The Sub-Committee on Calendar, Credit, and Assessment (CCA) offers this interim report on its activities and preliminary findings by responding to questions of the Sub-Committee that were proposed in a report by the Curriculum Review Exploratory Committee in May 2003.

Questions 15 and 16: Are we satisfied with the current calendar of two semesters and a multi-term summer school? Are we satisfied with the role the University Summer School plays in delivering our curriculum?

The CCA Sub-Committee has examined a number of possible alternatives to our current calendar, including the quarter system, trimesters, and a variation of our current calendar with the inclusion of a mini-semester, possibly in January or May. While there has been little, if any, enthusiasm for either a quarter or trimester system, the Sub-Committee felt that it was worthwhile to explore the viability of a calendar that included the mini-semester. Towards this end, we examined the calendars of a number of peer and aspirant schools, with a model proposed by Washington and Lee offering the most insight into the complexities, politics, time line, and cost of implementing such a calendar. (Note that the details of W & L’s 12week/12 week/6 week calendar can be reviewed at their website at http://news.wlu.edu/news/page/normal/725.html. Also, you may refer to the attachment which offers an assessment of W & L’s calendar by sub-committee member, Dean Simpson.)

While there may be some recommended changes to our calendar in the upcoming months of our review, for the present, the Sub-Committee feels it would be prudent to have clear objectives in place as well as an understanding of the requirements for changing the UR calendar before beginning this detailed evaluation. To this point, the sub-committee has already considered a number of issues or concerns that could arise by changing the University’s calendar. Among these concerns would be how we ensure that the students have sufficient flexibility to pursue summer internships and jobs, how the faculty might be affected as far as the time designated by many for research projects in the summer, and how such groups as Housing and the Dining Hall will be affected. The sub-committee expects to continue its discussions and solicitation of input from a number of groups and operations on campus when it reconvenes prior to the start of the fall semester.
Question 17: Should we make curricular adjustments in response to the trend toward four-hour courses in various majors?

The Committee feels that in those majors where four-hour courses are offered, there are inconsistencies in the scope and requirements for a four-credit course. A starting point for discussion would be that four-hour courses should require at least four contact hours per week, with a measurable increase in requirements for the added credit. Conversely, and to demonstrate that this is not a simple issue by any means, one might make the argument that the amount students actually work in a course and the amount they actually learn is not directly tied to seat-time in class. Further analysis and discussions will be part of the Sub-Committee’s agenda in the fall.

Questions 20, 21, and 22: Are we satisfied with our current policies regarding AP credit? Are we satisfied with our current policies regarding first-year credit and exemptions other than those for AP? Are we satisfied with or policies and practices regarding transfer and study abroad credit?

The Committee spent considerable time, with input from the Registrar and Admissions, on analyzing peer and aspirant schools' practices versus our current practices with respect to AP, IB, CLEP, and transfer credit. Many of our peer and aspirant institutions have similar policies, allowing the equivalent of up to one or two semesters of course work to be brought in by freshmen. How the credits count (e.g., applied for credit or placement, substitute for requirements versus electives) generally is subject to decision rules by each department and major.

The Committee is considering the following recommendations, recognizing that while qualified applicants are bringing in more and more AP/IB, there is the concern that these applicants benefit from a full college experience here at UR:

AP/IB Credit:
--Cap advanced AP or IB credits at a total of 15 credits or 5 courses (i.e. roughly 1/8 of the courses required for graduation). Any deviation from these guidelines will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

--How scores are evaluated will be the decision of each department (e.g., the departments will determine whether a 4 or 5 will be accepted vs. a 5 only).

Transfer Credit:
--Credits transferred in for courses with a C or better.

--Transfer courses must be equivalent to comparable courses at UR.
Courses may not count toward both high school requirements and college requirements (possible exception where these courses are the highest offered in the student's high school curriculum).

In the case of the transfer credits, the Sub-Committee recognizes that some of these recommendations are already in place, so the intent is to basically reaffirm the practice.

In response to these preliminary recommendations, the Sub-Committee has received input from some individuals who are more directly involved with the decision making process regarding AP/IB credits, such as department chairs. Their comments offer concerns for unintended consequences of changing our policies, such as the potential negative effects on the University’s ability to enroll the high achieving students that we most want to have here. Further examination of this topic will occur in the fall before the Sub-Committee presents its final findings and recommendations.