

## IMPLEMENTING A NEW ACADEMIC CALENDAR

*James Gee—Assistant Academic Vice President, Summer School Director*

When President Hinckley announced that Ricks College would evolve to a baccalaureate-granting school known as BYU-Idaho, he also said that we would be going to a new year-round calendar which would allow us to serve more students. While the idea of a year-round calendar was new to many people hearing the announcement, it was not new to us. President Hinckley was announcing something we had been talking about and studying for a number of years.

About seven years ago, Brent Kinghorn, Ron Campbell, and I were brainstorming about the problems the admissions office faced as they denied admission to about one thousand students a year. Spring and summer had become a stressful time because of those denials and the subsequent phone calls from parents and the students asking for some kind of review of the decision to deny. Every day for weeks on end the admissions officers had to explain that there just wasn't any more room for us to expand.

As Brent, Ron, and I talked, we tried to figure out how we could handle more students without increasing numbers during fall and winter. It was obvious that summer held the key, but how did you get more students to come in the summer and not impact fall and winter in the process? It was Ron who first suggested the idea of tracks. His idea was to have students come either summer-fall or winter-summer in addition to the traditional fall-winter schedule. The more we talked, the more excited we got at the prospect of serving more students. I was excited because it would create significant growth in summer school. A committee was formed to work out an implementation plan, and a follow-up study identifying some of the advantages, challenges, and other issues was conducted by Stephen Ott. After Steve's report was presented to the Presidents Council, we received permission to run a pilot project.

Initially fifty students who otherwise would not have been admitted were given an option of coming on a summer-fall track. They were excited at first, but soon began petitioning to be allowed to shift over to the traditional track. Midway through the fall semester the program was scrapped. The idea remained in limbo until Gary Marshall started encouraging Academic Council to back the idea. Because of his perseverance the idea again received serious consideration. Once again a pilot program was approved. About the time that decision was made, we received the announcement that we were going to become a four-year school. That announcement lent added support to the idea of tracks, and it has become a central part of our plan to become BYU-Idaho.

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Going to a three track calendar can increase the number of students served by up to 30%, but there are some challenges also. The first challenge is to get the students to accept a nontraditional track. We are venturing that the desire to attend a church school will outweigh the desire to attend college in the fall or winter. If we are wrong, students will simply opt to go to USU, ISU, SUU, Snow College, or some other school which has a strong LDS influence.

Another challenge is to offer all programs on every track. Programs which enroll a large number of majors, like business and elementary education, can do it without too much difficulty. But majors which have only forty or fifty students will be hard pressed to offer their specialized major courses more than once a year. Students will have to be admitted to specific tracks to get the courses they need.

Other problems include handling requests to change tracks because of marriage, participation in performing groups, changing majors, or economic challenges. We have discussed all of these issues and feel that they can be overcome, but it will not be easy. In many ways we are blazing new trails in academic calendaring.

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At this point, the admissions office is preparing to make a major leap into the new academic calendar. We are working in Academic Council to determine in which tracks majors will be offered. We are also trying to come up with criteria by which to measure requests to change tracks. The Presidents Council is working to make all the semesters as nearly alike as possible. Doubtless, we will make many refinements as we move ahead, but we are committed to make the track calendar work. ☺