

September 22, 2003

To the Board of Regents:

As a sophomore attending the University of Montana Western, I would like for you to know that it was a very positive experience to be included in the X-1 program in the 2002-2003 school year. As a student, I highly recommend the program to any fellow student and professor as well.

The classes were scheduled from 9 to 12 in the morning 5 days a week. Each class included 25 students (much smaller than most general classes in any college) and lasted for 18 days. This block schedule helped me manage my work and concentrate on one subject instead of juggling my priorities as I do this year. I received a 4.0 for the year and learned much more than I could ever have expected. The retention level is phenomenal in how much other students and I can still remember from various classes.

The professors went beyond teaching in the case of X-1. Each class had out-of-class activities where we as students could get a hands-on experience instead of reading about it and looking at pictures. For example, in Geology we went on a field trip to actually *see* what we were studying about. In Math, we created problems of our own and presented them to the class in a 'poster session.'

The professors actually treated you like a person instead of a number; this could be in large part of the small campus size. However, each student developed a close relationship and friendship with their professor, no matter what class it was in. I still visit frequently with many of my professors from last year. It was very hard to leave some of the classes because of the relationships created.

Not only did each student develop a close relationship with the professors, they created lasting friendships with each other. Many of the students in the X-1 program are still here getting an education while keeping close contact with their peers. I feel the program brought our group closer together as a whole with the educational techniques used in the classroom.

The upper-level classes such as Calculus and Physics (two of the courses I am taking now) would not fit very well in the block schedule, but I feel that many of the other classes I am taking would be better in the X-1 format. I hope this letter will give you an idea on the program and take in to consideration what a great experience this truly was.

Sincerely,



Laura Griffis

Tony Feist
9-24-03

To Whom It May Concern:

Even though I was not able to make it today I wanted to share some of my experiences with the University of Montana Western's X1 program to help answer some questions that may be asked. My name is Tony Feist, I am from Plains Montana and am currently a sophomore at Western and am taking classes under the standard college schedule. My classes include Chemistry 131, Statistics, Zoology and Oral traditions. I participated in the first year of the X1 program which began in the fall of 2002. In this letter I would like to compare X1 with the conventional college schedule objectively and scientifically. I will tell you what my experiences thus far have led me to believe and some things I find to be beneficial or possibly a downfall of the X1 program.

Benefits of X1 as compared to Traditional schedule:

I believe the X1 program has many benefits especially when it comes to the retention and understanding of knowledge within a subject. A good example of this shows up every day in Statistics class. Right now we are covering probability theory and reviewing the Math 110 class we took last year. We have been going over Binomial problems and combination problems and calculating probabilities and their distributions. The other people in my class and I that took Math 110 in the X1 program remember it well and it is easy for us to recall and use the knowledge we learned last year. It seems to me that the people who had Math 110 in the X1 program have an edge in Statistics because they understand the basis more clearly. It also appears that the slightly longer days in class concentrating only on one subject combined with more project oriented

work allowed us to absorb the material better. Another thing I notice quite a bit is the X1 program facilitated more discussions in class which seemed to be more enriching than just listening to a lecture. The classes that I am taking now in the traditional schedule barely get started and scratch the surface and they are over. In Zoology there is a lot of different terminology that sometimes doesn't get explained due to lack of time. Of course you can always meet with the professor and go over the terms but once you are out of class it is easy to end up doing something else. Many times I end up picking up the guitar and by the time I think about class again the professors are off for the day. In my opinion discussions in class make the subject material seem better-rounded and everyone gains a better understanding. Several other things I think are better about the X1 program are more field time for science classes and project oriented work that challenges you and makes you think instead of just repeating memorized information. I also feel the X1 program makes the students get things done and not procrastinate as much because there are closer deadlines. You know what you have to do and when and you don't have any other classes competing for your time.

Downfalls of X1 as compared to Traditional schedule:

There are only a couple of things that I would consider downfalls of the X1 program. I think with certain science classes where collecting data over long periods of time for an experiment, it would be better to be in the traditional schedule because it would give you time to compile your results. Anything that requires a lot of time, such as reading a long book like Atlas Shrugged, might be better in the traditional setting.

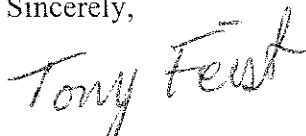
I think the benefits outweigh the downfalls and that the X1 program provides a better understanding of class material regardless of the class.

Common questions:

1. How can you stay in class for 3 hours a day? Well it really isn't that hard. Even in the regular schedule I am in class for 3 or 4 hours a day but it is a little more broken up. I personally would rather get it over with in 3 hours and have the rest of the day off. You also get a break every hour or so to keep it from becoming monotonous.
2. How is an X1 class different than a traditional class? The traditional classes I am familiar with are very low in interaction except the occasional blurting out of answers. X1 program classes include more projects to help gain understanding of the material you are working with. They also have a lot more discussion which allows you to see the topic from all angles and points of view. Focusing on one class at a time allowed me to put all my energy into that subject. With the traditional schedule I am taking now I end up making a choice between classes and sometimes the quality of work is compromised.

Everyone I know in the X1 program seems to agree that it is in fact a credible way to learn. I hope that anyone who reads this paper can gain a better insight to the X1 program from someone who is trying to be objective and has taken both the X1 program and the traditional schedule. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Feist". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Tony Feist

9/23/03

Montana Board of Regents:

I was in the block program the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2003. I think it was the best education experience I have ever had.

One of the first plusses of being in XI was the fact that I got all my general education classes done in my freshman year. Allowing me to start classes for my major immediately, my sophomore year.

The XI program also allowed me to focus on one subject at a time which helped me to focus completely and retain more information for three and a half weeks.

This program also allowed me to have a job and extracurricular activities without feeling overwhelmed. I also got very good grades my freshman year and made the Dean's List both semesters.

The XI program was the reason I came to University of Montana - Western and is the reason I would like to stay here. I am suffering in the regular scheduling and I am not even taking as many credits as I was in XI.

I think XI will bring a lot of people to this University and will help a lot.

of people who could never go to college in the regular schedule but will be able to in XI.

Please consider XI as a permanent thing. It helped me through a tough freshman year and I would really like to continue it throughout college.

Sincerely,

Cameron Vates

September 22, 2003

Dear Montana Board of Regents,

Last year I was one of the seventy-five freshmen who participated in the X-1 program at the University of Montana-Western. As an incoming freshman, I was not sure what to expect with the block because I had never had a three hour class before. What I did know was that when my high school made the transformation from the regular 52 minute class periods to 1 ½ hour blocks, it made my learning experience better. It allowed the teachers to go into more detail during class, and also gave students the opportunity to ask questions. I found that the same held true for the block. In fact, the block was even better because I only had to concentrate on one subject at a time.

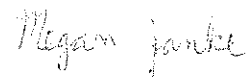
The block is based on experiential learning; it is not about regurgitating a lot of information. I feel that this was the best part about participating in the block. In geology, for example, we would go on field trips where we were actually looking at rock formations in their natural environment versus looking at a chunk of the rock in the classroom. Instead of getting a piece of the picture, we got the whole picture. This made piecing together concepts learned during lecture much easier. I am in the regular scheduling right now, and can not help but think how nice it would be to have my classes in the block.

During the regular scheduling, you walk into your class, sit down, take notes for 50 minutes, and then move on to the next class. I am majoring in Pharmacy, so I have three science courses with labs and an economics course. What I have found myself doing is prioritizing which subject gets the highest quality of work. In the block, this problem was eliminated and I was able to put 100% effort into all of my work. One of the reasons I came to Western for pre-pharmacy was because of the small class sizes. In the block I had much more interaction with my professors and classmates than in regular scheduling. The other reason I came to Western was to play basketball.

I was able to play JV basketball, take courses in the block scheduling, and still maintain a 4.0 GPA. When I had to miss class, I talked to my professors ahead of time and made up the work. It was nice to only worry about making up one class rather than four.

I do not have answers about how the block would work with upper level courses. The only thing that I can do is say that my X-1 experience was a positive one, and I would definitely do it again given the opportunity. I hope that this letter has given you a little insight through the eyes of someone who has had the opportunity to participate not only in X-1, but also the regular scheduling.

Sincerely,



Megan Janke

To the Montana Board of Regents:

My name is Michael Herdina and I am writing on behalf of the Experience One program at the University of Montana at Western. I wish I could be there in person to tell you my experience with the program, but I had academic responsibilities that I must attend to.

The Experience One program is the best thing that I have gone through so far in my post-secondary education. There would be absolutely no way possible that I would already be taking as many classes in my major as I am now without the help of Experience One. I would more than likely be finishing out my general education requirements this semester instead of already having them done. With the help of this program I can take more classes in education and history and in turn feel better prepared to go and teach history in high schools because I will know more material and I will know it even more in depth.

To give a testimony as to how well it works, I will tell you of my math classes in high school and my math class under Experience One. In high school at Manhattan High I battled with math. I would work on homework until one two or three in the morning and no matter how hard I studied and how much help I asked for I could not get above D's or F's in my math classes. I just couldn't understand it no matter how hard I worked. So I came to Western under the Experience One program and I was really dreading taking my math class for my general education requirement. In the program I got totally immersed in my math class and the teacher had us working on projects to help us understand the material even better and for the first time for as long as I can remember I was passing tests, getting good grades on homework, and ended up with a B for the class. Under

Experience One the professor was able to give me the long drawn out assignments that I needed to fully understand the material that we were covering even though it was a lot of material in those three short hours I understood it fully. It is probably safe to say that if I had to do my math requirement under the semester system that I would be up until all hours of the night again working until exhaustion for a D in the class.

This is my testimony to the benefits of the Experience One Program. It is a wonderful program that will be quite beneficial for the school of UMW and in turn for the town and state. If any of you have any more questions about my experience from this program feel free to call me at 406-683-7944 or at my email address m_herdina@hotmail.com. This program is the best thing for Western both now and in its future. Let it go through and it will not let you down.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Herdina".

Michael Herdina

To whom it may concern:

9/19/03

re: X 1

I accidentally attended a portion of the faculty meeting with President Dennison and stayed for the community meeting (to which I meant to be) and left feeling good about the campus progress and commitment to X1. I spoke to President Dennison twice during the community meeting expressing my disappointment with the local media and my support of the work leading up to the decision to implement X1 and questioned if the X1 program was designed around a four year degree.

The quest for change is a corner stone of the American way of life. Status quo and fear of change dampen the likelihood of experimentation and advance. Recently, on national news, New York was lauded for "change" in it's education system. I applaud the forward thinking educators willing to try Experience One, hoping to benefit the student primarily but also refresh what might be considered a stagnant teaching mechanism.

Steve Holbert could have deferred the decision to implement X-1 but instead acted prudently with the knowledge given him by those professionals given the tasked with weighing the pros and cons of X-1. How great to see a consensus of education professionals be heard and heeded.

The general public should be informed of what is happening and their concerns regarded. However, it is wrong to take what might be considered "the vocal few" and change policy to quell the hypothetical or misinformed questions. With any change there will be issues to deal with. Some of these issues, only perceived as problems, should be considered but don't allow the minute issues cloud the progress and results of the whole study. Having a niche with retention and recruitment through X-1, Western will flourish and meet the needs of those students not wanting to go the huge campuses and be lost in the enormous classes.

As a member of the community and a business partner with Western I support the X-1 program wholeheartedly.



Ken Heberling owner, Dillon Dairy Products

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Ken Heberling owner, Dillon Dairy Products

Date: Wed, 24 Sep 2003 08:18:32 -0600
To: s_mock@umwestern.edu,r_thomas@umwestern.edu,s_roberts@umwestern.edu,
a_ripley@umwestern.edu,a_easterpilc@umwestern.edu,d_moore@umwestern.edu
From: Experience One <x1@umwestern.edu>
Subject: Fwd: OCAAT success
Mime-Version: 1.0
X-RCPT-TO: <r_thomas@umwestern.edu>
Status: U

Good morning all!!!

Look what came in on the X1 email this morning!!! Can't have come at a better time for moral boosting. See? It is worth it!!
Margo

>Date: Tue, 23 Sep 2003 16:36:52 -0400
>Subject: OCAAT success
>To: x1@umwestern.edu
>From: "Jeffrey Brazee" <jbrazee@kitteryschools.org>
>X-RCPT-TO: <x1@umwestern.edu>
>
>Hello,
>
> I was cruising the web today, looking for information on experiential
>learning, and happened across an article about UM Western's experiment
>with OCAAT (www.mea-mft.org/hnews2.htm). As a graduate of Colorado
>College ('99), I am encouraged that a public university would have the
>spark to try this wonderful way to learn. I had to go all the way from
>Maine to Colorado for it (although that wasn't such a hardship as I am a
>skier). There simply wasn't anything like it anywhere near me.
>
> I came to the conclusion that CC was the place for me after some
> serious
>introspection about how I learn best. I was never overly excited about
>classes in Junior High or High School - I always felt stretched too thin.
>The classes I liked sometimes had to be ignored for other classes, and it
>was frustrating to have to make the compromise.
>
> Subsequent to my CC experience, I have had several opportunities
> to take
>classes in the traditional format. There is simply no comparison. I was
>able to accomplish much more and establish a deeper understanding with
>what we called the "Block Plan". The learning was also significantly more
>satisfying.
>
> Now, as a middle school teacher, I am looking for ways to
> integrate the
>ideas behind OCAAT into a somewhat traditional schedule. It is just too
>important not to try to find a way for students to really get at material.
>
>
> I just wanted to applaud your efforts toward making the "Block
> Plan" a
>success at UM Western. Good luck!
>
>Sincerely,
>Jeff Brazee
>
>
>
>Jeffrey Brazee
>World Languages
>Shapleigh Middle School

>Kittery, Maine
>207.439.2572
>
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Margo Heberling
Administrative Assistant
Experience One Program
UM-Western
710 S. Atlantic St.
Dillon, MT 59725
406-683-7050

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**TESTIMONY BY SWEDE TROEDSSON AT THE DILLON COMMUNITY
MEETING WITH MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM PRESIDENT GEORGE
DENNISON AT THE UM-W SWYSGOOD TECHNOLOGY CENTER, 9/9/03**

Good morning President Dennison, Chancellor Ulrich, Faculty, and Dillon Community members.

My name is Swede Troedsson. As a member of the Dillon City Council I want to express the importance this City places on the presence of UM-Western, and the involvement of its faculty and other employees in City government. Faculty members currently serve on at least two City Boards, and next year at least one will be a member of our City Council.

UM-W employees are not just "people on the hill". Among them are our neighbors, our friends, taxpayers, and constituents.

Now I would like to address the issue of one class at a time. Before proceeding further, let me preface my remarks by stating the following views are strictly my own and may not necessarily reflect the consensus of the Council.

I have had the privilege of being invited to participate as an instructor in at least three classes and workshops here on campus. This involvement has developed in me a deep respect for the dedication of our faculty towards a quality education program.

The current proposal to proceed with the "Experience One" program is being contentiously questioned by a group of downtown businessmen whose agenda may not be in the best interest of the community and a desire to micro-manage the education system on this campus.

I hope you will support the principal that new methods of instruction should be guided by your faculty who are dedicated to the survival and growth of this institution and to improving the quality of its educational system.

Thank you for listening.

September 10, 2003

102 E Dillon
Dillon, Montana 59725

President George Dennison
University of Montana - Missoula
Missoula, Montana 59801

Dear President Dennison:

During your visit to UM - Western on Tuesday, September 9, in the meeting with Dillon residents, I rose to speak in support of the X1 curriculum. On hearing what happened at the other meetings, I feel I must reiterate and add to my statement.

I consider X1 scheduling the last best hope for UM - Western. That being said, the soonest possible adoption of X1 is of utmost importance. At the end of spring semester, 2004, the faculty will have had years to plan for the change. Nearly all of the departments have completed the planning, or will have completed it by October 1. In my opinion, only those very few who wish to derail the implementation of X1 are slowing the process.

In the fall of 2004, there will be two years of X1 pilot students counting on being able to continue their education with X1 scheduling. As I recall, many of the first year X1 students petitioned to be allowed to continue block scheduling this fall, 2003. How many will leave UM - Western if they are forced to wait until 2005 or longer?

Since the initial meeting about X1 scheduling in 1999, that sizable majority of the faculty, as well as staff, students, and townsfolk who support implementation have done yeoman work in getting grant funding, gathering evidence, presenting information, and planning for the change. All the while, a small, vocal group continue to try to obstruct the process. As you saw and heard, they feign ignorance and spread misinformation. What you missed, at least at the one meeting I attended, is how X1 supporters are professionally and personally vilified by this vocal minority.

It reflects highly on the X1 supporters, the faculty in particular, that, in the face of these attacks, they continue in the great deal of extra work of X1 preparation as well as giving UM - Western students a quality learning experience. All this with precious little visible support from the administration.

During you talk, you recalled the time when the Montana University System changed from the quarter to the semester system. I remember that change. As I remember it, when the decision was made, the system changed. Those who had problems were told - Told - to solve them, either by adapting or leaving.

As I recall, they did.

Sincerely,



Thomas G. Satterly

Analysis of Universities utilizing Focused/Block Scheduling (defined as classes meeting for 3 ½ weeks for approximately 3 hours per day)

Tusculum College (Greeneville, TN)

Number of Students: 1,700
Number of Faculty: 141
Student to Faculty Ratio: 12:1
Annual Tuition \$13,400 plus \$4,500 for room & board

Colorado College (Colorado Springs, CO)

Number of Students: 1,900
Number of Faculty: 181
Student to Faculty Ratio: 11:1
Annual Tuition \$27,270 plus \$3,024 for room & board
Other facts: Maximum class size for freshman is 16
Average class size is 13 with all classes capped at 25
All course exams are un-proctored with no instructor present
Campus has 4,500 data ports available for computer access
5% of incoming freshman are transfer students

Cornell College (Mount Vernon, IA)

Number of Students: 1,000
Number of Faculty: 82
Student to Faculty Ratio: 11:1
Annual Tuition \$26,755 including room & board
Other facts: Average class size is 14 -15 with all classes capped at 25

University of Montana – Western (Dillon, MT)

Number of Students: 1,142 (866 full-time; 276 part-time)
Number of Faculty: 54 Full-time equivalents
Student to Faculty Ratio: 20:1
Average class size: 19
Annual Tuition \$6,975 in-state including room & board (86% of students)
\$12,570 out-of-state including room & board