

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP TO ASSESS  
THE SEPTEMBER STUDENT HOLIDAY EXPERIMENT**  
Spring 2013

**Summary**

Pursuant to a 2009 vote of the Faculty, the Working Group to Assess the September Student Holiday Experiment recommends a move of the September student holiday from a Monday to a Friday, and that the *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty* be updated to reflect this change.

**Background**

During the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years, the undergraduate and graduate student leadership, including the Career Fair Executive Committee (CFEC)—a body comprised of representatives of the Graduate Student Council, the Senior Class Council, and the Society of Women Engineers—petitioned the faculty and administration to move the September student holiday from a Monday to a Wednesday. Historically, the Career Fair has been held on a Thursday, a day of classes, thus limiting student participation and disrupting normal academic exercises. The students argued that moving the student holiday to a Wednesday, with the Career Fair moving accordingly, would have a number of benefits:

- Students who are unable to attend the Career Fair because of class conflicts would be able to do so.
- Students would have more time to research companies, thereby improving their career prospects.
- Faculty would benefit from increased class attendance.
- Faculty would no longer have to worry about distracted or sleep-deprived students who had prepared for the Career Fair instead of classes the night before.
- The CFEC and the Careers Office would benefit from increased employer participation over the long-term, which would increase the Career Fair's profitability.
- Employers would benefit from increased student attendance.

The Faculty does not control the timing of the Career Fair, but does set the academic calendar. Therefore, approval of the Faculty was needed to approve a move of the student holiday, which would allow the CFEC to move the Career Fair to coincide with the holiday. A number of Faculty agreed with the principles that the students identified above, but were unconvinced that moving the holiday to a Wednesday was the solution. Faculty argued that a three-day weekend early in the term, especially for underclassmen, was too important to eliminate. In order to garner the necessary Faculty support to consider a permanent change to the calendar, the students, in consultation with Faculty leadership, offered a motion at the November 2009 Institute Faculty Meeting to license an experiment that would serve as the basis for a more permanent decision.

Regulation 2.11 of the *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty* reads, “Classes shall be suspended during the following additional vacation periods: Fall – a Monday in September on or after the 15<sup>th</sup> (except when Labor Day is September 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>) to be determined annually by the Registrar in consultation with the Faculty Policy Committee...” The motion that was offered and approved in 2009 suspended this regulation, shifting the September student holiday in academic year 2011–2012 to a Wednesday and in 2012–2013 to a Friday to coincide with Career Day. Including a Friday student holiday in the experiment, the Faculty argued, would generate additional data and allow for a more effective analysis in determining a long-term solution. The motion that the Faculty approved reads as follows:

Moved that the Faculty approves a two-year experimental initiative proposed by MIT’s Undergraduate Association and Graduate Student Council to temporarily suspend a portion of Rule 2.11 of *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*. This temporary suspension would shift the September student holiday in academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 to coincide with Career Day. In 2011 the holiday will be scheduled on the Wednesday of Career Week and in September 2012 the holiday will be scheduled on the Friday of Career Week. The Faculty Policy Committee will assess this experiment in consultation with other committees that share responsibility for calendar matters, the Registrar, the Undergraduate Association, and the Graduate Student Council. The Chair of the Faculty will present the results of the assessment at a Spring 2013 Faculty Meeting and, based on the results, propose either a permanent change to *Rules and Regulations* or a return to the current calendar.

With the experiment concluded, the Faculty Policy Committee charged a working group to assess the experiment’s success and offer a recommendation for the permanent placement of the September holiday.

## **Process**

The working group identified a number of stakeholders to consult in gathering the necessary information to conduct a thorough analysis. Members of the working group spoke with Costantino Colombo, Dean for Student Life; Eric Grimson, Chancellor; Daniel Hastings, Dean for Undergraduate Education; Deborah Liverman, Director, Career Services; John Kendall Nowocin, Career Fair Facilitator; Melanie Parker, Executive Director, Global Education and Career Development Center; Robert Randolph, Chaplain; and Ryan Steele, Facility and Events Manager, Department of Athletics, Physical Education & Recreation (DAPER).

In addition, the working group solicited student and Faculty feedback by issuing a short survey. Although the working group’s charge focused on the placement of the student holiday, the timing of the Career Fair was an important factor to consider, and so the sur-

vey asked respondents to indicate their preference for the placement of the holiday in relation to the timing of the Career Fair.

## **Feedback**

Overwhelmingly, the feedback that the working group collected suggested a desire to align the September student holiday and the Career Fair. The students' rationale in 2009 for holding the holiday and the Career Fair on the same day of the week remains valid and was expressed by all constituencies. Therefore, the working group focused on determining the day of the week that would be least disruptive to students and Faculty and that would provide the greatest benefit to students who wish to attend the Career Fair.

Although the Career Fair is officially a one-day event, the working group considered both the days leading up to the Career Fair and the days following it. Many companies that visit campus for the Career Fair stay an additional day to conduct one-on-one interviews with students. Also, from a logistical perspective, it is necessary to consider the labor and costs associated with setting up the Career Fair during the days leading up to the event.

The feedback the working group received from the stakeholders is as follows:

Beyond voicing a preference to align the Career Fair and the holiday, Chancellor Grimson and Deans Hastings and Colombo expressed only a desire to schedule the holiday on a day that would have the least impact on classes and would allow students the opportunity to attend the Career Fair.

Ms. Parker and Ms. Liverman expressed a preference for holding the Career Fair and holiday on a day other than Monday. Scheduling the fair on a Monday presents a number of logistical challenges. The department must pay overtime to schedule staff during the preceding weekend to set up for the Career Fair. Also, in the event of last-minute changes or emergencies, it is difficult to reach the necessary individuals or departments on weekends when most offices are closed.

Dr. Randolph's interest focused on ensuring that the Career Fair and holiday do not fall on a High Holy Day. Over the next 20 years, Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur will fall on a weekday during the second half of September on 15 of 40 occasions. Neither of the holidays will fall on a Friday.

Mr. Steele indicated that, from a facilities perspective, the day of the week on which the Career Fair is held makes little difference. DAPER staff spend more than a week setting up and breaking down the facilities for Career Fair, which is held in the Johnson Ice Rink.

Representing the CFEC, Mr. Nowocin provided data suggesting that the last two Career Fairs, held on a Wednesday in 2011 and on a Friday in 2012, have by far attracted the highest number of company representatives in at least the last six years. The 2012 Career Fair, in particular, was the most successful Fair on record, drawing representation from 372 companies. To be sure, the data on company attendance are confounded by

other factors, most notably the state of the economy, as well as outreach activities by CFEC. Nevertheless, nothing in the data suggests that holding the Career Fair on a Friday would diminish company participation.

From a financial perspective, the CFEC's data suggests that the Career Fair's expenses would be about \$17,600 higher on a Monday than on any other day of the week. This is a result of the overtime expenses that the CFEC would incur for setup during the weekend preceding the Career Fair. The expenses that the CFEC would incur on a Friday would be about \$3,600 greater than on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Given a revenue stream on the order of \$500,000, and considering the increased revenue generated by this year's Career Fair, which was held on a Friday, it is clear that the revenues that the CFEC would generate on a Friday would far outweigh any additional expenses that it might incur.

In a survey conducted by the CFEC, companies expressed a preference for holding the Career Fair on a Wednesday or Thursday to allow time for follow-up interviews the following day. However, the data suggests that the day on which the Career Fair is held does not impact company participation. In fact, the 2012 Friday Career Fair drew far greater company representation than any Career Fair on record.

The working group sent a survey to 379 undergraduate students and 400 graduate students asking their preference in the placement of the holiday with particular regard to the scheduling of the Career Fair. The option that garnered the most positive responses from students was the option to hold the holiday and the Career Fair on a Friday. 84% of students rated that option as "desirable" or "very desirable." Only 7% of students described that option as "undesirable" and none described it as "unacceptable." The second most favorable option was the option to align the holiday and Career Fair on a Monday, which 72% of students rated favorably. Only 9.3% of students rated that option "undesirable" and 2.3% "unacceptable." Furthermore, a sizable percentage of students described holding the Career Fair on Wednesday as undesirable (25%) or unacceptable (6%).

Although the working group's focus was the holiday's impact on students, the group felt that it was important to solicit the Faculty perspective as well. Each of the Faculty members on the working group was asked to send the survey to 10 of his colleagues. Although the responses from Faculty suggest limited interest in the placement of the holiday, this informal poll indicates a preference for a Monday or Friday holiday. Sixty-one percent of the Faculty surveyed expressed a desire for a Monday holiday; the next highest-rated option was Friday, which garnered a 32% favorable rating. The majority of Faculty responses rated each option as "neutral."

The Office of the Registrar provided data suggesting that the least disruptive day of the week on which to schedule the holiday is Friday. During the Fall 2012 semester, the numbers of classes offered each day of the week are as follows:

Monday:           472

Tuesday:	537
Wednesday:	463
Thursday:	475
Friday:	243

Clearly, a Friday holiday would affect fewer classes than a holiday on any other day.

## **Conclusion**

There is strong evidence to suggest that a move of the September student holiday from a Monday to a Friday would be in the best interest of the Institute. From an academic and administrative perspective, a Friday holiday presents the least disruption to students and Faculty, and maintains a three-day weekend early in the semester. A Friday holiday presents students interested in attending the Career Fair an excellent opportunity to do so.

The working group recommends a permanent change to the academic calendar to move the September student holiday from a Monday to Friday. Mr. Nowocin, representing the CFEC, has expressed his support of this change. Although the timing of the Career Fair falls outside of the working group’s purview, the working group also recommends that the Career Fair be scheduled to fall on a Friday each year so that students may attend without fear of missing classes. This recommendation includes holding the Career Fair on a Friday during the years without a September student holiday.

## **Motion**

Moved that, effective immediately, the Faculty approves a change to the academic calendar as defined in Section 2.11 of the *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty* as follows (all deletions stricken; highlights in red):

“Classes shall be suspended during the following additional vacation period: Fall – a ~~Monday~~ **Friday** in September on or after the 15<sup>th</sup> (except when Labor Day is September 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>) to be determined annually by the Registrar in consultation with the Faculty Policy Committee...”

## **Working Group Membership**

Steven Hall, Chair  
 Professor  
 Faculty Policy Committee

Ravi Charan  
 Undergraduate Student Representative

SiSi Ni  
 Graduate Student Representative

Iria Romano  
Associate Registrar  
Office of the Registrar

Robert Sauer  
Professor  
Committee on Graduate Programs

Charles Stewart, III  
Professor  
Committee on Academic Performance

Aaron Weinberger, Staff  
Office of the President  
Faculty Policy Committee

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cf-directors@mit.edu  
<http://career-fair.mit.edu/>

March 10, 2012

John Kendall Nowocin  
Career Fair Chair  
MIT Career Fair

Dear Professor Hall and Professor Allen,

The MIT Career Fair Executive Committee has long felt that the MIT Career Fair and the September student holiday should coincide, and going forward be scheduled on the same day. For the reasons outlined by our predecessors in 2009, and the data collected and analyzed from 2009 to 2012 it is in everyone's best interest to align the student holiday and the MIT Career Fair. The evidence that has been presented to shift the student holiday to a Friday is convincing. The MIT Career Fair Executive Committee supports the Faculty Policy Committee working group's proposal to move the September student holiday to a Friday; the MIT Career Fair will follow suit and schedule the day of the Career Fair on the Friday student holiday each year.

Sincerely,



John Kendall Nowocin  
Career Fair Chair



Brian Spatocco  
2012-13 GSC President



Liza Xu  
2012-13 SWE President



Amanda David  
2013 Senior Class President

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