The Impact of J-Term

Written by: Associate Dean of CLA, Michael Reynolds

Hamline’s January term provides an opportunity for students that reaps rewards across all aspects of their educational career here. We’d like to take a moment to lay out some of these potential impacts, linking the short-term practical benefits to a bigger picture.

January provides a full month to engage entirely with one four-credit course. Most courses meet 4 days per week, and often 3 hours on each of those days—it can get (wonderfully) intense. The courses offered include a variety of required courses—in majors, but also throughout the general-education Hamline Plan—as well as a great range of intriguing electives. Students exploit both options.

Many will use the chance to fulfill requirements that are harder, or just scarier, to engage during the semesters; having the month to concentrate solely on a subject that gives folks the heebie-jeebies can take the edge off, can allow a student more room to explore and refine the skills needed for that Chemistry lab he normally sidesteps because he’s “not a Science person,” or in that oral-intensive seminar when she doesn’t feel comfortable with her public speaking. That focus can lead to greater success—and more confidence—in subjects where students struggle. January can have a great impact by providing room to really engage a tough subject with increased concentration and more focused faculty support.

On the other hand, J-term is also a chance to step off the “requirements” track and try out something you’d never have examined before. Even at a liberal arts institution like Hamline, students can be very ends-focused, and their schedules fill in with all those required courses for their major (not to mention their second major, their obligations at work, their regular practices for the team, their commitments to leadership in their dorms and organizations, and so on). Students can stretch themselves, move from mere requirement into a course on Indonesian culture and
music they’d never have previously thought of taking. January provides courses off the beaten path for faculty, too; many will use the month-long seminar to explore new areas of scholarship and research not taught before (like Chinese film! the City in Literature!).

But there is that need to keep moving toward degree requirements, right? January can have an impact on the number of credits earned and obligations met – whether a student takes January as the 9th course (in addition to their 4 courses each semester) or uses it to get back on track after taking only 3 in a prior semester. January provides many students more breathing room to keep moving forward, picking up their pace toward degree or making sure they don’t fall behind.

The impact isn’t just credits and courses. Students build stronger, more meaningful connections to the campus community through J-term, too. To some degree, January can feel like a collective accomplishment—we’re all hunkered down together, hiding from the Minnesotan cold! That camaraderie is enhanced through the more-intensive connections (and often the smaller, more intimate experiences) in the classroom, as well as a slew of co-curricular events around campus—programs in halls, performances in Sundin, events all over the place (and into the local neighborhood). This community connection has historically been particularly important for first-year or new students. After the rush of that first semester, acclimating to a range of new experiences, students may feel worn out—even worn down. Students can be hit by an urge to “step away,” to get a break from their studies, but that lure of the “break” can have unintended consequences—the skills built up over that first semester atrophy a bit, or the motivation to keep plugging along can wane because of the long stretch between semesters. Those first-year and new students who attend J-term find, however, a revitalized and reinforced sense of engagement—they are statistically more likely to find the connections (in and out of the classroom) that help them persist and succeed over the long march toward the degree. The impact of J-term can be felt in that more abstract sense of belonging to the place, of finding their sense of purpose more fully after the initial rush and anxiety of the first semester.

In sum, January reinforces students’ success at Hamline. The impact can be felt in local learning in the given, intensive course they take—but also in their long-term progress toward the degree, whether expanding curiously into new realms or tracking through some requirements.
Disability Resources—Partners in Access

Increasingly, colleges and universities across the country are working with students who have a variety of needs and characteristics. Hamline is no exception. The Disability Resources office assists and empowers students with physical, attentional, learning, and psychological disabilities. Hamline University and Disability Resources are committed to ensuring equal access to the university and its programs for these students. We coordinate and provide reasonable accommodations, collaborate to create an accessible and hospitable learning environment, and promote self-determination on the part of the individuals we serve. For more information about Disability Resources, please contact the director, Kathy McGil livray, at 651-523-2521.

Holiday Information Regarding Housing

Winter Break Housing (December 20—December 31)

Please Note: This section does not apply to the Hamline Apartments or Houses

Residential Life will provide housing over winter break for students who apply by December 13. You may stay in the room you currently occupy during the winter break period. A $100.00 fee will be charged to your student account for all or any portion of winter break. To apply for winter break housing, please submit a completed Winter Break housing form to the Residential Life Office, Manor 26. Forms are available in the Residential Life Office, Manor 26.

Please note: Only residents who apply for break housing will have access to their halls. Residents who do not apply for winter break housing will not have access to their building or room during the winter break period and should remove all items they may need.

If for any reason a resident needs access to their room during the winter break period a $25.00 charge will be applied to their student account. The Hamline Apts. and Houses do not close during winter break.

Winter Break Dining Service Hours

Bishop’s Bistro closes at 9:30 am on Dec. 20 and reopens on Jan. 2 with regular hours. Dining Service information can be found at; http://www.campusdish.com/en-us/CSMW/Hamline or by calling 651.523.2453

PARENTS NETWORK

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