

C-FSC Educational Policy and Faculty/Student Relations Committee
Proposal on Communication and Collaboration Regarding Modified Spring Break(s)

December 03, 2020

Provost Fleming,

The C-FSC is aware of concerns from students and university administration that some faculty might be inclined to give longer assignments over the long weekends in the adjusted NYU-NY spring semester calendar. We also know that this calendar does not apply to all programs in New York and that there are likely additional schedule complications for students taking classes at multiple sites and portals. We share a commitment to providing vital space for students and faculty to rest during this time. We also want to ensure that the regular assignment of work that happens to fall over those weekends is not so restricted as to compromise pedagogy or curriculum, especially for courses that meet once a week or on irregular schedules. To that end, we are suggesting a messaging strategy and collaborative series of events that support the following: help faculty communicate their support for this policy, reinforce the vital need for rest, and make the faculty a partner in activities during the semester and, in particular, over those weekends to encourage a sense of community solidarity.

COMMUNICATION TO FACULTY & STUDENTS

We believe that communication to faculty around this matter should be distributed before the end of the calendar year and include the following:

- An encouragement to review all spring syllabi with a specific eye towards shifting tests and major assignments away from the days immediately after those weekends
- Strategies for helping students avoid cramming for project deadlines that fall the week after (i.e. breaking large projects into smaller segments or assignments; having deadlines that don't fall on a class day)
- Acknowledgement that not all units of the university follow this schedule and an encouragement to check with their departments and schools before making plans and listing the schools that are impacted by the change
- Acknowledgement that students enrolled at different portals/sites and those taking classes on multiple campuses might find that not all courses are following this particular schedule
- Reminding advisors and students of the varied calendars their courses will follow according to their enrollment across the GNU.

COMMUNICATION FROM FACULTY TO STUDENTS

We believe that providing faculty some key messaging strategies for their classroom discussions with students will help frame assignments in the spring semester in ways that will avoid miscommunication about workload and reinforce the core purpose of the long weekends. Some possibilities include:

- Reminding students that the original plan to completely eliminate spring break was modified to this schedule with the full support of the faculty and administration
- Directly sharing with students the ways they've adjusted their usual calendar and assignments to help ensure reduced work over these weekends

- Speak early in the semester about time management and their desire for students to have these long weekends as an opportunity to rest by not delaying projects/work
- Listing those weekends in the syllabus to directly acknowledge them as one might spring break week

COMMUNITY EVENTS CO-SPONSORED OR LED BY FACULTY

We also believe that this conversation around wellness and how to foster breaks provides a unique opportunity for the faculty to co-sponsor/lead some virtual events. Such events, which could take place throughout the semester, might help reinforce our collaboration on finding rest and fun without leaving town and risking our community public health strategies. Plus, the events would represent the university and faculty's commitment to enhancing mental and social well-being. Some ideas might include:

- Videos of faculty offering NYC staycation ideas based on their expertise/knowledge of NYC
- Co-sponsoring events with The Office of Resident Life and/or Student Affairs or the Student Council
- An on-line faculty/student trivia night
- Community-wide virtual film screenings with post-show discussions with NYU alumni actors
- Possible sports event (i.e. conversation or panel with team members from Brooklyn Nets, etc)
- NYU|TISCH Game Center Community wide virtual competition
- Encourage Residential Life and their faculty affiliates and faculty fellows in residence to target events for those weekend

The C-FSC Education Policy committee would be happy to partner with the administration to help facilitate and move some of these ideas forward to ensure that students and faculty feel supported in this altered spring schedule and to use it to generate events that reinforce a sense of community and solidarity across NYU.