCTION

Authorization

This study was authorized by the Faculty Senate at their meeting on October 21, 1997. Subsequently, a committee was appointed by the Senate to examine Summer School and it was charged with conducting the study within the constraints of the contractual guidelines and the existing Summer School resources. The committee was instructed to examine admission to Summer School and Summer School scheduling. In addition, the committee was to gather data about summer enrollments and summer offerings.

Order of Presentation

The report is organized into three sections. The first section is an introduction. The next section describes the areas of investigation and study procedures, and provides some key points resulting from the gathering of data and other information. Section III provides the committee's recommendations.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the 775 undergraduate and 678 graduate students who completed a Summer School questionnaire and supplied much of the basic data for this study. In addition, we wish to thank our colleagues who individually, or collectively as a departmental unit, provided much needed information, as well as their thoughts, concerns and suggestions regarding Summer
School at WIU. We also greatly appreciate the assistance of the Student Government Association in the distribution and collection of the undergraduate survey, the resource assistance of the Provost's Office, the data entry provided by Ms. Janet Forgy (University Advising and Academic Support Center) and Ms. Yvonne Oliver (Graduate Studies), the data analysis by Ms. Rhonda Kline (Institutional Research and Planning), and the performance of clerical tasks and report preparation by Ms. Cheryl Colliflower and Ms. Mary Sherwood.

COMMITTEE PROCESS

Areas to Investigate

The committee approached its rather broad task by organizing into sub-groups to examine the following questions:

1. What is the mission of Summer School for the entire university, the four colleges, and the 58 departments?

2. What is the most appropriate number of Summer School terms and length for these terms?

3. What type of student is the university currently serving and what type should it serve in the future? For example, remedial vs. regular student, general education vs. non general education student, and undergraduate vs. graduate student.

4. What are the needs of the student in the summer?

Data and Information Gathering

To try to answer the above mentioned questions and formulate possible recommendations to be presented to the Faculty Senate, the committee gathered data and information from several sources. First, Alan DeRoos, Registrar, sent an e-mail request to other institutions across the country asking about their summer schedule, trends in enrollments, and any innovative programs they have formulated which have helped to increase enrollments. Several schools responded to the request, but very little useful information was received. Second, closely following the Registrar's request for information, announcements were placed in several issues of the WIU Campus Connection and simultaneously on the Faculty Senate electronic bulletin board asking faculty and staff to forward
to the committee chair their comments and suggestions concerning the mission of Summer School. A number of responses were received and shared with the committee. These responses helped to direct the committee to other sources of information, identified concerns of both faculty and staff, and assisted in formulating questions for several surveys which were to be conducted. A third source of data and information gathering was a series of three surveys. These survey results provided much of the background information for the recommendations in Section III.

The first survey was developed for undergraduate students, with suggestions from the committee, and administered in mid-April by the Student Government Association. The survey forms were distributed in the University Union concourse by SGA and some were given to students by advisers in the University Advising and Academic Support Center and other advising areas. A total of 775 completed survey forms were usable and were processed through the University Advising and Academic Support Center. See Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire with frequency counts for each item.

A second student survey was administered by the School of Graduate Studies and mailed in early May to approximately 2,300 graduate students. A cut-off date for inclusion of returned questionnaires was established as May 29. A total of 678 usable survey forms were returned for a response rate of around 29 percent. The questionnaires were processed by the Graduate Studies Office and Institutional Report of the Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee to Examine Summer Session (November 1998) Research and Planning. See Appendix C for a copy of the questionnaire which is followed in the same appendix by frequency counts for the survey items.

A third survey was sent to the 38 department chairs and the four college deans. The survey cover letter and questions, which can be found in Appendix D, were distributed on March 3, 1998, and the recipients were asked to reply by April 2. The responses were posted to the Faculty Senate electronic bulletin board, and recipients were invited to make desired revisions to their statements by May 1, 1998. See Appendix F for the final responses from the colleges and departments. A final source of information involved enrollment data provided by the Registrar's Office and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. See Appendix E and Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Highlights: Data (Baseline Information)

• Since 1990, total summer enrollments are down 15 percent
On-campus summer enrollments have fallen by almost 21 percent and off-campus by 8.5 percent since 1990.

Since 1990, course offerings have decreased by 94 sections (general education -9, lower division -10, upper division -13, and graduate -62).

In 1990 undergraduates were 51 and graduates 49 of summer enrollments, while by 1998 undergraduate enrollment was 58 and graduate was 42.

Off-campus enrollments are now approximately one-half of total summer enrollments (Summer 1998: on-campus 2,170 and off-campus 2,083).

Less than ten percent of summer students are academically suspended (in 1997 academically suspended students represented 25 of general education course enrollment).

Less than one-half percent of summer students are transients.

A minimum of ten students is required at the undergraduate level and five students at the graduate level for a course to be offered. Courses below this level can be taught at $65 per SCH per student enrolled.

Highlights: Student Surveys

Sixty-eight percent (N=526) of the undergraduate survey respondents would prefer to attend Summer School at the WIU Macomb campus. Of the 582 graduate survey respondents who would consider attending Summer School, 213 (36) would select Macomb, while 110 (20) would prefer the Quad Cities.

Importance of courses by the requirements they fulfill revealed that courses which apply to undergraduate students’ majors were deemed most important by students, but courses which meet general education requirements were also considered important.

For undergraduates, class offering was identified as the most important factor in the choice of an institution to attend in the summer, and information on WIU summer offerings was desired earlier than presently available. For graduate students, over 60 who would not attend Summer School cited limitations of course offerings as a reason.

Undergraduate students preferred a Summer School format of two 4-week and/or one 6-week session, while graduate students
selected a weekend and/or a 2-week session as their ideal format.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
The university should develop a dearly defined and broadly disseminated mission for Summer School supported by an appropriate allocation process.

Many departments and colleges have summer missions, but it is unclear what the University Summer Mission is. Departments/colleges offer basic skills and general education courses, major courses, graduate courses, and on- and off-campus courses, to both traditional and non-traditional students. Many departments are trying to cover all groups at the expense of serving no group satisfactorily; they are frustrated that they cannot do everything they need to do and there is no "university" mission statement to help them establish priorities.

Recommendation 2
Suggested Mission Statement: The mission of Summer School at Western Illinois University is to serve student needs while maintaining economic viability. A variety of course delivery methods and calendars may be employed with the primary consideration being the quality of the educational experience. It is recognized that each of Western Illinois University's colleges and divisions will differ in its clientele and teaching emphases.

Recommendation 3
A Summer School director appointed from the Provost's office, along with one department chair from each college acting as an advisory group, should be given clear responsibility for Summer School with the authority and budget needed to carry out this responsibility within the Summer School mission statement of the university.

Survey research done by Ronald L. Wasserstein of Washburn University indicates that while successful Summer School programs are organized in many different ways they all have one common factor. That common factor is that someone ultimately has clear responsibility and authority for Summer School. As Wasserstein states, "when everyone is in charge, no one is in charge."
Recommendation 4

Summer School should be designed to meet both program and student needs in terms of the classes chosen to be offered and the times they are offered.

The Summer School survey indicated that approximately 40% of both graduate and undergraduate students wanted courses offered in the afternoon, evenings or on weekends. Because of the concentration of morning classes, many wind up in the same time slots. Students would be better served if departments coordinated with each other when planning summer offerings. Decisions about which courses are offered and when they are offered should be program driven keeping student needs in mind. A number of departments also expressed concern that the vast majority of courses are offered in the morning which limits a student's opportunity to take a variety of classes. This problem might be lessened by having the deans coordinate the times classes are scheduled so as to spread them throughout the day and evening. Another concern is that if a large number of classes meet for different lengths of time there might be conflict between different class periods. By establishing period lengths that would allow for a variety of class times this problem can be avoided (example: Each period would be two and a half hours long allowing for 8 week classes to meet one hour a day, 6 week classes one hour and a half, 4 week classes 2 hours, etc. except in special situations, no classes would be scheduled "across" periods).

Recommendation 5

Summer courses should be offered between the end of spring semester and the beginning of fall semester in a variety of time blocks in order to be responsive to as many students as possible. This could include weekend and evening courses, workshops, what we currently call Intersession courses, and any session lasting from one to thirteen weeks. Departments should make every effort to review their summer courses to determine which time frame and format will best meet student and program needs while maintaining academic integrity. In our committee surveys, the majority of departments, as well as both undergraduate and graduate students requested flexibility and/or variety in the scheduling of their classes. Sixty percent of undergraduates preferred classes either immediately following the close of spring semester or just prior to the fall semester and graduate students favored weekend classes.

* Recommendation 6

The University needs to anticipate the demand for summer
graduate courses with greater precision. Eighty-six percent (N=678 which is approximately 1/3 of all graduate students) of the graduate survey respondents said they would consider attending Summer School. Over 70% said availability of courses is a determining factor, and over 60% cited limitations of course offerings as a reason for not attending Summer School.

Recommendation 7
Investigate the pros and cons of distance learning offerings for students during the summer.

Departments should investigate if courses lend themselves to being taught via distance learning. Perhaps a campus-based summer course could enroll a limited number of students not on campus who could complete requirements for the course in a distance learning format, including the Internet.

Recommendation 8
Summer class information (by department and course number) should be available at the same time as the Spring Class Schedule books.

If a listing of summer courses is included in the Spring Class Schedule book, then students could plan their spring and fall schedules with this information in mind. They could finalize their choices when the Summer Class Schedule books become available. Many departments believe that students and faculty will be better served if information on summer courses is available earlier. The SGA student survey supports this observation.

Recommendation 9
Investigate additional sites for the distribution of the Summer Class Schedule books.

Currently, the Summer Class Schedule books are not distributed to the residence halls but have to be picked up by students at the Registrar's Office in Sherman Hall or the Registration Center in Memorial Hall.

Recommendation 10
Make Summer School course information more available to area students who attend other universities.

Students who return to their homes in the Macomb area for the summer are potential "transient" or summer enrollees. Information concerning Summer School should be made widely available
during the winter break and spring break to encourage this population to make early plans for Summer School at WIU.

Recommendation 11

The WIU home page should have a prominent "hot button" to alert students to Summer School offerings.

The "Web page without a "hot button" is difficult to navigate.

Recommendation 12

A section of the Summer Class Schedule book should be identified as GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES. Courses would therefore be listed by general education category and by department.

A separate listing of General Education Courses would allow students to easily determine which communication skills, natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, multicultural and human well-being courses are available.

Recommendation 13

All students not enrolled in a comprehensive major should be required to declare their minor choice by the time they register for the second semester of their junior year.

Currently students are not required to declare their choice of major until they file their application for graduation. Determining a student's minor as early as possible will enable department chairs to identify summer courses to meet this graduation requirement.

Recommendation 14

Students should be made aware of the availability of Extension, ISP, and other such options during Summer School.

At present, many students are not aware that these courses exist. Efforts should be made to bring about a greater awareness of all Summer School options.