

MINUTES

Academic Support Committee

April 24th, 2026

10:00AM

Zoom

Present – S. Clements (presiding), E. Austin, H. Drewry, F. Ferretti, C. Haines, M. Kimbrell, M. Manteghu, S. Marine, S. Mutsa Jozi, S. Rinehart, K. Robertson, N. Schwab, D. Sedgwick, A. Sims, J. Weppner

Absent with Notice: M. Davidson, I. Lazar, J. Lucas

Absent: A. Parikh, E. Wikel, M. Wypyski

Guests: J. Bridgeforth, E. Moon, R. Pitcher, Z. Tucker, R. Sparks

Sherwood Clements called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. Motion carried.

2. Approval or Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of February 6th and March 3rd.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the amended minutes from the February 6th and March 3rd, 2026 meetings. Motion carried.

3. New Business – Two-Day Fall Break Proposal: Feedback from Associate Deans and Next Steps

Feedback from Associate Deans

S. Clements shared feedback received from the Pamplin College of Business, CNRE, and the College of Science. Two primary issues emerged:

Grade Submission Deadline

Several schools requested an extension to the grade submission deadline. R. Sparks noted that because paper diplomas are no longer distributed at commencement, the grading timeline has more flexibility. R. Sparks proposed language specifying a 72-hour window following the final examination period, rather than the current 48-hour window. This would likely shift transcript availability from Tuesday to Wednesday of the following week, which R. Sparks did not view as a significant burden to students. Committee members generally supported the 72-hour language.

Laboratory Course Impact

The College of Natural Resources and the College of Science raised concerns that removing a Thursday from the final week of instruction creates a meaningfully different burden than removing a day mid-semester. J. Weppner noted that for certain lab courses—such as microbiology—sections meet across multiple days, and removing Thursday would not allow students to be redistributed, potentially requiring a full additional lab week across all sections. For wet labs, setup must be consistent across all students, meaning a single missing day could affect the entire

cohort, not only the Thursday section. J. Weppner noted that this concern applied to all students enrolled in the course, not only those in the Thursday section.

A. Sims observed that not all lab time is always fully utilized and raised the question of whether curriculum adjustments might reduce the actual impact in some cases. A. Sims also suggested that faculty might be permitted—though not mandated—to schedule a common makeup lab session listed as a requirement in the syllabus from the outset.

S. Clements acknowledged that the committee is balancing two competing concerns: the mental health and wellbeing benefit to students of an additional break day, against the operational burden placed on laboratory instructors, lab managers, and support staff.

Background Documentation

R. Sparks noted that the original proposal document prepared by F. Keen, containing the rationale and background for a two-day Fall Break, had not been broadly distributed due to concerns that the options section might generate premature negative reactions from affected units. J. Bridgeforth, representing the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and Experience, offered to share both the original proposal document and a list of peer and regional institutions currently offering a two-day Fall Break with R. Sparks before the end of the meeting.

Motion to Proceed

Following discussion, a motion was made to support moving the proposal forward, with the understanding that additional data would be collected over the summer before the recommendation is finalized. Data needs identified by the committee included:

- Evidence from peer institutions regarding measured student mental health outcomes following adoption of a two-day Fall Break
- Information on how comparable institutions with laboratory-intensive programs have addressed the scheduling impact of the additional break day

S. Clements volunteered to lead outreach to peer institutions over the summer and requested that R. Sparks assist in identifying an appropriate list of contacts.

J. Weppner suggested that any recommendation moving forward include explicit language acknowledging that the committee had considered and weighed the laboratory course impact, to provide clear context for subsequent governance bodies.

S. Clements noted that the resolution language would be revised and circulated to committee members prior to sharing with CUSP. R. Sparks clarified the governance pathway: the recommendation would move from this subcommittee to CUSP for first and second reading, then to Faculty Senate for first and second reading, and then to University Council. Assuming data collection occurs during summer and early fall 2026, it would be feasible to complete the governance process during the 2026–2027 academic year, with implementation no earlier than 2027–2028.

A motion was made and seconded to advance the proposal with the above conditions. Motion carried.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 10:36am.