

Should the University of California Return to a Common Calendar?

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BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

The University of California previously operated on a common semester calendar. Then in 1966, all UC campuses converted to a common quarter calendar to support year-round operations in response to the surge in college-bound enrollment from the baby boom. While UC campuses did and still do offer summer sessions, summer never became a full quarter. In 1983, UC Berkeley converted back to semesters, citing opportunities to improve academic preparation and student success,¹ and UC Merced opened with a semester calendar in 2005.

In 2026, the California State University (CSU) system will have all its campuses on a semester calendar, after completing a 13-year effort to have six of its campuses convert from quarters to semesters. With that change, all CSU campuses and 113 of 116 California Community College (CCC) campuses will be on a semester calendar.

There have been prior UC systemwide and campus efforts considering calendar conversion. Recent discussions about ways UC can improve its student experience and support postgraduate outcomes have raised questions about returning to a common calendar—semester or quarter—to facilitate systemwide collaboration and cohesion. Differing start and end dates, exam periods, and breaks complicate efforts toward systemwide collaboration. These include providing comparable UC student access to summer jobs and internships, expanding cross-campus or dual enrollment to unique language courses or programs, and leveraging resources across campuses to advance UC's teaching, research, and public service mission.

In fall 2024, Provost Katherine S. Newman and systemwide Academic Senate Chair Steven W. Cheung established an Academic Planning Council (APC) workgroup to examine the issue of a systemwide academic calendar. The focus of the APC calendar workgroup was on UC's nine general campuses, not UC San Francisco and graduate professional schools. Semester and quarter calendars each have advantages and disadvantages. The process of calendar conversion would require a significant investment of resources. We recognize recent external pressures raise the

¹ UC Berkeley, Office of Institutional Research, *Berkeley Semester Conversion: Background, Results, and Ongoing Considerations*, p. 1, Sep. 25, 1985.

question of why now. Completing this information gathering exercise can help deliberations on desirable calendar features and if or when campuses should move to a common calendar.

PROCESS AND APPROACH

The APC calendar workgroup² includes 24 representatives from across UC campuses, academic disciplines, Academic Senate committees, and administrative roles. More than two-thirds are or have served as UC faculty, with 11 appointed by the Academic Senate Chair and at least five administrative leaders who are or have been UC faculty. Systemwide Senate leadership includes the vice chair of the Academic Senate and the chair or vice chair of the following: Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs, University Committee on Educational Policy, University Committee on Planning and Budget, University Committee on Academic Personnel, and University Committee on Research Policy. Administrative leaders include a campus provost; undergraduate and graduate deans; a registrar; and lead administrators for student affairs, academic personnel, academic success, institutional research, and planning and budget. The workgroup also includes both an undergraduate and graduate student representative.

Recognizing the members do not represent or reflect all interests, the workgroup took an inclusive and deliberative approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data to inform this work, including but not limited to an environmental scan of existing academic calendar features and potential new calendar features; input from UC student affairs, related campus offices, and peer institution representatives that completed or are completing calendar conversion; 90 responses from a questionnaire purposively directed to representatives of campus constituent groups; and hundreds of responses to the calendar@ucop.edu email. We also considered information submitted separately by the University Committee on Research Policy and the Council of UC Faculty Associations.

Initial workgroup discussions have proved fruitful, identifying critical calendar features in existing calendars, creating an alternate quarter calendar for consideration, detailing factors to consider before any change, and laying out the opportunities and challenges with common calendar options. Members believe, by sharing key findings to date, we can obtain more representative campus feedback to improve our final report. Our goal is to provide objective information to help answer whether UC should return to a common calendar and what the challenges and costs of moving forward with a calendar conversion process at this time would be. We present several options at the end of the report: 1) a common semester calendar, 2) a common quarter calendar, 3) a hybrid option of semester calendar and alternate quarter calendar with aligned start dates (described later), and 4) maintaining the status quo. The report highlights the opportunities and challenges with each option but does not recommend one option over another.

² Details on the APC workgroup and charge can be found at ucop.edu/apc-calendar.

INFORMATION COLLECTED

The workgroup examination began by comparing UC’s existing semester and quarter calendars.

UC Berkeley and UC Merced operate on semester calendars and UC Davis, UC Irvine, UCLA, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Santa Cruz operate on quarter calendars.

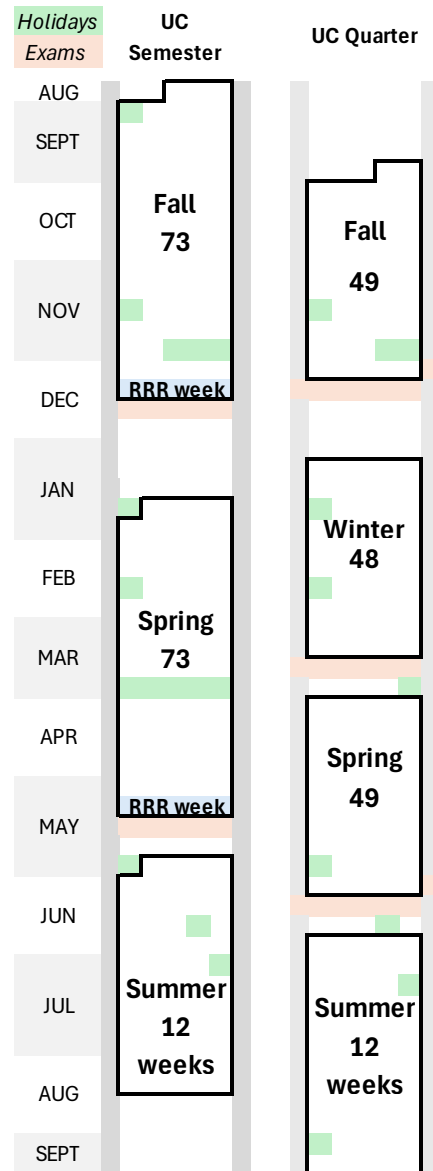
Common features across both calendars include:

- 146 instructional days during the academic year, which at UC Berkeley includes a reading, review, and recitation or RRR³ week each semester in advance of finals (i.e., 10 of the 146 days)
- 12-week summer session periods, with some variation in session lengths by campus
- Observed holidays, except for a 3-day Thanksgiving break⁴ for semesters and 2-day break for quarters

Differing calendar features include:

- Fall start of instruction and spring end of instruction dates
- Term length (i.e., 15 weeks each semester compared to 10 weeks each quarter)
- Exam period length (i.e., 5 weekdays for UC Berkeley calendar and 7 days, including a weekend for UC Merced and UC quarter calendars)
- Length of breaks between terms that includes exam period (i.e., 5 weeks between fall and spring semesters compared to 4 weeks between fall and winter quarter and 2 weeks between winter and spring quarter)

The workgroup also reviewed academic calendars at other institutions. Fifty-four non-UC American Association of University (AAU) institutions (28 public and 26 private), all California State University (CSU) campuses,⁵ and 113 California Community College (CCC) campuses are on semester calendars. Seven non-UC AAU institutions (including Stanford, Washington, and Oregon on the west coast) and three CCC campuses are on quarter calendars (see Appendix I).



³ See: [Reading, Review, and Recitation \(RRR\) Week Guidelines](#).

⁴ One non-instructional day and a 2-day break.

⁵ CSU Cal Poly San Luis Obispo will complete its semester calendar conversion in 2026.

Many academic calendars include features that provide additional flexibility for course offerings and co-curricular opportunities to further the student experience (see Appendix II). Some of these features were incorporated into the academic calendar as part of a calendar conversion process. These features include:

- **Minimesters:** Shorter blocks that run parallel to the traditional term, providing additional flexibility for curricular offerings. Some UC campuses use these blocks for graduate programs. For undergraduates, these sessions could provide focused learning, faster progress to degree, and the ability to retake courses.
- **Winter intersession:** Between the fall and spring term, these short, intensive periods can include coursework, education abroad, community learning, internship, or research experiences. Some CSU campuses use this period to provide academic support for students who faced difficulties in their prior fall term in order to get them back on track for the spring semester.
- **Maymester:** Some institutions end the spring semester with a special term to offer students opportunities for immersive learning with industry professionals, to satisfy major or minor requirements, or to participate in education abroad programming.
- **Fall/autumn break:** During the first third or half of the fall term, some institutions have implemented fall or autumn breaks to provide additional time for rest during the term. These breaks are considered holidays, and therefore not counted as instructional days.
- **Study/reading days:** Some institutions provide a break (one to several days) after the last day of instruction and before the first day of finals. The goal is to provide students with time to study before exams. These days are not counted as instructional days.

EVALUATION OF EXISTING CALENDAR FEATURES

Page 8 presents a detailed view of existing UC semester calendars (columns A and B), UC quarter calendars (column D), and optional calendar features that may work with either (columns C and E). Below is a summary of the extensive feedback received on the strengths and opportunities for improvement associated with UC semester and quarter calendar features.

Fall Start and Spring End Dates

Semester (late August/early May)	Quarter (late September/early June)
<p>Calendar alignment with 54 non-UC AAUs, allowing greater collaboration with these institutions and a more competitive advantage for UC students in getting paid or in-demand summer experiences.</p> <p>Calendar alignment with California public institutions (i.e., all CSU campuses and 113 CCCs), supporting CCC transfers along with UC students who take summer CCC courses.</p> <p>Start and end dates are better aligned with K-12 institutions, supporting UC parents with childcare needs.</p> <p>Career center representatives indicated timing provides a competitive advantage for paid summer internships and jobs. The August start date aligns better with fall recruiting activities, making semester students more competitive in obtaining paid summer opportunities. The May end date provides better summer opportunities with employers that align cohort-style jobs/internships, co-op programs, and bootcamp training to semester calendars.</p>	<p>Calendar alignment with seven non-UC AAUs.</p> <p>Calendar alignment with three CCCs.</p> <p>Milder temperatures, particularly for inland campuses, with less time spent on campus during the hottest time of the year, which is of increasing concern due to climate change. The current start and end dates require less reliance on climate-controlled classrooms, if they exist on campuses. It also promotes electrical conservation and student comfort. Appendix III provides monthly temperature comparisons across campuses.</p>

Length of Terms

Semester (15 weeks)	Quarter (10 weeks)
<p>Pedagogical advantages include more time within a term to master subject material and engage in research or course projects. The term length provides more time to connect with instructors and students in a course and build deeper relationships.</p> <p>More time to advise students on how to get back on track during a term, rather than the quarter calendar where advisors indicated their focus due to timing is often on how to drop and repeat courses.</p> <p>Slower pace during the term provides more time to support accommodations, reduce stress, and an ability to recover if one gets sick or has medical issues during a term.</p> <p>The calendar is more familiar for students coming from high schools or CCCs on semesters, requiring fewer orientation sessions to support transition compared to quarter campuses.</p>	<p>Pedagogical advantages include a curricular flexibility for faculty and greater course choice for students (e.g., electives and specialized topics that may not warrant a semester-long course). Modularity supports specialized instructional pathways. Faculty and students may face burnout by week 10.</p> <p>More likely to be able to fund a graduate student researcher over a quarter than a semester due to limited availability of grant funds.</p> <p>If students struggle or do poorly in a course, they have more opportunities to retake it and improve GPA than with semester calendar that provides fewer course offerings.</p> <p>Faster pace keeps students engaged and provides no time to procrastinate.</p>

Reading, Review, and Recitation (RRR) Periods

APC workgroup members noted the instructional benefits of reading, review, and recitation periods, particularly before finals. Fall or autumn breaks were less popular, considering the existing fall holidays (particularly Thanksgiving break) and different midterm assessments and timing.

Semester	Quarter
The RRR period at UC Berkeley provides a week before each term’s finals to review and reflect on materials. This time can reduce stress and support student success by consolidating learning. It could be a feature that UC Merced and any future semester campuses consider.	The quarter calendar is too tight to use instructional days to support this function. But there may be ways to adjust the calendar to provide a study break period after the last day of instruction and before finals.

Number of Terms

Semester (two terms)	Quarter (three terms)
<p>Institutions that changed from quarters to semesters did not report major cost savings, but instead a reduction in workload once converted, providing more time to focus on activities related to supporting student success and institutional performance.</p> <p>Two instead of three cycles can reduce the amount of academic and administrative time spent “spinning up” and “winding down” courses. It can reduce the strain on faculty who have more time to refine courses and mentor students.</p> <p>Registrars, advisors, and financial aid staff would have two instead of three cycles for advising, classroom scheduling, course evaluation, processing transcripts, and allocating financial aid.</p> <p>Academic support offices could spread the workload over a longer term, instead of having to scale up at a faster rate and meet the more frequent peaks the quarter calendar demands.</p>	<p>Faculty can meet their instruction load in two quarters and then have concentrated time to focus on research and administrative service in the remaining quarter and summer. Some noted this calendar difference provides a competitive advantage when recruiting faculty.</p> <p>Three quarters instead of two semesters provides students access to more courses that can provide specialized instruction, give them more options if they need to repeat a course or move to another major, and support efforts to graduate in a timely manner.</p>

Breaks Between Terms

This period promotes rest, along with time for faculty and staff to complete work for the prior term (e.g., grading) and the next term (e.g., class preparation, registration, financial aid processing).

Semester	Quarter
Semester calendars provide five weeks between fall and spring terms, including one for exams and two for winter curtailment.	Quarter campuses have four weeks between fall and winter, including one for exams and two for winter curtailment and there are two weeks between winter and spring, including one for exams.

Optional Calendar Features

These features can provide students with additional opportunities for experiential learning and support that can be balanced with the faculty and staff workload for those supporting these efforts. There may be a need to determine if financial aid or other support is available to support student participation.

Semester	Quarter
<p>Two 7-week minimesters are possible within a 15-week semester.</p> <p>A winter intersession and Maymester period are also possible due to the length of the term, break between fall and spring semester, and end date for the spring term.</p>	<p>Two 5-week minimesters are possible within a 10-week quarter.</p>

PROPOSAL OF AN ALTERNATE QUARTER CALENDAR

Page 8 also presents an alternate quarter calendar for consideration. It was developed as a result of a discussion with career center directors who emphasized the benefits that an earlier fall start and spring end date could have on summer job and internship opportunities. This alternate quarter calendar (column F) better aligns with the semester calendar by moving up the fall start and spring end dates. It would also not require the work associated with a calendar change (e.g., curricular revision and review).

APC workgroup members also discussed the benefits of UC Berkeley’s RRR period for students, by having more time to reflect on the material provided and study and complete projects; and for instructors, by having less time required to prepare and present new content and instead being able to focus on ensuring students understand prior material.

The workgroup considered adding two study days after instruction and shortening the exam period to five weekdays, providing a four-day study period for students before finals. Implementing that change would have either required further shortening the break periods between terms or reducing the 12-week summer period. While that feature is possible, it is not an option in the current proposal.

Finally, this alternate calendar would include a two-week winter curtailment period during the winter quarter. It would be a week longer and occur earlier in the term than the spring break in the semester calendar.

UC 2024-25 Existing Calendars and Alternate Calendar/Calendar Features

	Semester Calendars & Options			Quarter Calendar & Options		
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	UCM	UCB	Options with semesters	UC Quarter Calendars	Options with quarters	Quarter with semester start date
Calendar	Semester	Semester		Quarter		Quarter
Instruction Days	146 days	146 days		146 days		146 days
Classroom Days	146 days	136 days		146 days		146 days
Holidays* in FWS term	11 days	11 days		6 days		13 days
Exams	12 days	10 days		21 days		21 days
Unique features		RRR week (10 instructional days)				
	S M T W Th F S	S M T W Th F S		S M T W Th F S		S M T W Th F S
Aug 25-31		B				B
Sept 1-7						
Sept 8-14						
Sept 15-21						
Sept 22-28						
Sept 29-Oct 5						
Oct 6-12	Fall	Fall	Minimester (7+ wks)	Fall	Minimester (5wks)	Fall
Oct 13-19	(73 instructional days)	(73 instructional days)		(49 instructional days)		(49 instructional days)
Oct 20-26						
Oct 27-Nov 2						
Nov 3-9			Minimester (7+ wks)		Minimester (5wks)	
Nov 10-16						
Nov 17-23						
Nov 24-30						
Dec 1-7						
Dec 8-14		RRR week				
Dec 15-21						
Dec 22-28						
Dec 29-Jan 4						
Jan 5-11			Winter Session	B	Minimester (5wks)	B
Jan 12-18						
Jan 19-25						
Jan 26-Feb 1						
Feb 2-8			Minimester (7+ wks)	Winter	Minimester (5wks)	Winter
Feb 9-15				(48 instructional days)		(48 instructional days)
Feb 16-22						
Feb 23-Mar 1						
Mar 2-8						
Mar 9-15	Spring	Spring	Minimester (7+ wks)		Minimester (5wks)	Spring
Mar 16-22	(73 instructional days)	(73 instructional days)				(49 instructional days)
Mar 23-29						
Mar 30-Apr 5						
Apr 6-12			Minimester (7+ wks)	Spring	Minimester (5wks)	Spring
Apr 13-19				(49 instructional days)		(49 instructional days)
Apr 20-26						
Apr 27-May 3						
May 4-10						
May 11-17			Maymester		Minimester (5wks)	
May 18-24						
May 25-31						
Jun 1-7						
Jun 8-14						
Jun 15-21						
Jun 22-28						
Jun 29-Jul 5						
Jul 6-12	Summer sessions	Summer sessions		B		B
Jul 13-19	include 6, 8	include 3, 6, 8				
Jul 20-26	and 12-week terms	and 10-week terms				
Jul 27-Aug 2						
Aug 3-9						
Aug 10-16						
Aug 17-23						
Aug 24-30						
Aug 31-Sept 6						
Sept 7-13						

Holidays include: Labor Day (9/2), Veteran's Day (11/11), Thanksgiving Break (27-29 semesters and 28-29 quarter campuses), Martin Luther King Day (1/20), President's Day (2/11), Spring Recess (3/24-27) Cesar Chavez Day (3/28), Memorial Day (5/26), and Juneteenth (6/19)

FACTORS TO CONSIDER BEFORE ANY CHANGE

Campus colleagues, including APC calendar workgroup members, identified other factors to consider when deciding if, how, or when to implement a calendar conversion or revision, including factors which are important but difficult to quantify.

Timing: The University is facing a convergence of challenging events that include the continued ramifications of the pandemic, fiscal constraints with future budget cuts expected, heavy faculty and staff workload, and growing external pressures from a new U.S. presidential administration. These factors should inform any decisions about if or when a calendar conversion occurs.

Opportunity costs: Any calendar conversion or revision will divert attention from UC leadership, faculty, and staff from addressing other issues. For example, organizational attention may be needed to successfully address unprecedented institutional challenges. These include technological disruption to traditional forms of teaching, learning, and research; declining public support for higher education and an overtly hostile federal policy climate; and persistent or growing financial shortfalls related to increased institutional costs, state budget constraints, and threats to federal research funding streams.

This work would also potentially affect other core missions of the University. For example, faculty supporting curricular conversion efforts would have less time for the development of new instructional programs, research, and public service. Calendar conversion will require a significant amount of logistical coordination across campuses where timely completion from individuals and units is critical for smooth implementation. It is also important to consider the trade-offs as part of any decision-making process.

Calendar conversion workload: Campus representatives that completed a calendar conversion project emphasized it is a significant amount of work and that few campuses would be expected to independently choose to embark on such an endeavor; but they noted that if supported and properly focused on student success, a conversion could yield long-term benefits. Some of the critical areas of work include:

- **Curricular revision and review**, including evaluation of courses and academic programs for redesign; redesign efforts that consider appropriate pedagogy and modality; and department, college/school, and Academic Senate review.
- **Advising support** to help students graduate before calendar conversion, create individual advising plans for students spanning different calendars, and ensure students on the new calendar take appropriate courses and load to graduate in a timely manner.
- **Transition leadership and communication** for project/change management support and materials to keep key audiences aware of what to expect, progress to date, and next steps.
- **Operational support** to revise business operations, support calendar conversion changes, and test information technology (IT) modifications.
- **IT modifications** to key systems that rely on calendar features (e.g., degree audit, registration, payroll).

Student success: Calendar conversion efforts need to focus on student success. A study⁶ examining universities that switched from quarters to semesters found a negative impact on four-year graduation rates (although the effect was not evident in the six-year graduation rate). This impact was potentially due to lower first-year grades, decreased likelihood of taking a full load, and delays in timing of major choice. While the study’s “switching” institutions only includes five AAU institutions (or six percent of all switchers), some of these institutions did see a fluctuation in four-year graduation rates before a continued upward trend (see Appendix IV). Calendar conversions that incorporate effective pedagogy in curricular innovations and expand advising support, particularly for students who span different calendars, will be critical support student success.

Faculty and staff workload and morale: The amount of workload and impact on morale is significant. Some faculty have expressed concern over having to redesign all courses and program requirements, which could detrimentally affect their research. The Joint Senate-Administration Working Group on Faculty Work & Recovery Post-Pandemic⁷ noted the impact of other recent events on faculty workload and morale. Some faculty express concern that calendar conversion so close to the pandemic and current daunting institutional challenges could further exacerbate these issues.

Existing faculty and staff workload is high and the work to support this transition is tremendous. For example, advising staff would need to create individual advising plans for students who transition from one calendar to the other, while also learning the new course and program structure to advise students on the new calendar. In addition, faculty and staff would have to re-do existing transfer articulation agreements with the 116 California Community Colleges based on changes to the curriculum and undergraduate programs.

Calendar conversion can provide an opportunity to support curricular and pedagogical reforms and improve business processes, but doing so requires appropriate investment of time and support for faculty and staff who would take on that responsibility.

Classroom capacity and condition: Converting from quarters to semesters will increase the need for larger classrooms, unless there is a concurrent effort to increase online and cross-campus course offerings. For example, high-demand courses offered over three quarters that are converted to a semester schedule will either need to be offered more frequently, which requires more instructors, or will need to be offered in larger classrooms to meet similar demand.

The availability of classrooms and teaching labs on campuses varies. Below is data from the [November 2023 Classroom and Teaching Lab Utilization Report](#) on the number of general-assignment classrooms and teaching labs, along with utilization rates.⁸ This data shows some UC campuses have fewer large classrooms or teaching labs, which may be needed to support

⁶ Bostwick, V., Fischer, S., & Lang, M. (2018). Semesters or quarters? The effect of the academic calendar on postsecondary graduation rates. Institute of Labor Economics, 2-57. Retrieved from <http://ftp.iza.org/dp12429.pdf>

⁷ See final report: [Joint Senate-Administration Working Group on Faculty Work & Recovery Post-Pandemic](#).

⁸ Legislative standard for utilization rates is 35 weekly student contact hours per station for classrooms and 20 weekly student contact hours per station for teaching laboratories.

semester courses that may be larger or offered less frequently. This situation could either require expanded classroom capacity or changes in instructional delivery. For example, an unintended consequence of a calendar conversion process might be more courses moving to an online or hybrid format.

Number of General Assignment Classrooms and Utilization by Room Size (Fall 2022)

Station Count	Semester Campuses						Quarter Campuses											
	UCB		UCM		UCD		UCI		UCLA		UCR		UCSD		UCSB		UCSC	
1-15	13	15.1%	2	25.5%	11	57.7%	-	0.0%	12	22.5%	3	18.6%	16	77.6%	8	33.2%	4	12.7%
16-25	76	51.4%	38	71.6%	22	64.1%	35	59.4%	51	57.0%	5	76.7%	15	76.1%	31	64.9%	30	61.6%
26-50	175	58.2%	25	91.8%	70	63.6%	58	63.0%	116	61.6%	52	77.4%	42	90.7%	60	75.1%	32	119.6%
51-100	65	59.2%	11	66.0%	39	58.1%	40	69.3%	54	51.9%	18	89.1%	16	73.9%	28	57.7%	12	74.8%
101-200	18	78.2%	7	76.3%	25	77.8%	14	89.6%	22	79.8%	7	91.7%	18	106.9%	8	98.7%	7	125.0%
201-300	10	98.6%	2	127.9%	6	96.2%	5	97.2%	8	81.2%	5	97.7%	3	122.7%	3	101.9%	3	129.8%
301+	4	182.1%	1	47.5%	5	105.6%	7	87.7%	7	80.4%	4	87.4%	5	114.8%	2	105.2%	3	162.7%
Total Campus	361	78.4%	86	79.4%	178	76.8%	159	78.1%	270	66.9%	94	87.1%	115	101.2%	140	77.9%	91	115.6%

Number of General Assignment Teaching Labs and Utilization by Room Size (Fall 2022)

Station Count	Semester Campuses				Quarter Campuses													
	UCB		UCM		UCD		UCI		UCLA		UCR		UCSD		UCSB		UCSC	
1-15	-	0.0%	#	0.0%	6	45.5%	-	0.0%	12	48.9%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	5	51.3%	7	74.7%
16-25	10	75.2%	27	76.8%	71	98.9%	25	113.4%	33	113.2%	45	113.8%	37	106.1%	34	105.2%	38	78.9%
26-40	45	76.0%	6	130.1%	28	113.6%	4	83.7%	9	54.1%	16	92.9%	9	98.9%	29	66.2%	4	44.5%
41+	28	60.8%	2	60.4%	6	41.1%	5	119.9%	4	32.5%	7	349.2%	1	37.1%	4	80.3%	4	110.8%
Total Campus	83	67.8%	35	87.3%	111	96.0%	34	111.2%	58	77.4%	68	124.9%	47	101.9%	72	82.7%	53	81.4%

Legislative support: State legislators would likely support UC aligning its calendars to K-12, CCC, and CSU institutions. This move could support dual enrollment across institutions, assist students with intersegmental transitions, improve the transfer student experience, and provide opportunities for joint academic programs.

Some institutions report a drop in enrollment (i.e., student full-time equivalent or FTE metrics) after a calendar conversion, either from larger cohorts graduating before a calendar conversion or students not taking a full load as they and advisors adjust to the new calendar. The Governor’s Office and Legislature likely will support efforts for all public higher education systems operating under the same calendar. While the State did not provide financial support to the CSU system for their calendar conversion, there may be other ways to ensure stable resources to UC. These include highlighting the likely impact a calendar conversion will have and negotiating multi-year enrollment agreements with the State that could provide more flexibility on compact goals or stability in state support during this process.

Calendar conversion costs: Calendar conversions take multiple years to complete, tapping both faculty and staff resources along with one-time funds. These expenses can be spread over several years, with financing options spreading costs even further. Campuses have taken different approaches on what to cover and/or extended the timeframe to leverage existing resources.

For example, the Ohio State University spent around \$15 million (when adjusted for inflation) to cover its calendar conversion costs. Over 80 percent of those costs supported IT modifications, with the remainder split between advising and project management/calendar transition costs. Curricular and course conversion costs were borne by the colleges, departments, and faculty and are not included in the \$15 million noted above.

CSU institutions spent over \$90 million to have six campuses convert from quarters to semesters, ranging from \$10 million for the initial converters to over \$20 million for CSU Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (i.e., the last to convert). CSU covered more expense categories than Ohio State, specifically curricular and program revision and review, advising, leadership transition and communication, operational support, and IT modifications.

Calendar conversion costs (\$M, adj for inflation)

	CSU (6-campus total)
Curriculum	\$ 23.29
Advising	\$ 8.30
Leadership & Communication	\$ 12.92
Operations Support	\$ 13.33
IT Costs	\$ 32.82
Total	\$ 90.65

To provide the low and high ends of the range of estimates, the calendar costing subgroup used the most recent data from the CSU and adjusted these costs to account for the differences in the number of academic programs and students between UC campuses and the five CSU campuses⁹ that completed conversion and CSU Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, which is in progress. In addition, these estimates included adjustments for differential labor costs between CSU and UC in each category.

The table below provides the range of one-time calendar conversion cost estimates, along with annual financing costs.¹⁰ Semester conversion costs discount UC Berkeley and UC Merced estimates by 95 and 90 percent, respectively, since they already are on semesters. It includes some expenses for implementing optional calendar features (e.g., RRR period for UC Merced). It also replaces CSU-derived estimates for IT costs with initial IT information provided by UC campuses.

Semester conversion cost and financing estimates

	<i>One-time cost estimates</i>		<i>Financing estimates</i>			
	Low \$M est	High \$M est	Low \$M est		High \$M est	
UC Berkeley	\$ 1.36	\$ 1.68	\$ 0.18 to	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.22 to	\$ 0.29
UC Davis	\$ 56.51	\$ 59.90	\$ 7.35 to	\$ 9.61	\$ 7.79 to	\$ 10.18
UC Irvine	\$ 35.25	\$ 49.94	\$ 4.58 to	\$ 5.99	\$ 6.49 to	\$ 8.49
UCLA	\$ 61.83	\$ 76.11	\$ 8.04 to	\$ 10.51	\$ 9.89 to	\$ 12.94
UC Merced	\$ 1.37	\$ 1.78	\$ 0.18 to	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.23 to	\$ 0.30
UC Riverside	\$ 40.05	\$ 47.56	\$ 5.21 to	\$ 6.81	\$ 6.18 to	\$ 8.09
UC San Diego	\$ 35.62	\$ 44.43	\$ 4.63 to	\$ 6.05	\$ 5.78 to	\$ 7.55
UC Santa Barbara	\$ 38.30	\$ 47.49	\$ 4.98 to	\$ 6.51	\$ 6.17 to	\$ 8.07
UC Santa Cruz	\$ 18.34	\$ 42.07	\$ 2.38 to	\$ 3.12	\$ 5.47 to	\$ 7.15
Systemwide Total	\$ 288.62	\$ 370.96	\$ 37.52 to	\$ 49.07	\$ 48.22 to	\$ 63.06

The second table provides a similar range of estimates for UC semester campuses to convert to quarters and discounting costs for the seven quarter campuses by 95 percent, assuming these campuses may implement some optional calendar features (e.g., minimesters).

⁹ CSU Bakersfield, CSU LA, CSU East Bay, CSU Pomona, and CSU San Bernardino.

¹⁰ Financing assumption provided by the UC Finance division at UC Office of the President is \$10 million in financing that ranges from \$1.3 to \$1.7 million over a 7- to 10-year period.

Quarter conversion cost and financing estimates														
	One-time cost estimates				Financing estimates									
	Low \$M est		High \$M est		Low \$M est		High \$M est							
UC Berkeley	\$	46.40	\$	57.09	\$	6.03	to	\$	7.89	\$	7.42	to	\$	9.71
UC Davis	\$	0.98	\$	1.20	\$	0.13	to	\$	0.17	\$	0.16	to	\$	0.20
UC Irvine	\$	1.10	\$	1.36	\$	0.14	to	\$	0.19	\$	0.18	to	\$	0.23
UCLA	\$	1.18	\$	1.45	\$	0.15	to	\$	0.20	\$	0.19	to	\$	0.25
UC Merced	\$	14.38	\$	37.13	\$	1.87	to	\$	2.45	\$	4.83	to	\$	6.31
UC Riverside	\$	0.94	\$	1.18	\$	0.12	to	\$	0.16	\$	0.15	to	\$	0.20
UC San Diego	\$	1.11	\$	1.36	\$	0.14	to	\$	0.19	\$	0.18	to	\$	0.23
UC Santa Barbara	\$	0.91	\$	1.16	\$	0.12	to	\$	0.16	\$	0.15	to	\$	0.20
UC Santa Cruz	\$	0.91	\$	1.17	\$	0.12	to	\$	0.15	\$	0.15	to	\$	0.20
Systemwide Total	\$	67.92	\$	103.11	\$	8.83	to	\$	11.55	\$	13.40	to	\$	17.53

A more detailed description of these estimates, including the type of workload associated with calendar conversion and methodology for cost estimates can be found on the APC systemwide academic calendar website at <http://ucop.edu/apc-calendar>.

COMMON CALENDAR: OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

Differing start and end dates, exam periods, and breaks complicate efforts to support systemwide collaboration. Based on input received from campus colleagues, APC workgroup members identified multiple reasons to support a common calendar, including but not limited to:

- **Greater systemwide collaboration** among professional disciplinary and student extracurricular activities across the nine undergraduate campuses, along with conference and meeting sessions and planning for systemwide initiatives.
- **Expansion of systemwide course and program offerings** including specialized and/or low-enrollment courses or high-demand courses with capacity issues. This change could support increased intersegmental course offerings across all nine general campuses and depending on the calendar selected, dual enrollment in high schools and concurrent enrollment with CCCs, particularly those that are lower-sending institutions.
- **More comparable student experiences** across all nine undergraduate campuses, particularly related to experiential learning opportunities and for student athletes.

Below are four options to consider for a common calendar.

1. Common semester calendar (all nine general campuses adopt semesters)

Some of the greatest opportunities a common semester calendar could provide include:

- More time in a term to support in-depth learning and course/research projects, provide accommodations and get students back on track within a term, and support RRR periods and other optional calendar features.
- Earlier fall start and spring end dates to increase student competitiveness for paid summer jobs, internships, and coop experiences.
- Two cycles (instead of three) and longer breaks between terms to support faculty and staff workload.
- Calendar alignment with 88 percent of AAU, all CSU, and almost all CCC institutions.
- Calendar conversion provides an institutional opportunity to implement curricular and pedagogical reforms.

Some of the greatest challenges of a common semester calendar conversion include:

- The timing and opportunity costs associated with a calendar conversion, pulling organizational attention away from other unprecedented challenges facing the institution.
- The amount of work for seven UC campuses to complete a calendar conversion, increasing existing faculty and staff workload.
- Potential risk to student success if institutional resources and expertise are not sufficiently directed to curricular conversion and advising support.
- One-time systemwide costs for calendar conversion that could range between \$290 and \$370 million and require changes to existing facilities to expand capacity and improve conditions.

2. Common quarter calendar (all nine general campuses adopt quarters)

Some of the greatest opportunities a common quarter calendar could provide include:

- Greater curricular flexibility for faculty and choice for students, including access to electives and specialized instructional pathways and ability to take more classes to get back on track (i.e., improve GPA) and change majors
- Research quarter for faculty that meet instructional load in two quarters, providing more time to support research activities and serving as a competitive advantage when recruiting faculty
- Greater ability to provide graduate research opportunities with greater likelihood to have sufficient funds over a quarter, compared to a semester due to limited grant funds
- Faster pace to reduce burnout and prevent procrastination
- Calendar conversion provides an institutional opportunity to implement curricular and pedagogical reforms

Some of the greatest challenges of a common quarter calendar conversion include:

- Similar concerns about semester calendar conversion related to timing, opportunity costs, and workload, though it would apply to two campuses instead of seven.
- Only gain in calendar alignment within the UC system, not with most AAU and the California public higher education segments (i.e., CSU and CCC).
- One-time systemwide costs for calendar conversion that could range between \$70 and \$100 million.

3. Maintain semester calendar and implement alternative quarter calendar

Some of the greatest opportunities of maintaining current semester calendars and having quarter campuses implement the alternative calendar include:

- Improving calendar alignment within the system, at least for start and end dates that could increase the competitive opportunity for students accessing paid summer jobs and internships.
- Less costly option that would not require curricular revisions or much of the other work associated with a calendar change.

Some of the greatest challenges of this option include:

- A winter term that includes a two-week winter curtailment break that is earlier in the term and a week longer than spring break on the semester calendar.
- Shorter breaks between terms to accommodate the shift and continue to preserve a 12-week summer period.

4. Maintain status quo

Semester and quarter calendars both have advantages and calendar change is difficult. Now may not be the time to implement a common calendar. Campuses could consider whether any of the

optional calendar features presented in this report would further benefit the student experience. For example, could a winter intersession period be created as a part of academic recovery plans to further student success and advance UC 2030 goals? Or could quarter campuses implement a spring trimester that could prepare students for a summer co-op experience and help them complete coursework earlier than the existing spring quarter calendar? The benefits of these opportunities would need to be evaluated against potential availability of student financial aid and faculty and staff workload.

Appendix I

Public Institutions		Private Institutions		CSU Campus Instructional Days	
Semester Campuses	Instructional Days	Semester Campuses	Instructional Days	Semester Campuses	Instructional Days
Arizona	149	Tulane	142	Maritime Academy	148
Penn State	148	Rochester	141	Fresno	147
Iowa	148	USC	141	San Francisco	147
Indiana	147	Case Western	140	Sonoma	147
Purdue	146	Emory	140	Chico	146
UC Berkeley	146	New York Univ	140	Fullerton	146
Colorado	146	Notre Dame	140	Humboldt	146
Missouri	146	Penn	140	Monterey Bay	146
Kansas	145	Vanderbilt	140	Northridge	146
Illinois	144	Cornell	139	Pomona	146
Maryland	144	Duke	139	San Jose	146
Arizona State	143	George Washington	139	Stanislaus	146
Georgia Tech	142	Miami	139	Bakersfield	145
Florida	142	Washington Univ	138	East Bay	145
South Florida	141	Brown	135	Los Angeles	145
Utah	141	Columbia	135	Sacramento	145
Ohio State	140	Rice	135	San Diego	145
Stony Brook - SUNY	140	Johns Hopkins	134	Channel Islands	144
Texas A&M	140	Boston Univ	133	Dominguez Hills	144
Buffalo - SUNY	140	Carnegie Mellon	132	Long Beach	144
Minnesota	140	MIT	131	San Bernardino	144
North Carolina	140	Tufts	131	San Marcos	144
Pittsburgh	140	Brandeis	130		
Texas - Austin	140	Yale	128		
Michigan State	139	Harvard	124		
Virginia	139	Princeton	120		
Rutgers	138				
Wisconsin	137				
Michigan	136				
Average	142	Average	136	Average	146
Quarter Campuses	Instructional Days	Quarter Campuses	Instructional Days	Quarter Campus	Instructional Days
Washington	147	Chicago	153	San Luis Obispo*	145
UC Davis	146	Northwestern	148		
UC Irvine	146	Stanford	144		
UCLA	146	Cal Tech	143		
UC Riverside	146	Dartmouth	138		
UC San Diego	146				
UC Santa Barbara	146				
UC Santa Cruz	146				
Oregon	145				
Average	146	Average	145	Average	145

* CSU-SLO on semesters in 2026

Appendix II

2024-25 Calendars/Calendar Features for AAU/CSU Institutions									
	Stanford	CalTech	Penn	Minnesota		Ohio State		Georgia Tech	CSU LA
Calendar	Quarter	Quarter	Semester	Semester		Semester		Semester	Semester
Instruction Days	144 days	143 days	140	140	2 days	140	11 days	142	146
Holidays in term		5 days	13 days	7 days		13 days			9 days
Unique features	Democracy day (1)	Study period (12 days)	Fall break (4 days)	Begins after Labor Day, study days, Maymester (3 wks)	Session (7 wks)	Autumn break (2 days), reading days (2 days)	Session (7 wks)	Fall Break (2 days), Reading days (2), Maymester (3 wks)	Winter 2 wk & May 3 wk intersession
Aug 18-24									
Aug 25-31									
Sept 1-7			Inst Begins 27th <i>Labor Day 2nd</i>		Inst Begins 3rd	Inst Begins 3rd	<i>Labor Day 2nd</i>	<i>Labor Day 2nd</i>	<i>Labor Day 2nd</i>
Sept 8-14									
Sept 15-21									
Sept 22-28	Inst Begins 23rd								
Sept 29-Oct 5		Inst Begins 30th	Fall Break 3-6						
Oct 6-12									
Oct 13-19									
Oct 20-26									
Oct 27-Nov 2									
Nov 3-9	Democracy day 5th								
Nov 10-16									
Nov 17-23									
Nov 24-30	T-Break 25-29	T-Break 28-29	T-Break 28-29	T-Break 28-29	T-Break 28-29	T-Break 27-29	T-Break 27-29	T-Break 27-29	T-Break 28-29
Dec 1-7	Inst ends 6th	Inst ends 6th				Inst Ends 4th, Reading Day 5th	Inst Ends 4th	Inst Ends 2-3, Reading Day 4th	Inst Ends 7th
Dec 8-14		Study period 7-10	Inst Ends 9th	Inst Ends 11th, study day 12	Inst Ends 11th				
Dec 15-21									
Dec 22-28									
Dec 29-Jan 4									
Jan 5-11		Inst Begins 6th				Inst Begins 6th	Inst Begins 6th	Inst Begins 6th	Inst Begins 2nd
Jan 12-18	Inst Begins 6th		Inst Begins 15th						Inst Ends 18th
Jan 19-25	<i>MLK day 20</i>	<i>MLK day 20</i>	<i>MLK day 20</i>	Inst Begins 21st	Inst Begins 21st	<i>MLK day 20</i>	<i>MLK day 20</i>	<i>MLK day 20</i>	Inst Begins 21st
Jan 26-Feb 1									
Feb 2-8									
Feb 9-15									
Feb 16-22		Presidents Day 17							
Feb 23-Mar 1	Presidents Day 17								
Mar 2-8									
Mar 9-15		Inst Ends 12th & Study days 13-16	Spr Brk 10-14	Spr Brk 10-14		Spr Brk 10-14	Spr Brk 10-14		
Mar 16-22	Inst Ends 14th							Spr Brk 17-21	
Mar 23-29									
Mar 30-Apr 5		Inst Begins 31st							CC/Spr Brk 31-4
Apr 6-12	Inst Begins 31st								
Apr 13-19						Inst Ends 21st, Reading Day 22nd	Inst Ends 21st	Inst Ends 21-22, Reading Day 23	
Apr 20-26			Inst Ends 30th						
Apr 27-May 3				Inst Ends 5th, study days 6-7	Inst Ends 5th				Inst Ends 10th
May 4-10									
May 11-17									
May 18-24								Maymester 3 week session	Inst Begins 19th
May 25-31		Memorial Day 26		Maymester 19th to 6th					Memorial Day 26
Jun 1-7	Memorial Day 26	Inst ends 6th, study period 7-10							Inst Ends 7th
Jun 8-14	Inst Ends 4th								
Jun 15-21			Summer session includes 2 five week terms and 1 eleven week session		Summer sessions includes 2 four week sessions, 1 eight week session, and 1 thirteen week session.		Summer sessions includes 3 four week session, 2 six week sessions, 2 eight week sessions, and 1 twelve week session.	Summer sessions includes early short and late short four-week sessions, along with a full eleven week session.	Summer intersession is 1 eleven week term (starting after Memorial Day)
Jun 22-28									
Jun 29-Jul 5									
Jul 6-12									
Jul 13-19									
Jul 20-26	Summer session includes 1 eight week term	Summer session includes 1 eleven week term							
Jul 27-Aug 2									
Aug 3-9									
Aug 10-16									
Aug 17-23									
Aug 24-30									

Appendix III

Average temperatures

(Min daily temp, Avg montly temp, Max daily temp)

Time on campus in term: Part of month Most/all month

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Semester												
Berkeley	42-55-58	44-55-62	46-56-64	47-58-67	49-61-70	52-64-73	52-66-74	54-66-74	53-66-75	51-68-73	47-57-65	43-55-59
Merced	32-51-73	37-53-71	40-56-80	37-61-88	43-69-96	60-79-105	64-85-107	59-88-105	54-76-103	45-69-93	36-54-78	34-51-66

Quarter

Davis	33-52-73	30-54-75	40-57-80	36-62-90	39-69-97	51-76-105	52-82-113	54-77-103	50-75-106	41-71-105	31-54-76	24-51-72
Irvine	41-58-79	44-58-79	49-60-72	46-61-83	54-64-72	59-69-89	63-73-86	64-75-92	60-73-109	53-68-83	45-61-80	45-59-80
Los Angeles	45-59-79	43-57-78	47-58-72	44-60-76	52-61-70	56-66-83	56-69-81	59-71-87	53-70-105	53-67-83	49-62-78	47-59-82
Riverside	34-55-81	37-55-77	40-57-77	40-61-89	47-65-84	56-75-103	60-82-104	58-81-109	55-78-115	46-73-104	38-60-82	37-58-86
San Diego	39-56-77	42-56-73	47-57-73	45-58-72	50-60-67	57-65-81	61-69-78	61-71-82	57-69-92	51-64-76	43-59-80	41-56-77
Santa Barbara	35-56-81	40-56-74	42-57-76	42-57-74	45-58-72	51-63-83	52-65-78	53-67-84	49-66-96	43-63-81	36-56-76	36-54-80
Santa Cruz	34-54-82	36-50-78	36-55-86	40-60-86	41-60-84	44-64-99	52-65-83	51-67-85	48-70-92	42-63-93	38-56-82	34-55-83

Source: National Weather Service (<https://www.weather.gov/wrh/climate>)

Appendix IV

The Effect of Switching from the Semester Calendar to the Quarter Calendar

Published research finds negative impact on 4-year rates but little impact on 6-year rates from switching from semesters to quarters

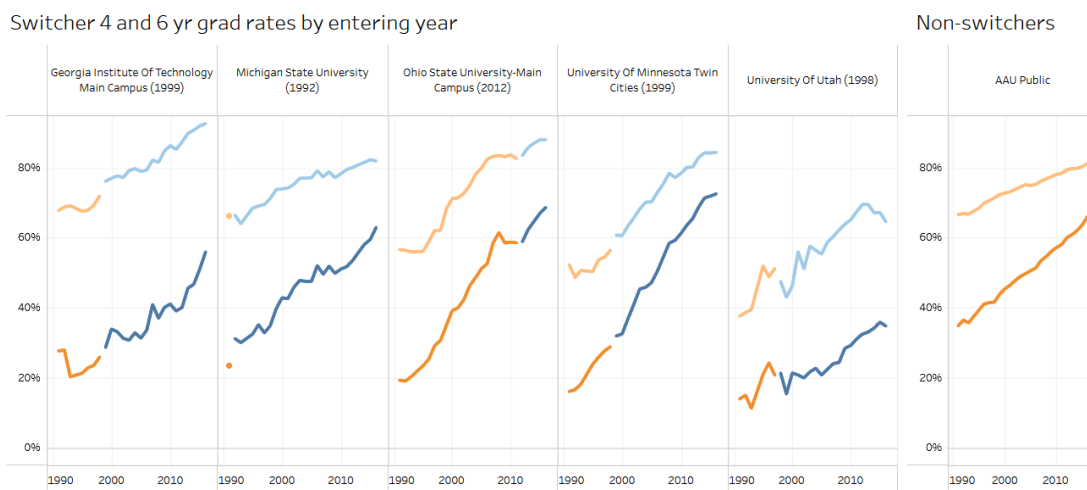
In “Semesters or Quarters? The Effect of the Academic Calendar on Postsecondary Student Outcomes,”¹¹ Bostwick, Fischer, and Lang use federally reported data to model the effect on undergraduate graduation rates of switching from a quarter to semester calendar. After controlling for institution- and year-specific effects, a set of institutional characteristics,¹² and institution-specific time trends, they found:

- A negative 3.7 percentage point decline in 4-year graduation rates for cohorts that started after the switch (full exposure). This does not mean graduation rates declined, but rather that modeled graduation rates would have been higher had the institution not switched.
- Effects on 6-year rates to be “small in magnitude and only marginally significant.”

Five AAU institutions (six percent of switching institutions) were included in the study

The study included 731 institutions, of which 79 switched during the study timeframe from quarters to semesters. Over 40 percent of these switchers were baccalaureate institutions and about 30 percent were special purpose institutions. Only 14 were R1 institutions, out of which 5 were AAU members. Graduation rates for the AAU institutions before and after the switch, as well as overall rates for non-switchers, are shown below.

Four-year and six-year graduation rates before and after switch, AAU institutions



Switcher lines: Orange is graduation rate when on quarters calendar and Blue when on semesters. Non-switcher: Orange graduation rate for no change in calendar. Note: darker line is the four-year rate and lighter line is the six-year rate.

¹¹ See: <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20190589>

¹² Institutional characteristics included: total expenditures, in-state tuition, percentage underrepresented (not White or Asian), percentage White, and percentage female.