TO: Committee on Strategic Planning and Priorities

FROM: Committee on Strategic Planning and Priorities

RE: Academic Calendar and Winter Term

DATE: September 25, 2013

**Background**

In the winter of 2012, the college ran a pilot winter term program that enrolled 83 students in nine course sections, including some short-term travel courses. One course travelled to London, another to the Quaker archives in Swarthmore, PA. Student and faculty feedback was solicited. As might be expected, responses indicated that the compressed term was appropriate for some courses and less so for others. These results were brought to CPP. CPP endorsed running another winter term. The committee’s guidance was to include blended coursework and to encourage short-term travel courses that could allow students whose fall-spring academic program does not readily fit study away to have this experience. In the winter of 2013, 24 course sections ran with a total of 184 students. Again, it was reported that the compressed format worked well for many of the courses. Blended coursework was the most popular among students during this time period. All travel courses, including new offerings in New Orleans and New York City, enrolled enough students to run. The tuition generated during both terms far exceeded the cost of running the programs. In winter term 2013, the college netted an estimated $200,000 from winter term.

While the general consensus among participants is that winter term is a useful and viable time to schedule classes, there seems to be equal consensus that a slightly longer term would be useful in that it would allow for more, slightly shorter class meetings. A longer term would also build in some flexibility in case of inclement weather.

**Charge**

CSPP requests that CSPP examine the academic calendar with an eye towards altering the calendar to allow for a longer winter term.

Among the questions that might be useful to consider are:

1. What are the potential effects of an expanded winter term on fall and spring term calendars?
2. Does the campus community view winter term as a viable and useful academic period? If so, is the benefit of expanding the number of potential class meetings worth the potential disruption caused by a calendar change to expand winter term?
3. What is the cost involved in an expanded winter term? Do these costs outweigh the potential financial benefit? For example, what are the incremental costs, if any, of keeping the dorms open a week later in the spring? To what extent do these costs eat into the revenue from winter term? How much (if at all) would winter term have to expand in order to overcome these costs?
4. Does CSPP have a recommended course grid for winter term, or should this decision be left to program staff working with individual faculty to best accommodate the needs of each class? Note: Since students do not typically take more than one winter term class, course conflict issues are not relevant.

**TCNJ Planning Processes**

Step One: Identifying and reporting the planning issue.

When CPP identifies or receives information of a planning issue, it will post notice of impending action on the issue on the Planning Website (www.tcnj.edu/~CPP). The notice should contain a description of the goals and expected results of the planning process, identify the planning body involved, offer a provisional timeline for the final plan and describe how interested parties can offer preliminary input. In all cases, preliminary input can be sent via email or campus mail to the chair of the relevant Planning Council (or to the co-chairs of CPP if CPP is taking the lead role on the issue).

Step two: Preparing a preliminary plan.

The Planning Council (or CPP) assesses the issue brought forth, surveys preliminary public input and collects other data as needed. The Planning Council (or CPP) may request quantitative data from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Using all available information, the Planning Council (or CPP) will revise the relevant plan to address the underlying problem identified in the previous stage. The plan should include a means of assessing the proposed change, as well as a timeline for assessment. The planning unit should be cognizant of how such changes will affect other units’ plans

Step three: Soliciting public input.

Once the Planning Council (or CPP) has a revised plan, it must offer it for public input. A draft of the revised plan will be posted on the Planning Website ([www.tcnj.edu~CPP](http://www.tcnj.edu~CPP)) and a campus-wide email should notify all students, staff and faculty about such a posting. The Planning Council (or CPP) can invite testimony during its regularly-scheduled meetings. In addition, the Planning Council (or CPP) will make every effort to identify affected parties and by email solicit the view of their representative. For issues that garner campus-wide attention or significant controversy, the Planning Council (or CPP) will have a campus-wide forum at a time or times that allow substantial public access.

It is important to give every stakeholder enough time to consider the proposed changes and form an opinion on them. From the time of posting the preliminary plan on the Planning Website and the emailed notification of such posting, stakeholders must have at least ten working academic days before the closure of the input process or the holding of an open forum. Longer periods may be considered for more controversial or far-reaching changes. The adoption of substantial planning changes during the summer is discouraged and Planning Councils should consider awaiting public input until the academic community reconvenes. The guiding principal is to err towards generosity in opportunities for public input to ensure a well-informed and legitimate process.

Step four: Creating a final plan.

When, in the best judgment of the Planning Council, the campus community has had ample opportunity to respond to the preliminary plan, the council will prepare a final plan and send it to CPP. The plan should be accompanied by a memo that summarizes the input received from the college community and explains how the plan was revised in light of the input.

CPP reviews the final plan to make sure it followed the process above and that the plan is consistent with other strategic plans on campus and with the College’s Mission. If CPP feels that additional and substantial revisions are necessary, it posts these on the Planning Website, informs the campus community and begins a process of public input. If CPP is satisfied with the substance and process of the final plan, it sends it to the President for consideration.