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UNH FACULTY SENATE MOTION # XIX-M8 on canceling classes the Wednesday before Thanksgiving

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UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION # XIX-M8

on canceling classes the Wednesday before Thanksgiving

1. Motion presenter: Michael Ferber, chair of the Senate Academic Affairs Committee
2. Dates of Faculty Senate discussion: 2/23/2015

3. Rationale: The administration has recommended that all classes held on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving be cancelled, beginning in the fall of 2015. This would not, strictly speaking, be a holiday for faculty and staff, but students would be free to leave campus at some time on Tuesday, or earlier, without cutting Wednesday classes. To make up for the lost classes, the October one-day break ("Fall Break Day") on the calendar would be cancelled.

The Faculty Senate determines the academic calendar, so the proposal has come to the Academic Affairs Committee.

The reasons for this proposal are not far to seek. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving (hereinafter WBT) is the busiest traveling day of the year, and many students, unless they live prohibitively far away, or quite nearby, join the rush sometime on Wednesday or else, to avoid the rush, leave campus on Tuesday whether they have a class on Wednesday or not. UNH Manchester already schedules no classes on WBT, and many instructors on the Durham campus cancel classes on that day, particularly in the afternoon. To give students an extra day to travel will help them plan a more reasonable schedule, will provide a little more flexibility in case of a storm, and should enhance safety.

Against this proposal some professors have argued that the Tuesday before Thanksgiving would become the new WBT, and students would start cutting classes on that day (some already do), and then, in the minds of some students, there would just be Monday to think about, so why not skip the whole week and leave on Friday or Saturday?

Our Committee thinks there is some merit to this slippery-slope argument, but that it is outweighed by the advantages of canceling WBT classes. Senior Vice Provost Vasudevan reported to us that he and others have held the line with some success in their classes by scheduling quizzes on the Monday or Tuesday of Thanksgiving week, offering extra credit for attendance, and the like, and believes such threats and inducements would remain effective after WBT classes are cancelled. (They do not work on WBT itself.) With some skepticism, we agree that this sort of thing might work, and that at the very least students would have no right to complain if a test were given or an assignment were due early in that week. In any case, it is a plan worth trying for a year.

4. Motion: The senate Academic Affairs Committee moves that the academic schedule be altered so that:

- (1) classes will no longer be cancelled on the Fall Break Day, and
- (2) classes will be cancelled on the Wednesday before the Thanksgiving Break.

We also move that (3) the Academic Affairs Committee monitor the effect of the alteration next fall and report to the Senate with a recommendation whether or not to continue it.

5. Senate action: The rules of the senate were suspended to allow an immediate vote on this time-sensitive matter. The motion passed with 32 votes in favor, none opposed, and 1 abstention.

6. Senate chair's signature: Albert B. Marano

Forwarded to: President Mark Huddleston, on March 3, 2015
Provost Lisa MacFarlane, on March 3, 2015
P.T. Vasudevan, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, on March 3, 2015
Registrar, on March 3, 2015
All college deans, on March 3, 2015
All department chairs, on March 3, 2015