TO: The Academic Senate
FROM: Semester Conversion Directors (SCD)
SUBJECT: 14-15 ASCD 5: Framework for Semester Conversion
PURPOSE: For information to the Executive Committee and the Academic Senate

ACTION REQUESTED:
That the Executive Committee and the Academic Senate accept this information item from the Semester Conversion Directors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
At the meeting of February 6, 2015, the Semester Conversion Steering Committee unanimously approved the following values and principles for semester conversion.

BACKGROUND
In his Fall 2014 convocation address, President Leroy Morishita identified the conversion of CSUEB from a quarter to a semester academic calendar as a “critical strategic priority” for the University. Semester conversion is part of a system-wide effort with budgetary support from the Chancellor’s Office to have all 23 campuses on a similar calendar. As President Morishita noted in his address, 109 of the 112 California Community Colleges (CCC) use a semester calendar. Of the more than 70% of our students who transfer, the vast majority does so from the CCCs. Thus semester conversion will align our academic calendar with the other CSU campuses, our CCCs, and more than 90% of colleges and universities nationwide. An obvious benefit of semester conversion, then, would be to smooth the transition for students, enabling them to transfer course credits more easily and apply them towards degree completion.

Fortunately, CSUEB is not alone in the conversion process, and we plan to collaborate with and learn from our colleagues at CSU Bakersfield (CSUB) and CSU Los Angeles (CSULA), where the process has begun with the plan to launch the semester calendar in Fall 2016, and with Cal Poly Pomona, where the campus plans to launch the semester calendar at the same time as CSUEB, Fall 2018. In Fall 2014, the formal process began on our campus when Provost James Houpis in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate appointed Eileen Barrett (Professor of English) and Jason Singley (Professor of Physics) as co-directors and Lindsay McCrea (Professor of Nursing) as associate director of semester conversion.

The directors consulted with the administrative co-sponsors of the conversion initiative Provost Houpis and Vice President Wells, and with Interim Vice President Hebert to identify key administrative membership of the Semester Conversion Steering Committee (SCSC). Working with Senate Chair Michael Hedrick, who will serve on the SCSC, and with the chairs of CAPR, CIC, FAC, FDEC, and the GE subcommittee, the directors identified faculty membership on SCSC.

The SCSC hopes to use the conversion process as an opportunity to re-envision our curriculum, revitalize our pedagogy, and support the learning and success of our diverse students in the 21st century. Ideally the
conversion process will support faculty as they develop more in-depth projects, create richer and more significant learning experiences, and enhance the overall engagement of their students.

VALUES

The SCSC values our Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and the University-wide process used to develop them. Our ILOs thoughtfully articulate what we expect our graduating students to achieve. Conversion is a unique opportunity for our campus community to model for our students as well as ourselves how our ILOs can be used to guide our transformation from quarter to semester.

Conversion is a complex challenge that affects the everyday lives of the entire CSUEB community. It will require critical and creative thinking along with analytical and quantitative reasoning. The SCSC must communicate our values and perspectives about conversion as well as listen openly to others throughout the semester conversion process. The SCSC commits to infusing diversity throughout with a goal of a just and equitable conversion process. The SCSC respects the expertise of our colleagues. When appropriate, we will seek advice and assistance from colleagues, both within and outside the University, to facilitate our conversion process. Thus in carrying out this conversion we will deeply engage with our ILOs around process and outcomes.

The SCSC intends to work collaboratively within the existing structures of faculty governance and to protect the principle of shared governance, which is vital to maintaining the University’s mission. The SCSC will be responsible to our entire campus community as we convert to a new academic calendar and revitalized curriculum that will support the diversity and learning of our students, and sustain the academic excellence of CSUEB well into the 21st century.

PRINCIPLES

The SCSC adopts the following guiding principles for the semester conversion process:
Throughout our work we will

- Maintain a student-centered approach, always considering the needs of our diverse student body;
- Commit to an inclusive faculty-driven process, respect existing structures of shared governance, collaborate with our Academic Senate and with college and department committees, and recognize that faculty have primary responsibility for curriculum and its associated scope and sequence;
- Provide support and training to assist faculty as they develop innovative pedagogy and transform curriculum to incorporate high impact practices, address the learning needs of our diverse students, map and connect the learning among courses, and improve overall learning, engagement, and success for all our students;
- Compensate efforts that go beyond the usual expectations of faculty and staff both during and following the conversion while carefully considering workload issues;
- Focus on the needs of our diverse students, faculty, and staff, and remain dedicated throughout the process to our core values of diversity, equity, and social justice;
- Inform all campus constituencies through clear, open, on-going, and up-to-date communication.