



Semester Conversion Survey (0203-3)

During the Winter Quarter, 2003, NUPULSE surveyed 760 full-time undergraduates to determine their attitudes and opinions about the September 2003, conversion from a quarter calendar to a semester calendar.

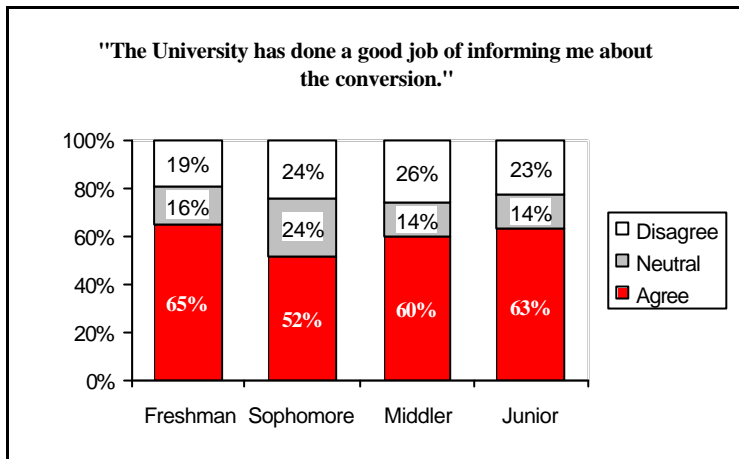
Executive Summary:

* A majority of students believe that the calendar change will be good for both students and faculty. However, there are large differences in the responses by class year with freshmen being far more positive about the change than upperclass students. * The greatest concern students have is being able to graduate on time. * On the other hand, more than three out of every ten respondents in each class year are considering taking extra courses so they can graduate earlier. * In general, students are more likely to have consulted with their academic and co-op advisors than with a financial advisor.

<u>College</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Enrollment Origin</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Arts & Sciences	343	45 %	Started as freshman	610	80 %
Bouvé Health Sciences	79	10	Transferred in	150	20
Business Administration	149	20		<u>760</u>	<u>100 %</u>
Computer & Info. Science	31	4			
Criminal Justice	63	8	<u>Gender</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Engineering	79	10	Male	319	42 %
Engineering Technology	11	1	Female	441	58
Other	5	1		<u>760</u>	<u>100 %</u>
	<u>760</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>Final Disposition of Sample</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Class Year</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	Completed interviews	760	16 %
Freshman	184	24 %	Contacted but refused	268	6
Sophomore	169	22	Unable to contact	401	9
Middler	164	22	Phone number unavailable	<u>3248</u>	<u>69</u>
Junior	<u>243</u>	<u>32</u>		4677	100 %
	<u>760</u>	<u>100</u>			

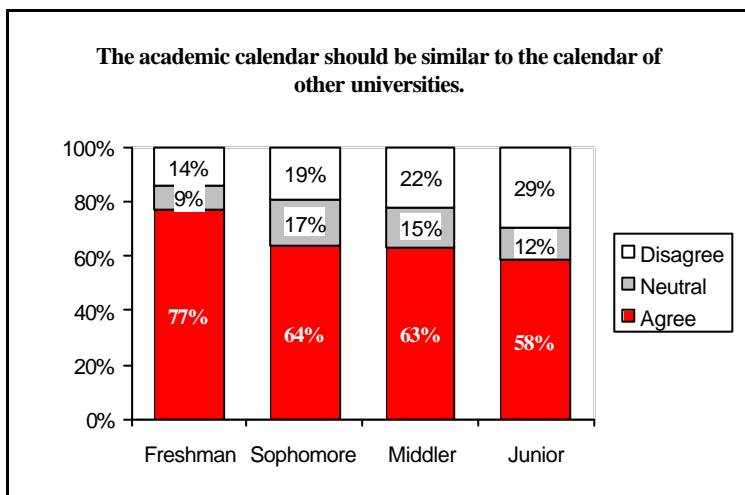
General Attitudes Regarding Semester Conversion

Sample members were given a series of statements about various aspects of the semester conversion. They were then asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a five point scale which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.



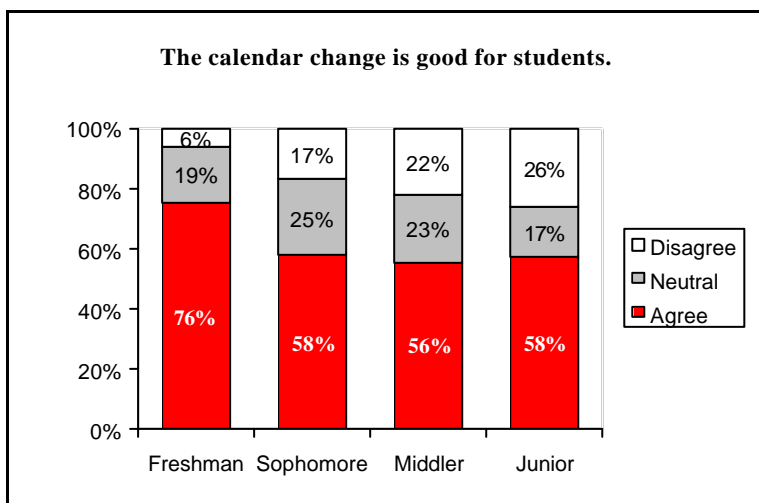
- ◆ *"I think the University has done a good job in terms of informing me about the conversion to a semester calendar."*

A majority of students surveyed think the University has done a good job of informing them about the semester conversion.



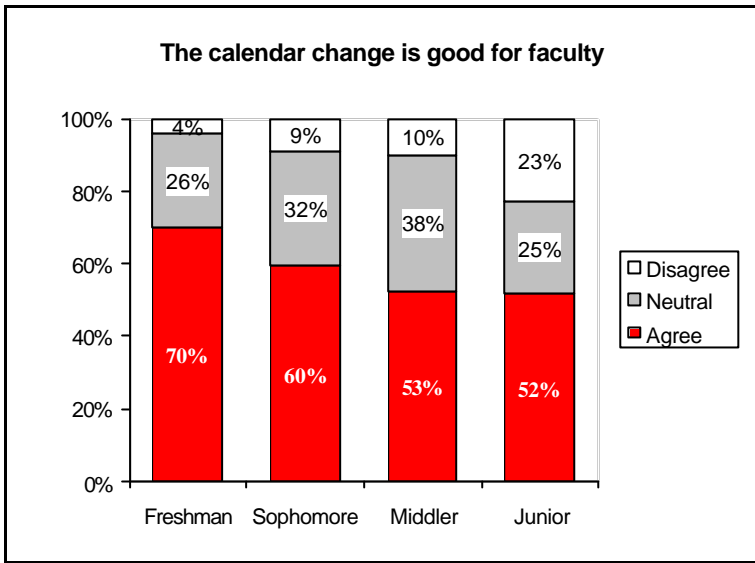
- ◆ *"I think it is important that NU's academic calendar is similar to the academic calendar of most other universities."*

The majority of students in all years agree that NU's academic calendar should be similar to other universities. However, the longer a student has been at NU, the less likely they are to have this opinion.



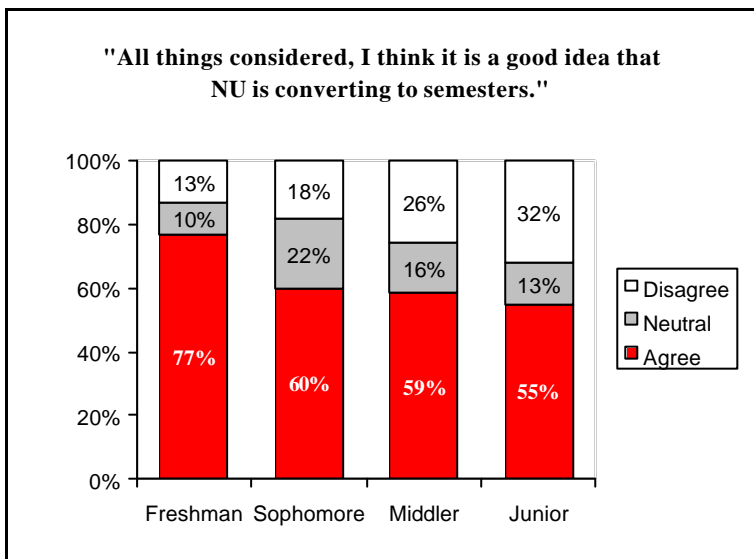
- ◆ *"Overall, I think the change to a semester calendar will be good for students."*

Slightly more than 75% of the freshmen in the survey agree that the calendar change is good for students. However, this percentage declines substantially for all upperclass students.



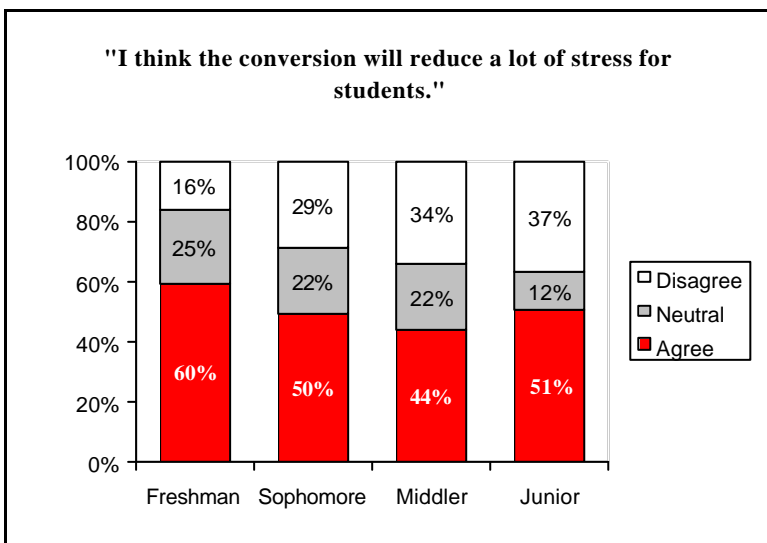
◆ *“Overall, I think the change to a semester calendar will be good for the faculty.”*

A similar result was obtained when students were asked whether they believed that the calendar conversion would be good for faculty.



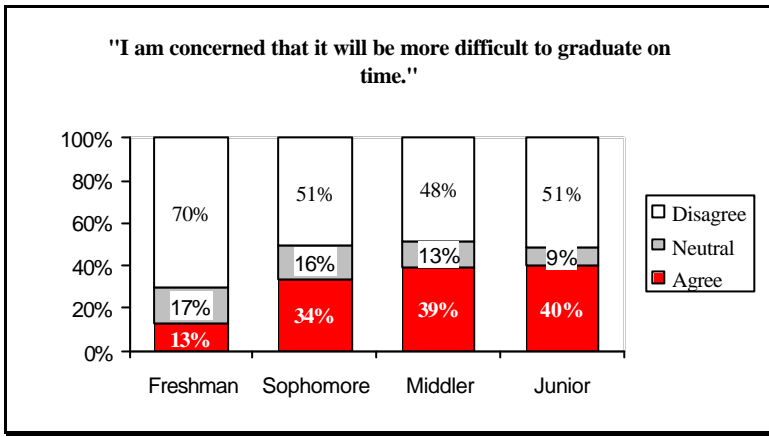
◆ *“All things considered, I think it is a good idea that Northeastern has decided to convert to a semester calendar.”*

Over half the students in each year agreed that it is a good idea to convert to a semester calendar. However, upperclass students were less likely to hold this position.



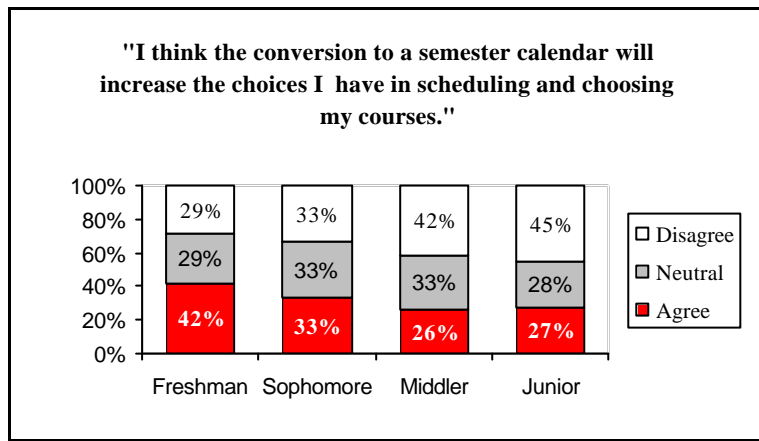
◆ *“I think the conversion to a semester calendar will reduce a lot of stress for students.”*

Upperclass students, especially middlers, are less likely than freshmen to agree that the conversion to a semester calendar will reduce a lot of stress for them.



◆ *"I am concerned that the conversion to a semester calendar will make it more difficult for me to graduate on time."*

Approximately half of the upperclassmen and 70% of the freshmen do not think it will be more difficult to graduate on time under the semester calendar.



◆ *"I think the conversion to a semester calendar will increase the choices that I am going to have in scheduling and choosing my courses."*

Approximately 25% of the middlers and juniors believe the semester calendar will increase their choices in scheduling and choosing courses. This percentage increases among sophomores (33%) and freshmen (42%).

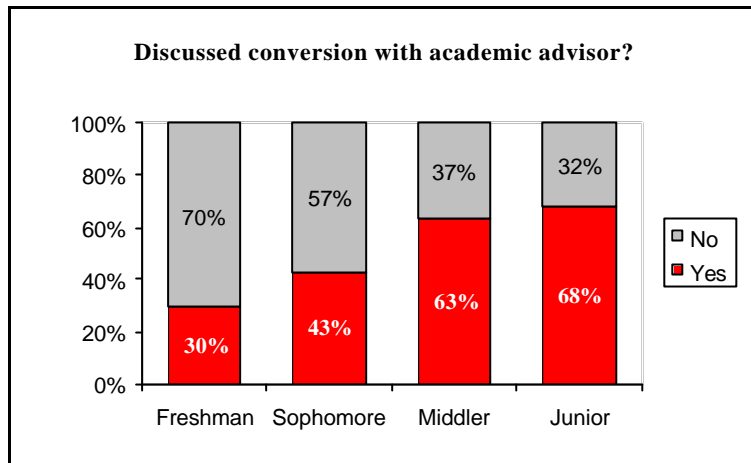
Sources of Information About the Conversion and Their Usefulness to Students

Students were asked about their use of a number of possible sources of information concerning the semester conversion and which of these sources were the most useful to them. As shown below, the three most widely used sources of information were (1) other students, (2) faculty and (3) staff members. Unfortunately, the source found to be most useful, the college/dorm meetings, was also one of the least widely used sources of information.

Source	Used Source				Source Was Very Useful			
	<u>Fresh.</u>	<u>Soph.</u>	<u>Mid.</u>	<u>Jr.</u>	<u>Fresh.</u>	<u>Soph.</u>	<u>Mid.</u>	<u>Jr.</u>
Other students	40	60	51	42	27	20	15	27
Faculty members	38	38	49	49	53	50	40	47
Staff members at Northeastern	32	37	47	37	52	40	34	48
Personal letters or mailings	40	42	39	41	32	25	28	30
Semester Conversion Website	28%	45%	38%	32%	48%	49%	37%	40%
NU News	23%	28%	29%	38%	41%	23%	15%	36%
Semester Conversion Handbook	28	39	31	31	47	33	44	34
Course Content Equivalencies Hbk.	18	28	29	19	61	45	47	49
College or dorm meetings	16	7	5	3	57	50	75	43
Semester Conversion Office	3	1	1	2	-	-	-	-

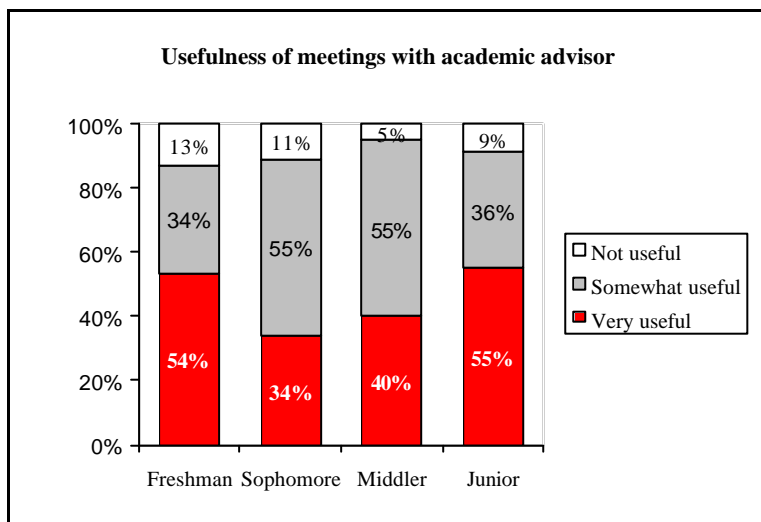
Academic Advising for Semester Conversion

Students were asked a series of questions regarding meetings that they might have had with their academic advisor to gauge where they are in the conversion process.



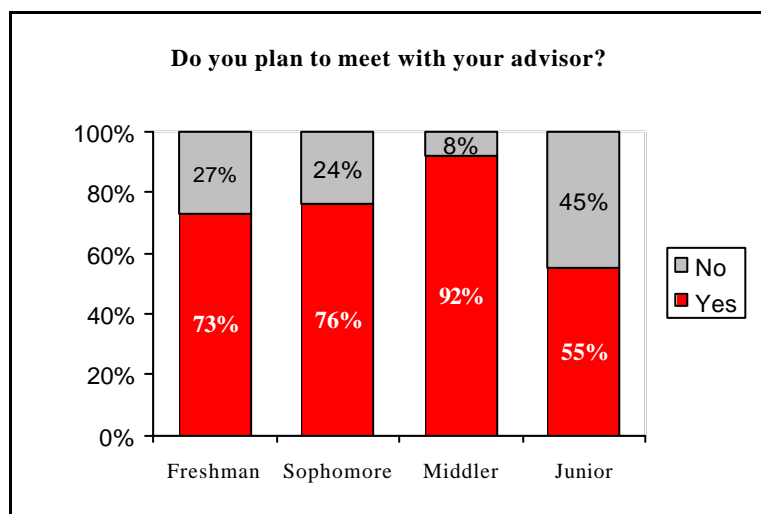
- ◆ *Have you discussed how the semester conversion will affect your academic program and studies with your academic advisor?*

Many more middlers and juniors had discussed the conversion with their academic advisors than had sophomores or freshmen.



- ◆ *“How useful have you found your meetings with your academic advisor on semester conversion to be?”*

Most of the students who have met with their academic advisor report that these meetings were either “somewhat useful” or “very useful”.

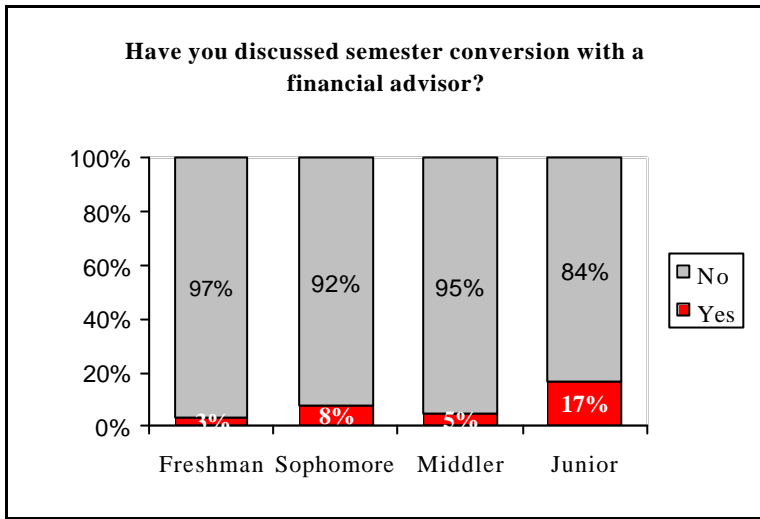


- ◆ *“If you have not met with an advisor on semester conversion, do you plan to?”*

Except for the juniors, a large majority of those students who had not already met with their advisor were planning to do so.

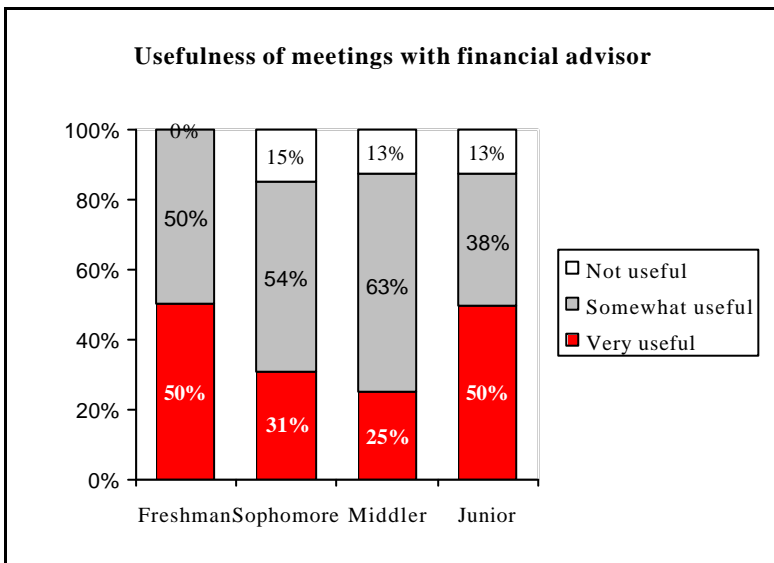
Financial Planning and Semester Conversion

Students were asked a series of questions about meeting with a financial advisor to discuss possible financial implications of the semester conversion.



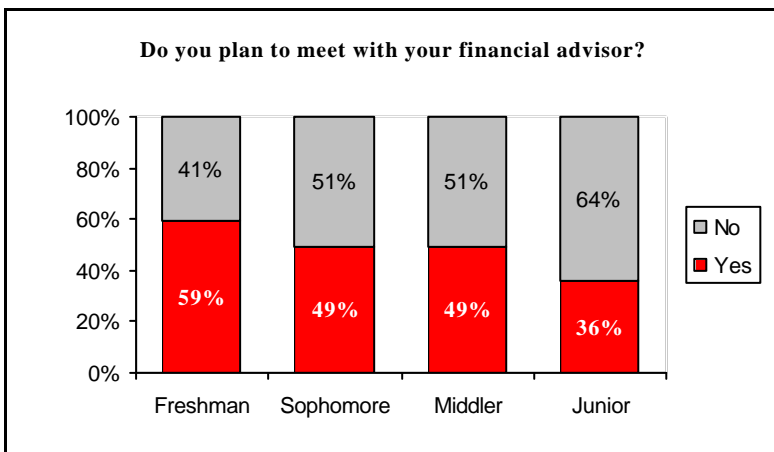
- ◆ *“Have you discussed how the semester conversion might affect any financial aid you receive or how it might affect the financing of your college education with a financial advisor here at Northeastern?”*

Not many students in any class year had discussed semester conversion implications with a financial advisor.



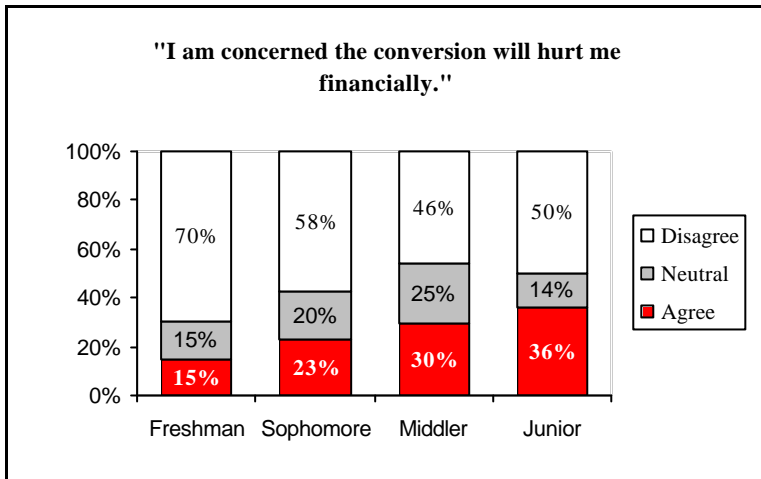
- ◆ *“How useful would you say these discussions with your financial advisor have been?”*

Of those students who had met with a financial advisor, the vast majority characterized that meeting as either “very” or “somewhat” useful to them.



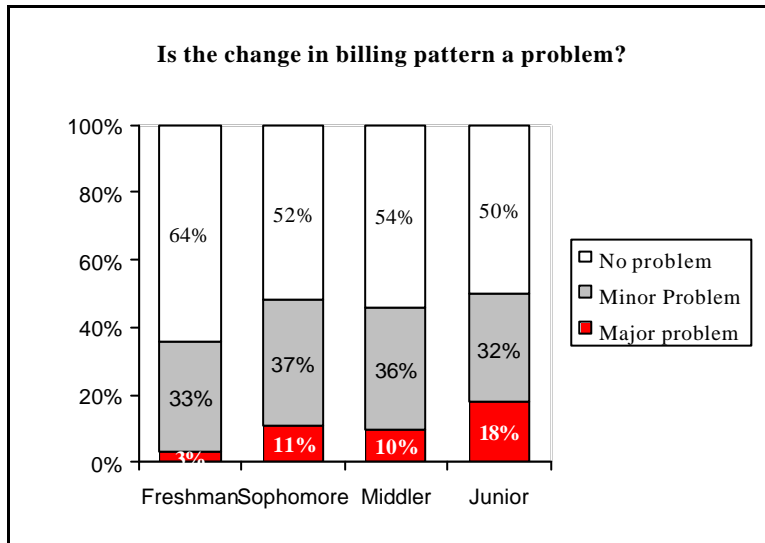
- ◆ *“If you have not met with a financial advisor, do you plan to?”*

Overall, a relatively large percentage of respondents said that they do not plan to meet with a financial advisor.



◆ *"I am concerned that the conversion to a semester calendar will hurt me financially."*

Most students do not think the conversion will hurt them financially. Those that do are more likely to be upperclassmen.

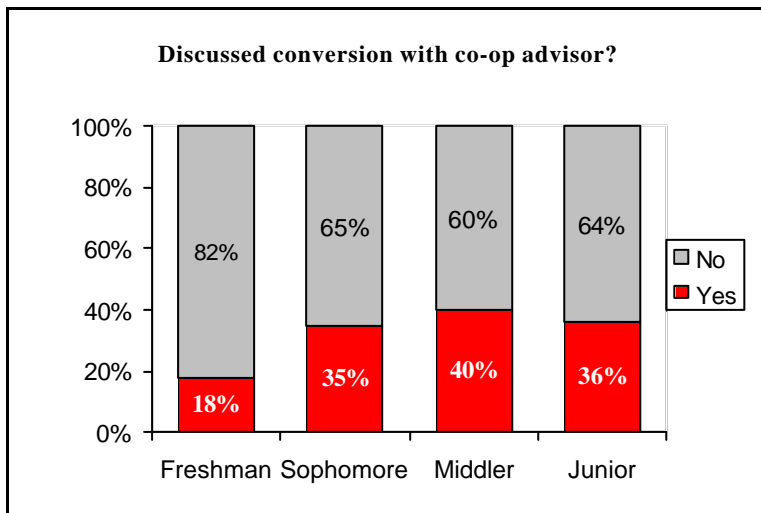


◆ *"The overall cost of your education at Northeastern will not change when the University converts to a semester calendar. However, the billing process will change since there are fewer semesters. As a result, the bills you receive will represent larger portions of the total annual cost, but will be collected less frequently. Is this change in the billing pattern a problem?"*

The change in billing pattern is not a major problem to most students.

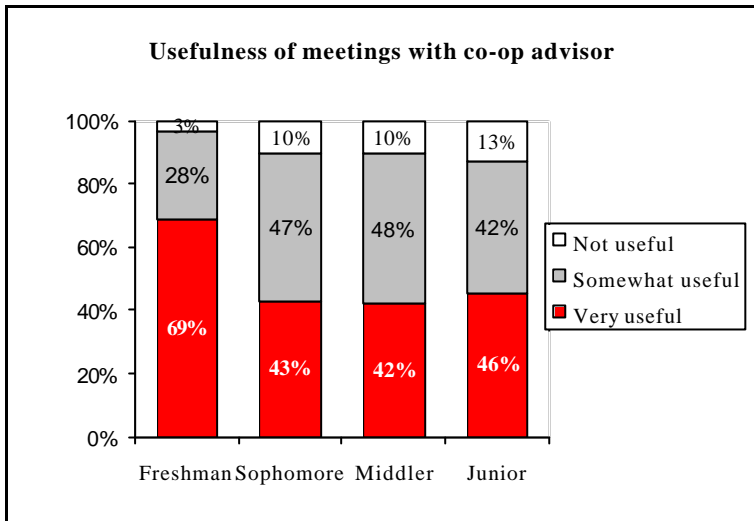
Cooperative Education and Semester Conversion

Students were asked many questions about co-op and many different aspects of their experience.



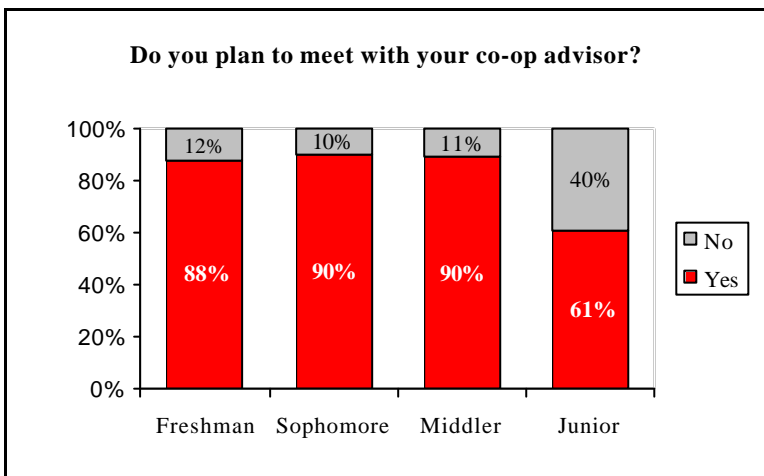
◆ *"Have you discussed how the semester conversion might affect co-op with your co-op advisor?"*

Only about a third of upperclassmen had consulted with their co-op advisor about how the conversion was going to affect them. Fewer freshmen have done so.



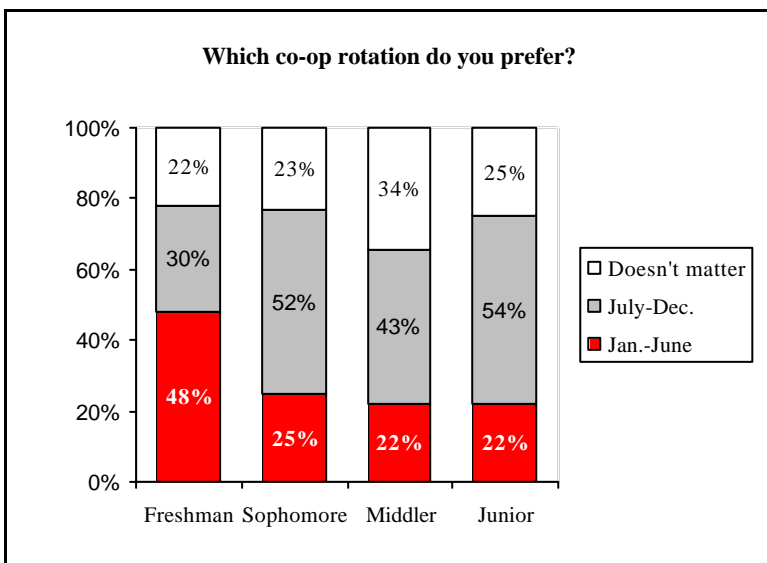
◆ “How useful would you say these discussions with your co-op advisor have been?”

Respondents indicated that meeting with their co-op advisor had been "somewhat" or "very" useful.



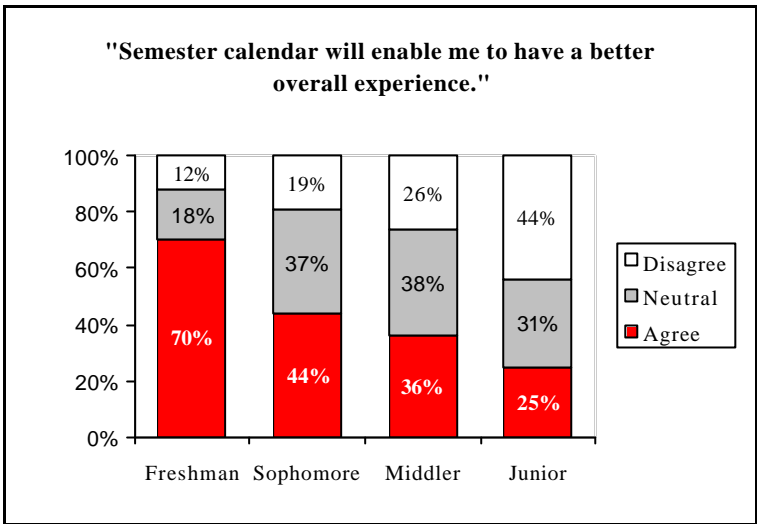
◆ “If you have not met with a co-op advisor, do you plan to?”

Most students who had not already met with their co-op advisor plan to do so.



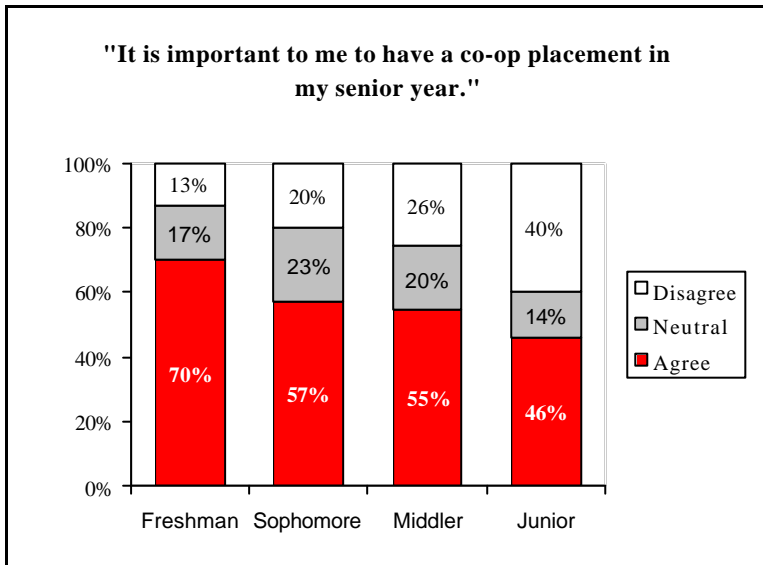
◆ “Under the semester plan, co-op students will have three six-month co-ops. They will either have all of these co-ops from January to June or from July to December. Which time period do you prefer?”

Upperclassmen prefer the July to December semester for doing their co-op. This is not the case for freshmen as they have a clear preference for the January to June period.



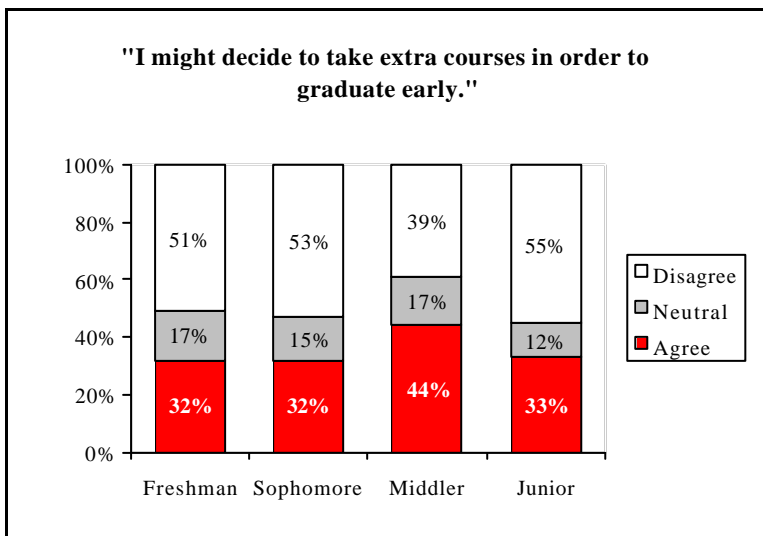
◆ *"I think the semester calendar will enable me to have a better overall co-op experience."*

Upperclassmen are far less likely to agree that the semester calendar will enable them to have a better co-op experience.



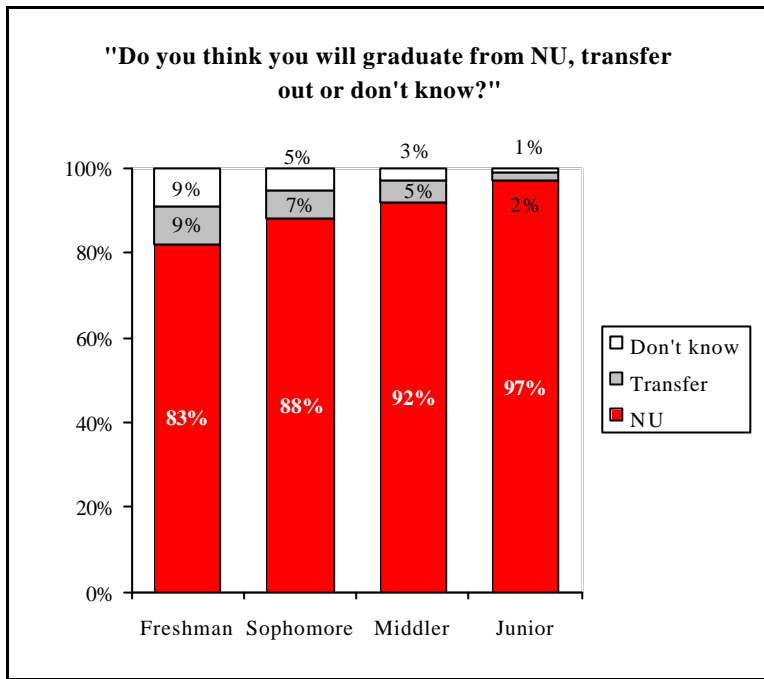
◆ *"It is important to me to have a co-op placement in my senior year."*

Approximately half of the upperclassmen say it is important to them to have a co-op placement in their senior year. However, seven out of ten freshmen say it is important to them.



◆ *"I might decide to take extra courses either at NU or at another university in order to graduate early."*

More than three out of every ten respondents in each class year are contemplating taking a course overload in order to graduate early.



- ◆ *“Do you think you will likely graduate from Northeastern or do you think it is more likely you might transfer to another university to obtain your degree or don't you know?”*

The overwhelming percentage of students said that they plan on graduating from Northeastern.

Student Concerns

Students were asked *“What is your single greatest concern about switching to the semester calendar?”*. The most important concern for the students was graduating on time. In addition, many of their other concerns related to graduating on time. A sample of verbatim student comments follows.

Graduating on time

- “Not being able to graduate and complete all the courses needed.”
- “How is this system going to work, and will this delay my graduation date?”
- “Not graduating on time and not being able to do study abroad.”
- “It is really going to hinder students from graduating on time.”

Courses

- “Having enough time to get all required classes.”
- “Not enough class sections and choices.”
- “Quarter allows us to take a wide range of classes, semester doesn't.”
- “Having to retake classes”
- “Have I wasted my time taking the classes I have taken so far?”
- “Increased workload for students.”
- “Since the classes go for a long time, the scheduling will be inconvenient.”

Credit conversion concerns

- “Losing credits and pushing back graduation.”
- “Concerned about how credits already gained will not count on the semester calendar.”
- “Getting credits figured out.”
- “Making sure all my credits carry over.”

Requirements for Graduation

- “Keeping track of program requirements.”
- “Not going to be able to finish minor since I only have time left to fulfill major requirements.”
- “No electives now.”

Financial concerns

- “Losing money due to losing credits”
- “Paying money on time to graduate on time.”
- “Paying for the upcoming fall semester.”

Co-op concerns

- “Co-op scheduling, new dates and deadlines”
- “Co-op will be messed up if students don’t find a job, 6 months to do nothing.”
- “It’s taking the focus off co-op.”
- “The loss of co-op experience time.”
- “Getting people back on schedule, what happens when people don’t get jobs for co-op?”

University Actions Needed to Help Students With the Conversion

Students were asked about the one thing the University could do to help them with the semester conversion. Their responses fell into three main categories:

1. Make information more available.

Responses included: putting flyers around campus; having someone come into classes to speak; holding seminars and mandatory meetings.

2. Advisors need to be more accessible.

Responses included: having more advisors available; having specially trained staff to counsel students; having advisors provide more time and being proactive.

3. Administrators and faculty need to be more informed.

Responses included: having advisors and faculty more knowledgeable about the conversion to eliminate misinformation; disseminating clear and consistent information throughout the university.