



Spring Break Alignment Report

Introduction

ADVANCE at UNM undertook this research project to determine the levels of support among different constituency groups on campus for aligning UNM and Albuquerque Public School (APS) spring breaks. Currently, there is no communication between UNM and APS in terms of scheduling spring breaks. This has resulted in members of the UNM community having spring break at a different time than their children, siblings, or other family members. Several community members complained to us that the lack of alignment created problems arranging child care, made it difficult to fulfill professional obligations, and prevented families from spending time together during breaks.

Methodology

The survey instrument was designed to assess respondents' level of support for spring break alignment, attitudes about the importance of alignment, and demographic information about their position on campus and their family composition. The survey was administered online. Respondents received invitations at their UNM email addresses through appropriate email list-serves. Because the survey invitations were not individualized, we limited responses to one per IP address to lower the likelihood of respondents taking the survey multiple times.

UNM staff received an email invitation from the ALL-STAFF list-serve on July 7th, 2017 and a reminder email through the list-serve on August 15, 2017. The online survey was available until August 30, 2017, a fielding period of almost two months. Of the 3,200 individual email addresses on the ALL-STAFF list-serve, 1,003 staff responded to the survey. This resulted in a response rate of 31%.

Faculty received an email invitation to the online survey through the ALL-FAC list-serve on August 16, 2017. The survey remained open for two weeks. There are 2,786 email addresses on the ALL-FAC list. A total of 708 faculty responded to the survey, for a response rate of 25%.

Research faculty and staff also received a survey invitation through the PI list-serve maintained through the Office of the Vice President for Research. That email went out on August 15, 2017 to 908 email addresses.

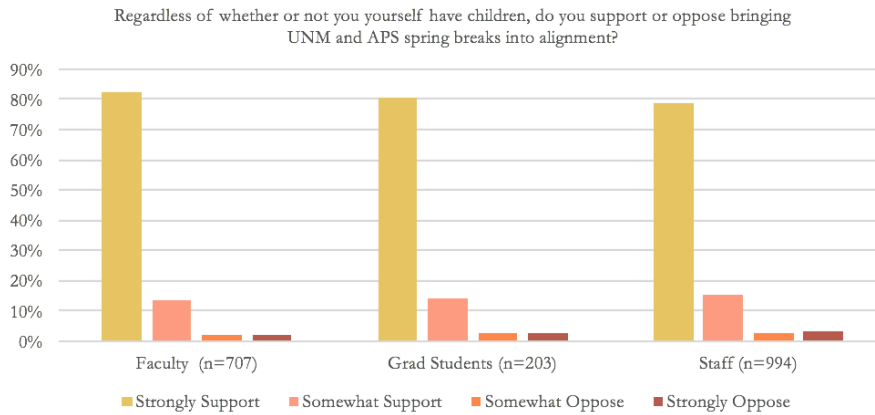
Graduate students received an email through the graduate student list-serve on August 15, 2017.

Findings

In general, there is widespread support for aligning UNM and APS spring breaks. We asked respondents "Regardless of whether or not you yourself have children, do you support or oppose bringing UNM and APS spring breaks into alignment?" Respondents could choose *Strongly Support*,

Somewhat Support, Somewhat Oppose, or Strongly Oppose. Figure 1 presents the levels of support and opposition to aligning UNM and APS spring breaks.

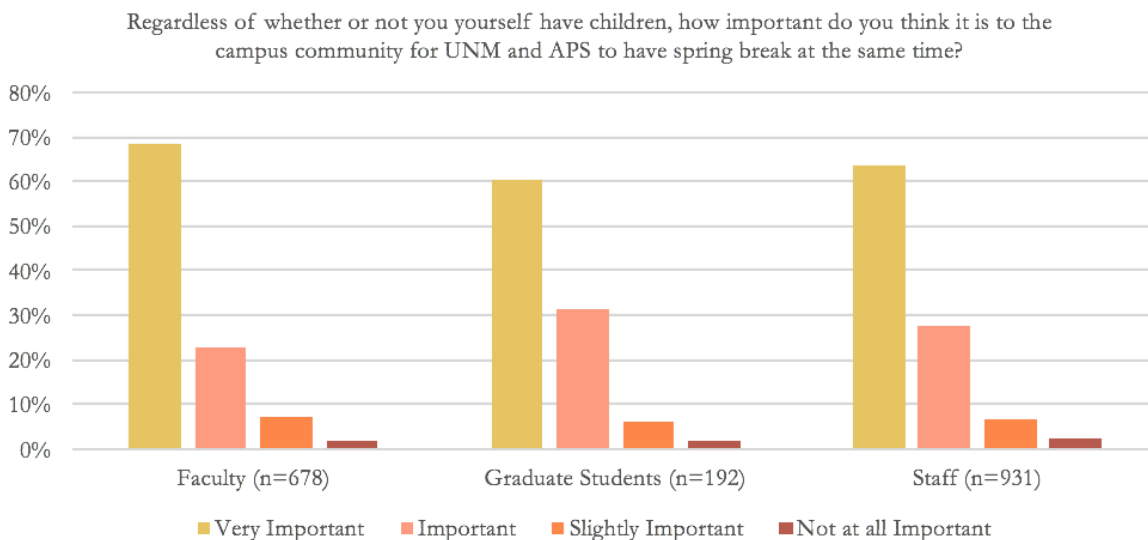
Figure 1: Support for APS/Spring Break Alignment by Constituent Group



The vast majority of faculty, graduate students, and staff strongly support spring break alignment. The highest level of strong support comes from faculty with 82% strongly supporting alignment and the lowest comes from staff with 79% expressing strong support. Another 14% of faculty and graduate students somewhat support alignment along with 15% of staff. Only 4% of faculty, 5% of graduate students, and 6% of staff do not support alignment.

Because individuals may support an issue without prioritizing it, we were interested in gauging how important the issue of alignment is to supporters. We asked respondents who had reported that they strongly or somewhat support alignment “Regardless of whether or not you yourself have children, how important do you think it is to the campus community for UNM and APS to have spring break at the same time?” Figure 2 displays attitudes about the importance of alignment among different constituency groups.

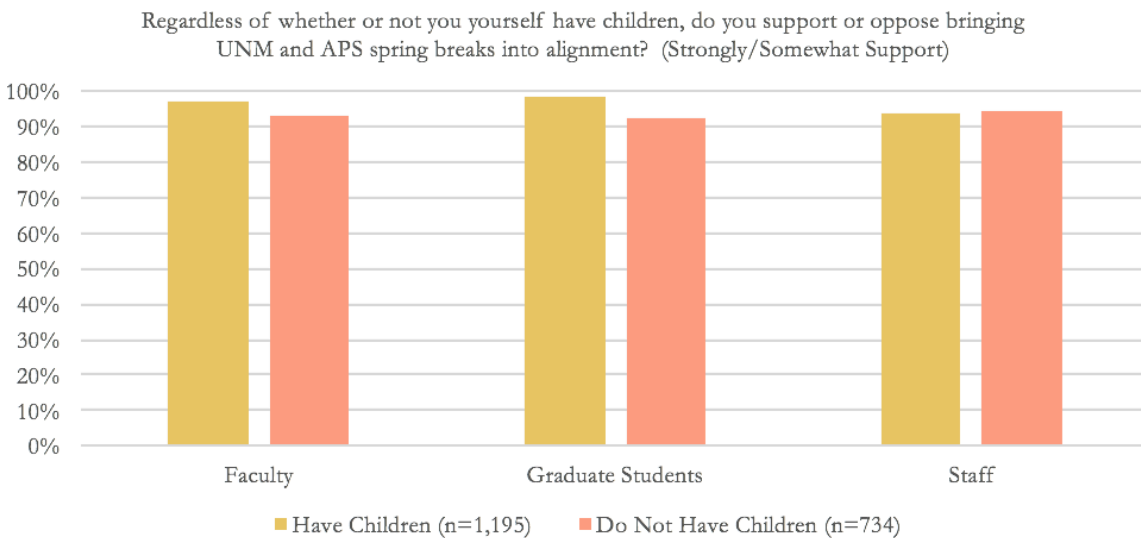
Figure 2: Importance of Spring Break Alignment by Constituent Group



Generally, most supporters of spring break alignment also think the issue is important. Over 90% of respondents in all groups who support spring break alignment see the issue as either very important or important while nearly two-thirds of each group reports that aligning UNM and APS spring breaks is *very* important (68% of faculty, 60% of graduate students, and 63% of staff).

We were additionally interested in whether support for alignment varied with respondent characteristics. We collected information on whether respondents have children; whether the respondent's primary appointment is on main campus, HSC, or a branch campus; and among faculty, what type of faculty appointment they have. Figure 3 illustrates the difference in support for alignment among faculty, graduate students, and staff with and without children. For ease of analysis, we have combined the strongly and somewhat support categories and the strongly and somewhat oppose categories into support and oppose respectively.

Figure 3: Support (Strongly/Somewhat) for Alignment by Whether the Respondent Has Children

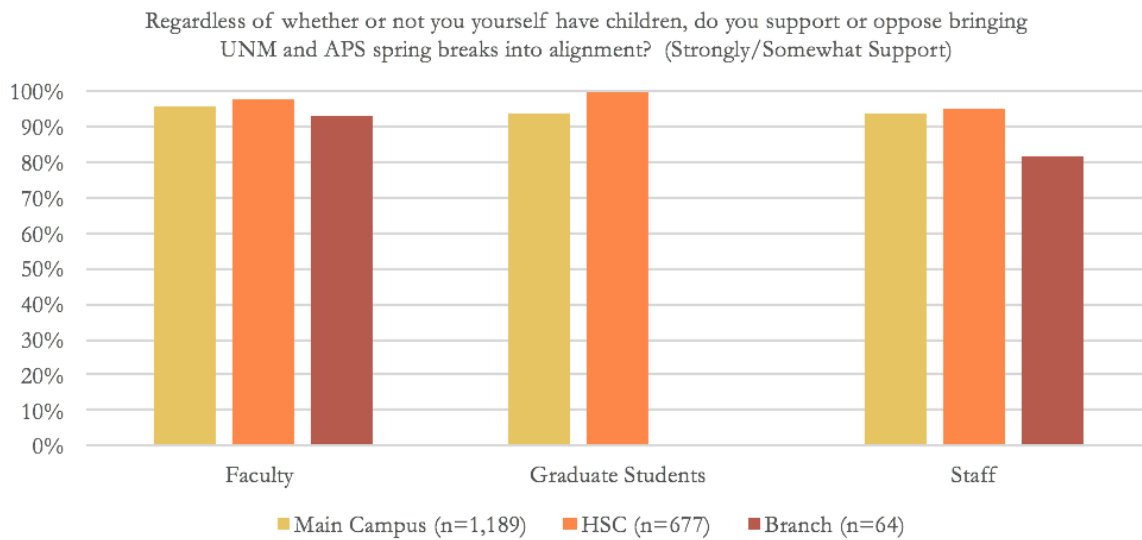


We expected that respondents who are parents would have a higher level of support for spring break alignment than respondents who are not parents. Generally, we found that this is the case. However, the differences are relatively small and only in the case of faculty statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Among faculty and graduate students, individuals with children are more likely to support alignment than individuals without children, though support across all respondents remains high. Ninety-seven percent of faculty with children support alignment while 93% of those without children are supportive. There is a similar difference between graduate student parents and other graduate students – 99% of graduate students with children support alignment, compared with 93% of graduate students who are not parents.

In contrast, staff without children are slightly more likely (95%) than staff with children (94%) to support alignment, but the difference is not statistically significant.

Figure 4: Support (Strongly/Somewhat) for Alignment by Respondent's Primary Appointment Location



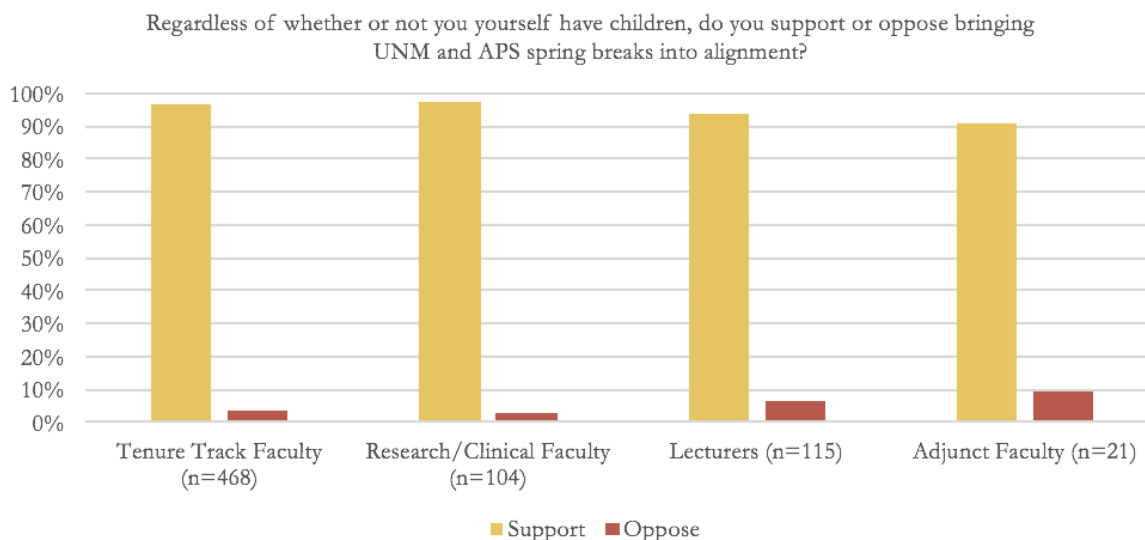
As outlined in Figure 4, respondents also differ slightly in levels of support by the location of their primary appointment. We received responses from individuals from main campus, the health sciences center (HSC), and a few responses from branch campuses (no graduate students attend branch campuses so there are no graduate student responses from that appointment location).

All respondents with appointments at HSC have marginally higher levels of support than respondents in all groups with appointments at main or branch campuses. Ninety-eight percent of faculty with appointments at HSC support alignment compared with 96% of faculty with appointments on main campus and 93% of faculty with branch campus appointments. All of the graduate student respondents from HSC support alignment, while 94% of main campus graduate students report support.

The only group with statistically significant differences in support by appointment location is staff. This difference is driven by a lower level of support from branch campus staff. Only 82% of branch campus staff support alignment compared with 95% of HSC and 94% of main campus staff. It makes some sense that support among respondents from branch campuses would be lower because they are likely to be outside of the APS school district and thus less likely to be impacted by the date of APS's spring break. Nevertheless, the vast majority of respondents from branch campuses still express support for alignment.

Finally, we take a closer look at support among faculty of different appointment types. We break faculty out by whether they are tenured/tenure track, research or clinical faculty, lecturers, or adjuncts. Figure 5 presents the results of this analysis.

Figure 5: Support and Opposition for Alignment by Faculty Appointment Type



Levels of support vary marginally with faculty appointment type. The highest levels of support are among research and clinical faculty (97% support) and tenured/tenure track faculty (97% support) with the lowest levels of support among lecturers (94% support) and adjunct faculty (90% support). Perhaps not surprisingly, adjuncts and lecturers are also less likely to have children than research and clinical faculty and faculty on the tenure track. Here again, however, the differences are not statistically significant and overall levels of support are high.

Qualitative Comments

We also solicited open-ended responses from respondents. As expected, most of the qualitative comments are supportive of spring break. In general, we saw a number of themes emerge.

First, many respondents note how widespread the effects of alignment can be across campus and throughout the community.

On a campus where not only faculty and staff but students have children enrolled in APS, it is only common sense, but it is also saves all parents and even grandparents from having to figure out ways to attend classes while their children are on break. Coordinating the breaks also enables parents to plan activities and trips with their children that can have long-lasting benefits educationally and recreationally.

this would be a HUGE step forward for families at UNM, and I suspect for many in APS

It is immensely important for families, friends, and community members to share the opportunities associated with spring break. Aligning the breaks will allow students to spend time with their children or dependents, as well as work throughout the break.

Faculty respondents also are likely to note how alignment can positively impact their students.

I'm not sure if students can respond to this survey, so on their behalf: please do this! I have attendance policies in my classes; every semester the difference between UNM's and APS's spring break means that several of my students either have to skip class or their children with them. I always recommend that they choose the latter option, but that's hard on the kids, their parents, the other students, and me (as instructor).

Matching breaks would reduce the issues of child care not only for faculty but also for our students. We see many students trying to attend class but bringing kids with them as they have no child care for the mismatched breaks.

Some respondents who feel personally affected by spring break misalignment do not have school-aged children or children in APS.

This is so important to those of us who don't have children! It is not a "mom issue" or a "women's issue". We all have students who are parents, staff members who are parents, colleagues who are parents....

This has been a long time in coming. I hope administration seriously considers it. Personally, I live in RR as do my grandchildren, so they are on a different schedule.

You should consider all families, not just those with children. People may have siblings that they fully support that are in APS and thus the alignment would likely save them extra childcare costs, or allow for necessary family time.

The APS & UNM breaks taking place at the same time would also benefit UNM employees that are grandparents, aunts/uncles, anyone involved with young family members

Many respondents characterized a decision to align spring breaks as a “no-brainer”.

I don't have children, but many of my colleagues do and this just seems to me to be a no brainer on behalf of the two organizations!

This seems like a "no-brainer". Not sure why you need a survey to confirm that it's a good idea

Many students have children and securing childcare for their children when our breaks are not aligned can be difficult to impossible. If we are going to truly serve our nontraditional students, aligning breaks seems like a no brainer.

UNM and APS spring breaks need to align. This is a no brainer. Please make this happen ASAP

Some faculty and staff respondents noted that aligning breaks would be a low-cost way to improve their quality of life in difficult budget times.

I think it is helpful for parents; was not an issue for me when my children were younger; but a perk for some staff when no pay raises in recent years, this helps reduce their need to hire babysitters if they cannot vacation with their children

I think that in this era of doing more with less, and not paying raises for many years, the least the University can do is align Spring Break. It is a free option and makes a huge difference for families. Please do it. Aligning the Spring Break schedules for APS and UNM could increase tourism spending within the state, because it would enable families to take short trips to NM locations, it could also cut down on childcare costs for UNM employees, which is significant when employees have not had raises in several years.

Great idea we need new work life balance initiatives to help with the strain of more work and more budget cuts and wage and hire freezes support this 100%

Additionally, respondents across groups expressed gratitude that this issue is being considered.

Thank you for listening and trying to help with this important equity issue that affects women faculty disproportionately!

Thank you for even considering the needs of parent-students and our kids. I really appreciate it.

The alignment of our Spring Breaks would be such a big deal for our family. Thank you.

The biggest theme that emerges from respondents' comments opposing alignment is the concern that UNM's spring break with not fall directly in the middle of the semester.

It is nice to rely on the consistency of UNM's Spring Break always happening 8 weeks into the semester. APS constantly changes theirs to the extreme of one year happening the 2nd to last week in April, which would be 2 weeks before UNM finals. If anything, APS should consider following UNM's pattern of hosting spring break directly in the middle of the term. In addition, having a constantly fluctuating Spring Break will make planning for things like mid-terms and projects much more difficult.

UNM cannot move spring break away from the midpoint of the semester and maintain the current option of 8 week sessions. I would support altering our semester dates to align the middle of our 16 week semester with APS spring break as long as our classes did not start before 15 January.

Other respondents reported that they would support alignment if APS moved their break to coincide with UNM's rather than moving UNM's break to align with the APS break.

I believe it may be better for APS to align to UNM than the other way around. It is best for UNM to align with other universities as business purposes require this. APS should look to UNM rather than the other way around.

Let's not be driven by the insanity that reigns at APS. Tail wagging the dog.

Some staff respondents noted that alignment would not help them since they do not have time off during UNM's spring break.

Spring Break is for students, not staff. They need a break after mid-terms and moving Spring Break back to meet the needs of APS parents who happen to be staff will have adverse effects on our student population. Besides, it's not like we get the week off; you can take your annual leave whenever you'd like.

Staff doesn't have Spring Break off anyway; why does it matter?

Conclusions

The vast majority of faculty, graduate students, and staff support aligning UNM and APS spring breaks. Across all groups, across parents and individuals without children, across appointment location and type, there is strong support for alignment. Even at the lowest level of support – among staff at branch campuses – more than four-fifths of respondents are supportive.

Not only is there broad support for aligning spring breaks, but members of the UNM community see alignment as an important issue.

While a small minority opposes bringing the breaks into alignment, their concerns are generally relegated to the following issues: not having spring break exactly in the middle of the semester, hesitation in working with APS, and not feeling personally affected by alignment.

Given the comments of individuals opposed to spring break alignment, especially those that are concerned about UNM moving its break to align with APS, it is important to note that recently the Public Education Department has announced that they are moving PARCC testing later in the year. This presents us with a unique opportunity to work with APS to bring their spring break close to the middle of UNM's spring semester and address some of the issues the small minority of faculty, graduate students, and staff have with alignment.

Based on the high levels of support among these campus constituencies and APS' new flexibility in calendaring its spring break, it seems like a good time for the UNM administration to move forward in determining the feasibility of aligning UNM and APS spring breaks.

This report has been prepared by ADVANCE at UNM for use at the University of New Mexico. Please contact Brittany Ortiz (bbolt@unm.edu) with questions. Email advance@unm.edu for permission to further distribute the document or its contents.

Appendix A – Survey Instrument

Currently, UNM and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) spring breaks occur during different weeks. This means that the majority of parents do not have a break that aligns with their children’s break. Aligning the breaks is a no-cost effort that could broadly help many parents on campus.

Q1. Regardless of whether or not you yourself have children, do you support or oppose bringing UNM and APS spring breaks into alignment?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Q2. Regardless of whether or not you yourself have children, how important do you think it is to the campus community for UNM and APS to have spring break at the same time? (Among those who chose Strongly support or Somewhat support in Q1.)

- Extremely important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Q3. What is your primary role at UNM?

- Staff
- Faculty
- Graduate Student
- Other (please specify) _____

Q4. Where is your primary appointment?

- Main Campus
- HSC
- Branch Campus

Q5. Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

Q6. How many children do you have? (Among those who responded yes to Q5.)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Q7. In which age range(s) are/is your child(ren)? (please select all that apply) (Among those who responded yes to Q5.)

- 0-3

- 4-7
- 8-12
- 13-18
- over 18

Q8. If UNM offered a camp for kids on main campus during the week of APS's spring break at a cost of approximately \$150 for the week, how interested would you be in enrolling your child(ren)? (Among those who responded yes to Q5. and 8-12 in Q7.)

- Very interested
- Interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not interested at all

Q9. If you have any additional comments, please include them here.