Jeff Popke noted that he has a meeting with the Provost Hayes right after this meeting and can ask him about issues brought up in this meeting. He went on to explain that Provost Hayes put all recommendations from the subgroups made for the Altered Calendar Committee (ACC) into a draft (which Jeff Popke sent around to the CIT members). Jeff Popke has not seen any drafts from the other groups, but it is his understanding that they are all creating compiled drafts. It is also his understanding that the information will be disseminated to campus eventually. Does anyone have any comments or thoughts on that draft?

Marianne Montgomery found whole thing really daunting. Some of the student life and financial aid pieces that aren’t in their purview are really daunting. Coverage for faculty who may be sick or need to be quarantined is one thing she is wondering about and suggested that one solution might be to hold some instructional capacity in reserve. In other words, maybe units should not fully use fixed-term faculty or tenure-track faculty. She does not see overloads as a good option for fixed-term faculty in these shortened 8-week terms. She acknowledged that some department chairs might be able to teach a course but doing so under these circumstances and in a shortened term period would be difficult. Department chairs are certainly not able to cover for another faculty member who is sick or under quarantine if they are already teaching courses of their own. She would like the option to reserve some instructional capacity to be suggested as a solution.

Jeff Popke said he was taking note of her suggestion and asked for further thoughts and comments.

Alethia Cook said that if a faculty member is quarantined, they could teach still but would need to shift instruction to online. If they became ill, then that is another thing. She is hoping those cases will be relatively few.

Leigh Cellucci said she was in another meeting just before this one and a person in that meeting said we couldn’t require a student to wear a mask. She wondered if it is appropriate in the document that Jeff Popke sent around to say we require students to wear a mask when meeting face-to-face to lower the probability that faculty would become sickened and then have to take their courses online.

Jason Yao asked how evening classes will be split into two blocks. He did not see guidance for how courses held after 5 pm would be handled. He also noted that if we have to go to a 7-week schedule in the 2nd block (due to a question of ending the face-to-face portion of the term before Thanksgiving, which was a suggestion discussed through email), is the starting date for the fall fixed, or is it something we can look at moving earlier?

Jeff Popke said he thought the starting date was still flexible and negotiable. He said it might be the only way if we want to try to hold exams before Thanksgiving. Originally the Interim Chancellor wanted to keep the start date as it was, because it was more certainty for students, but this idea of finishing up face-to-face instruction before Thanksgiving may require a change.

Marianne Montgomery said that for evening courses, she thinks it should be left up to departments to move them into the blocks because those are mostly graduate courses. That flexibility could help manage graduate student course loads and faculty workloads.

Puri Martinez said she thought they had agreed that they wanted to leave the distribution of those nighttime classes to be determined by the unit.

Jeff Popke agreed. He said with regard to Leigh Cellucci’s concerns about masks that they will have to defer to legal or other experts but they can communicate that expectation in the document.
Leigh Cellucci said that if a student feels so strongly about individual freedom, they can take a distance education (DE) version. She thinks that we, as a faculty-led committee, can’t speak strongly enough about this. If her program loses even two faculty, she doesn’t have a bench to pull more from. She thinks we have to protect faculty. Otherwise, faculty are relegated to delivering their courses from another room.

Puri Martinez agreed and said we absolutely must be able to force students to wear masks to attend face-to-face classes. She has had colleagues ask about what we can do if students refuse and how can we police people? She said we must.

Jason Yao agreed, noting that he would be under family pressure to wear a mask, too.

Amanda Klein agreed, but expressed concern about the backlash against mask-wearing across the country. She thinks we’re going to have students primed and ready for arguments about wearing masks. This is going to be more labor on faculty to be enforcers of health codes. She is not saying that we shouldn’t make students wear masks, but we need to acknowledge that will be yet another aspect about this push to have an on-campus experience. There are going to be students with phones out, recording interactions with faculty about this.

Tucker Robbins, Student Government Association (SGA) President, said he wanted to let faculty know that if there is any way that SGA can be a liaison between faculty and students about this, to please let him know. He acknowledged that SGA could not solve everything, but he did want to voice the willingness to do that.

Crystal Chambers suggested that SGA could do a video about how cool it is to wear a mask and really enforce it with students. Make it fun.

Jason Yao suggested the design of an eye cover and a mask together and echoed that call to make it fun to increase willingness of students to comply.

Jeff Popke turned the topic back to what to do about quarantined faculty and whether students will be able to opt out of face-to-face classes. He said there has to be a process in place to handle those situations, and that for any of this to work, every single lecture would need to be recorded and every faculty member would need to be prepared to deliver any element of their course DE.

Alethia Cook said that if it ends up an entire class has to go online because a student gets sick, that is one thing, but posed a scenario in which there was a rolling situation, where there are a couple of students here or a couple of students there who get sick, the expectation is that every faculty member should be ready to deliver all their courses in any format. That goes against SACS requirement that at least 50 percent be face-to-face. It is an unreasonable burden to put on a faculty member. That faculty member is going to say they will just teach online, so they only have to prepare one type of course. What about students not opting to come to a face-to-face class because they can get the content online? She understand that it would lessen the chance that a sick or quarantined student would come to class, but if the expectation is that we will accommodate every student for every class we should still go online for fall.

Timm Hackett noted a comment brought up by Marianne Montgomery in the chat, asking whether we even have the capability to record class sessions. Some classrooms do, some don’t. Some instructors bring their own equipment to record, and we can do it, but you are asking a whole lot of the professors. ITCS is helping people shrink their classes next week to 8 weeks, but there has been no discussion about shrinking it down to a completely online class now. Using WebEx to livestream a course requires the class to be synchronous. If a student can’t come to class and are truly sick, they may not be able to be online too. Most online portions of courses are asynchronous. In the Office of Faculty Excellence, when we were helping faculty get their courses online in the spring, we were telling them not to do synchronous classes. When students go home their schedules change drastically.

Donna Roberson said she thought you could run WebEx and record it, and for anyone who can’t be there you can post it later. In Nursing, students are petrified to miss classes and they ask about recording. Recording it while lecturing keeps you from doing double work if you can record it when it is synchronous.
Elizabeth Swaggerty said if the course in question is a lecture, it works but a lot of the courses in the College of Education are discussion-based and that content is not easily converted into a video. If it is not a lecture it will require a lot of extra work.

Timm Hackett pointed out that most faculty aren’t tethered to a computer when they teach. Some rooms are wired to record live, but others are not. Another question is whether those video options currently in rooms are automatically going to convert within Canvas.

Crystal Chambers said the College of Education has a few iPads that can move with you to follow your motion while you teach, and she wonders if Nursing has that too? She knows that they have iPad carts, so it is a matter of getting the stands. But how do you make that sort of accommodation for every classroom? There might be pockets of technology in other parts of the university, but it isn’t consistent.

Marianne Montgomery said Jeff’s question was whether faculty we say we are going to record every single class, and she does not think we can. If they mean taking an informal video on your phone, then maybe, but anything beyond that is no. If we are assuming students are going to miss class, then we need t come up with other ways to deliver the content, or they need to drop the course and take it later.

Puri Martinez agreed that we can’t expect colleagues to do that.

Timm Hackett said he can almost guarantee we don’t have the bandwidth, the capability, even if we tried.

Jason Yao suggested that, given the wide variety of classes and individual issues different course types would face, it might be a good idea to create a faculty support group to problem-solve for those issues because there are a lot of things that will have to be figured out and it is beyond the scope of what we can fix right now.

Jeff Popke said he can convey that we really should not have it as an expectation that every class can become available to every student who is ill or quarantined. That should not be an assumption. We can work with ITCS to maximize the number of classes that could be recorded, but he does not think that is an expectation that should be there. He then turned to a suggestion made to the ACC yesterday to try to organize the calendar to send students home at Thanksgiving and not have them come back. Provost Hayes’s current thinking about it is that exams would take place virtually some time after that. He noted that a few of the members of CIT would like to see exams finished before Thanksgiving break. That makes for a pretty compressed schedule but if we moved the start date back, it might be doable. He looked at some dates and considered how it might work.

Puri Martinez said if she remembers correctly what Jeff Popke said about the first meeting he attended for the ACC, the first idea was to start the semester early and finish by Thanksgiving and not do blocks. She recalls that he said that was quickly dismissed as not possible. Does he remember why it was dismissed?

Jeff Popke said the idea that was dismissed was pushing back the start date to start later and extend the semester over winter break and into what would normally be the spring semester, and to start the spring semester later.

Puri Martinez said she likes the idea of finishing by Thanksgiving.

Donna Roberson asked what would students think about that? If the SGA president has had a chance to talk about that, maybe he could provide some information.

Tucker Robbins said he has had talks with administrators about no fall break, and he has heard the idea of finishing before Thanksgiving. He thinks it is a smart idea. There is no way to track 28,000 students during the off time. It is already going to be a big enough concern when bars and restaurants open up and classes are going on. The only drawback is the change in exams from face-to-face to DE, but he personally does not mind that.
Marianne Montgomery said she thinks it is a great idea to end by Thanksgiving, and if we can manage to get exams done before then that would be great. One of the things that they were trying to do with the hybrid schedule was preserving an option that would be similar in length to class sessions that faculty are already teaching in. We are asking faculty to do an enormous amount, so even preserving something that looks like class times they are used to is a good thing. She is worried about compressing too much in that second block because class sessions would not look like a normal session.

Marianne Montgomery said they could craft a new hybrid face-to-face/online distribution that would still be close to 47%. Previously, this was accomplished by extending class times by 5 minutes, but now it is going to be 10 minutes. She is concerned about some courses being 135 minutes—it increases exposure time of faculty and students in the room, and some classes are not as effective if they are held that long. She thinks it is workable, and there is room to change the lengths of time. We really need an academic calendar before we can know how long the class times are.

Leigh Cellucci asked whether beginning on August 10th is possible, or is there a reason why it has to be August 17th?

Alethia Cook pointed out that the guidance from UNC System Office (UNC-SO) is that classes start no earlier than August 1st. It seems like we have a couple of weeks there to maneuver.

Donna Roberson admitted that she just wants to get rid of blocks. We don’t have enough time for faculty to effectively adapt their course to a block. If we started August 10th, and maintained our regular semester, we could do more easily do this.

Jeni Parker agreed with starting earlier, but said we have to think about faculty and staff with children starting school on August 17th. She also agrees about trying to keep it to 15 weeks. Some courses are writing intensive, so how do you do a writing intensive class in 8 weeks? Faculty are stressed and not sure how they will achieve the learning outcomes and get the students to submit the writing necessary in 8 weeks.

Jason Yao mentioned that at some other institutions, in writing intensive sections they do not necessarily have the students write for the whole course, but they write in sections. He was amazed by the approach.

Marianne Montgomery said she can pass on to folks in writing program that there is a need for some professional development and guidance for delivering content in an 8-week block.

Jeff Popke said he could send an extensive bibliography done by Alan Guidry as part of the block scheduling strategic enrollment group. That group found that people have figured out how to do things a little differently, give writing assignments a little differently, so they manage to achieve the learning outcomes in less time. Just like the advice in the spring was to refrain from taking your exact course and placing it online, we may not want to take our existing course and just squeeze it in 8-weeks. He understands there is a great deal of concern and resistance to the 8-week schedule, but his understanding is that it is water under the bridge. For faculty doubting the wisdom of the approach, he assures them they are not alone. There is a lot of doubt, and most of their colleagues are not sold on the cost-benefit analysis driving this, because it hasn’t been effectively explained.

Puri Martinez noted that yesterday in the meeting of the Academic Council with the Faculty Officers, the start date mentioned was August 17th because Interim Chancellor Mitchelson is worried that if it is pushed too early in August it might run into one of the estimated peak dates for the coronavirus cases. The decision to change the starting and ending date would be done by the ACC next week, right?

Jeff Popke agreed that the Interim Chancellor seemed to be concerned that moving it up too much might run into a time when there are still a lot of restrictions in place that would not allow us to open. He does not know what medical advice is being received that would generate that concern. He also does not know who is best placed to try to work out what a schedule might look like. If Marianne Montgomery’s addendum for including shorter time-frame courses is used, it seems like an August 17 start date with no fall break has to be it for the first block. That left only one day for exams, and he does not know if that is sufficient, and only one day is left between the blocks. It seems like there is another way to do it so students don’t come back after Thanksgiving break and we are in favor of making that work.
Paul Lindauer voiced concern about the Dental School’s schedule being moved into something like what was being proposed, which would be unworkable.

Rachel Roper reminded him that in Brody School of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, they are sticking with their normal schedules.

Jeff Popke agreed that much of this conversation may not apply to the Dental Medicine programs.

Paul Lindauer said that would be good because of the big differences between what they are doing and what main campus is doing.

Jeff Popke said they accept that Dental Medicine will stay on their schedule.

Marianne Montgomery asked about the courses receiving 15-week exceptions? We’ll need a new calendar for the long semester too.

Jeff Popke said he started to think about that when he began his mock ups, but realized there will be not enough Wednesday and Thursday courses in the 15-week schedule, so there would need to be a Monday turned into a Tuesday or something else to get to the right number of days.

Marianne Montgomery agreed that the math in this is daunting, and previously she forgot that we count final exams as part of the contact hours.

Leigh Cellucci said if we are looking for a couple of days, we could start on the 12th or 13th and move it so you can cover those last couple of days necessary to get the right number of Wednesdays and Thursdays. Maybe if we do begin in that week of August 10th, we can address some concerns.

Jason Yao asked if is possible for us to cancel Labor Day or other types of holidays.

Jeff Popke said no—every employee has a right to take that day off and cannot be compelled to work that day.

Leigh Cellucci emphasized that any calendar should provide enough days to make this work.

Jeff Popke said his earlier mock-up had assumed that courses would have exams administered online and did not attempt to have exams before Thanksgiving. He asked if anyone wanted to volunteer to try to mock up a calendar that would accomplish that? Are there two or three who want to do that to work through the different compromises?

Mark McCarthy said he was willing to do that. We can’t do anything in detail until we know when we can start. He agrees they should try to finish before Thanksgiving. Right now, if we started on our regular day and finished the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, that would be 13 full weeks and a day. If you could start a week earlier, instead of 8 week blocks you could have 7-week blocks. Maybe you meet a little longer and your percentage of online delivery goes up a little bit. It may be that a 7-week block becomes easier to implement than something shorter than that. But you’d have to start earlier than what we are proposing starting at right now. If you went all the way up to the 10th, it would be easier.

Marianne Montgomery said she would help work out the dates as well.

Jeff Popke noted that as long as the number of face-to-face classes stays above 50% of the instructional time, it is fine. They just need the content to add up to 100%. He thinks that for a Monday/Wednesday class, there has to be at least 13 meetings to keep it at 50%. For a 90-minute timeslot, you could probably go up to 14 meetings and you can always adjust the hybrid amount to get fewer classes on the schedule in the interest of finishing before Thanksgiving. He will pass along the recommendation that this group is in favor of trying to make a calendar like that work.
Jeff Popke noted that one big issue is about faculty members getting to deliver classes DE due to health concerns. We will get some guidance from UNC-SO on this. System President Roper said it won’t be a simple matter where anyone who requests this sort of accommodation gets it, and there will have to be some medically valid reasoning. The question of who makes that determination and what information is included in making that decision is unknown at this time, but we should receive some guidance about how to get an exemption from face to face teaching. In the weekly meeting between Academic Council and the Faculty Officers, we pointed out that if large enrollment courses are going to be moved online and some portion of faculty will be moving their courses online due to health exemptions, we are in danger of having an almost entirely online endeavor. Just moving the large enrollment courses online will result in about 40% of all courses being online, and that is before granting faculty exemptions for health reasons. If a large number of faculty need those exemptions, then you could end up with 30-40% of courses being offered with any in-person component, and even then only roughly half of those course contact hours will be face-to-face. Members of Academic Council suggested that units could finagle it so that the faculty who request health exemptions can teach the sections that are moving online.

Marianne Montgomery said that would not work well in her unit because of the degree of specialization. Faculty cannot be interchanged between a lot of those courses.

Alethia Cook agreed that while that may work in some cases, it will not be a viable solution in every case.

Puri Martinez said such thinking is likening faculty to factory workers or robots that are easily interchangeable. She noted that no one else in her department knows anything about medieval literature.

Jeff Popke agreed that it can work in cases where multiple people teach multiple sections, but the point about specialization is taken and should be obvious.

Puri Martinez said the Faculty Officers also expressed concern yesterday that a reason for moving to the block schedule is make sure that freshman are able to take face-to-face classes, but the majority of courses that freshman take are large enrollment classes, and those are the ones to go online. When she brought this up, Academic Council basically said, “Well, we can figure something out.” But how?

Leigh Cellucci thanked Jeff Popke for sending out that draft report from the Altered Calendar Committee. She said it gave her the ability to discuss why things were happening with her colleagues.

Jeff Popke cautioned CIT members about sharing it too widely yet, as it is just a draft. He restated that he thinks each of those committees are putting together similar reports with a literature review and a series of recommendations and that is what will drive our approaches going forward. There are faculty members on these committees who will be able to present their results to us. What is next is that we are still awaiting UNC-SO guidance. These reports are going to the Interim Chancellor and Academic Council today or tomorrow, and they will read through and try to finalize recommendations. Sometime next week we should be able to finalize, though now that we are working on a slightly different calendar (ending by Thanksgiving) we may take a few extra days. We did state to them that we need to finalize this ASAP and send out bullet points of instructions and guidance to units so they know what to do in this short time. We know in this group that a lot of that work needs to be done prior to initial schedule migration on June 1 and we don’t know how much that has been disseminated. That is a message we’ve been conveying.

Jeff Popke asked if there were any further concerns or comments. There were none, so he adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:00 PM.