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Semester System or Quarter System

An annotated Bibliography

Brenda Ashford, *Academic Calendars – Encyclopedia of Education.* New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003 Print.

In his book *Academic Calendars – Encyclopedia of Education,* Brenda Ashford talks about the history and the origin of the early semester system, the progress of the development and the change on the two systems, what are the two systems like nowadays and the current percentage use in the American universities. To begin with a major paper, it’s always appropriate to start with something which tells the audience the background of this controversy, whether the necessity and stakes to argue, and then leads to the main claim. The part of the history mentioned in this book can be cited in the intro paragraph to depict the origin of the two systems. Then, analyzing the basic description about the two systems and give the audience an idea what the two systems are and the difference between them. Even though lots of citizens have been to schools with semester system and they definitely know what it is, not all of them are familiar with the quarter system because there is only very small percentage of universities choose to use the quarter system. Brenda Ashford has mentioned the exact percentage in his book. This is also something can be cited in order to give the audience an idea about the facts and the data. University of California Los Angeles campus, Berkeley campus, Santa Barbara campus and the university of Washington Seattle campus are the most famous universities using the quarter system.

Dan Rosenthal, *Transition to Semesters: Effects on Enrollment and FTE Students*. Annual forum paper 2000 published.

The paper *Transition to Semesters: Effects on Enrollment and FTE Students* is about the comparison the author made in three different states (Alabama, Georgia and Utah) after the colleges change the quarter systems to the semester systems. Dan Rosenthal mentioned the reasons that the three states chose to make the transition and he also described how the enrollment changed. The enrollments in all those three states have declined and he analyzed the reasons caused the situation. I use this source in my major paper for the need of some real examples. It is important to have some examples proving the claim made in the paper. Only one example is definitely not enough because there might be some other reasons lead to the result. But if the experiments are made at the same time but different places and they have the same result, it’s very helpful to prove the point made in the paper. I’m only arguing the impacts on the universities but not the high schools, so this source is better than the ones discussing about the academic calendars in lower level education systems. This is one of the reasons I choose this source. Also, it mentions the advantages and disadvantages of the transition from one system to the other. But the author doesn’t have a very clear idea whether the enrolment decline is because the students haven’t get used to the adjustment or they really prefer quarter system to semester system. This can be argued in my paper.

Mitch Smith, *Strength in Numbers*, news, Inside Higher Ed, February 7, 2012.

In the news *Strength in Numbers* published on Feb 7, 2012, Mitch Smith reported the change of the academic terms in Otterbein University. It explains the why the university makes the decision. Mitch Smith focused on the impacts on the vacations and holidays after the decision becomes effective. The most significant adjustment is that the Christmas breaks starts before Thanksgiving and students don’t have to go back to school until after the New Year. Most of the students like the new policy a lot and this leads to the result that the transition becomes so smooth. This is also the most interesting part for the different reactions students have comparing to what is mentioned in the last source. This reason can be the different ideology people have they value different things. The universities mentioned in the last source are all public universities while this one is private. This can also be the difference of the states. This point can leads a new topic in my essay to argue that neither the semester system nor the quarter system is better, the better choice should be made after analysis of the university students preference and characteristics. The news has also mentioned the most important reason for the university to make the change is to be the same with most universities in the world in order to increase the study abroad oppotunites. This will also be a topic in my paper – is it better to have the same academic term with the majority universities or it doesn’t make a big different?

Mengsu,

Well done! These sources fit in perfectly with the direction of your argument, both to provide some real-world evidence and to frame the question for the reader. Make sure that your claim is complex enough, and also strong enough (the idea that individual universities should choose is good, but it might not be so strong- it seems a little obvious). You can also consider the issue from different perspectives. What about International Students? Which system is better for them, and given the increasing International population at American universities, is that a compelling reason to adopt one over the other? Overall, great start and I look forward to reading your paper!