

February 14, 2010

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[Haverford Plenary Resolution: Explore the Possibility of an Optional January Term](#)

By Andrew Thompson

Presented by James Merriam '11

This resolution was presented to request that all parts of the College look into the possibility of creating an optional January term. The purpose of such a term would be to give students the opportunity to explore other academic areas than they could in a normal semester. The resolution also mentioned that such a term should be “financially expedient,” given the current economic climate.

“Virtually all of our peer institutions have this,” said James Merriam '11 in the presentation. “This is a very Haverford thing to have, a time to have a low pressure environment.” Merriam also stressed that the resolution was merely a way to express student interest, and did not propose a specific course of action.

Robert Mathis '10 asked the single question in the question and answer session, “Would the faculty teach this, or would we have regular students like Ex-Co? And how much would this cost?” asked Mathis.

Merriam responded that it would be a mix of faculty- and student-taught classes. In response to cost, Merriam added, “We keep dorms open for athletes anyway, and this would be done in a financially expedient way.”

The Pro-Con debate generated three pro comments, and one con comment.

Sarina Schwartz '11 spoke in favor of the resolution, saying “Haverford is having a lot of financial problems, but we shouldn't stop thinking about the future.”

Rachel Cholst '11 said that Haverford's intellectual atmosphere attracts students, the pressure during the normal semester stifles it somewhat.

Asher Reisman '10 said, “it's a wonderful way to expand our options.”

On the Con side, Cody Oakley '10 said, “I am sick and tired of weakly worded plenary resolutions that waste my time. I would love to see this next fall after someone [has done research]. Then I would vote for it.”

Merriam's responded to the pro-con debate by saying, “Emerson was reasonably open to this idea, and thought it was something we could look into.”

The resolution failed by paper ballot.

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