During three meetings in the Fall 2022 semester, the Project 2024 working group on Flexibility of Formats discussed a series of proposed changes to the structure of the Block Plan, the academic calendar, and other structural aspects of CC’s academic instruction. We focused our discussion on the ideas that emerged most consistently during the cross-campus Project 2024 discussions held during the 2021-22 AY (see Appendix 1). Our intention was to consider ways in which the campus might reintroduce some of the flexibility offered by the initial version of the block plan, under which faculty taught courses of varying lengths, meeting at diverse times. In recent years, the format of each block has become more sedimented: 3 hour classes, for 3½ weeks, meeting from 9-12 am.

During our meetings, we sought to draw on two core ideas that emerged from the various proposals from the first year of Project 2024 meetings. These aim to maximize the potential of the block plan in order to

1. bolster the sense of community and connection across the campus, including among faculty, staff, and students;
2. make the block plan more sustainable, from the perspective of mental health, engagement, and energy.

After three meetings, and a fourth talk-back session with faculty at the Block 3 faculty meeting, our working group came up with two alternative proposals to advance:

1. Maintain the current academic schedule as is.
2. Reimagine the academic calendar as a series of 2-block pairs, with diverse structures available for instruction within each two-block pair.

The working group’s preference tilted toward the second of these options, with a revised academic calendar that would move the fall break (currently held between Blocks 3 and 4) so that it would fall between Blocks 2 and 3. This would create the following academic calendar, which would create a pause after every two blocks, alleviating some of the exhaustion that seems to suffuse campus during Block 3:

- Blocks 1 + 2
Within each of these two-block pairs, a diverse series of instructional formats would be available to faculty and departments:

- Single-block courses
- Paired single-block courses (linked by theme; content; or curriculum; etc.)
- Build Your Own Block (two linked courses, stretched across the two blocks; modeled on the Psychology Department’s BYOB curriculum: [https://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/dept/psychology/courses/BYOBoverview2022.pdf](https://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/dept/psychology/courses/BYOBoverview2022.pdf))
- Individual course stretched across two blocks (1 OR 1.5 credits)
  - This course could be paired with an experiential learning credit (internship; practicum; etc.)
- 2-unit, 2-block class

In addition, we envision a reimagining of the general education curriculum, to create greater flexibility in the spirit of these revisions. This revised general education would be sequenced by standing at the college as follows:

- First year: a 2-block FYP in Blocks 1 + 2;
- Middle (ideally sophomore or junior year): a 2-block pair of linked courses, with two faculty members from different disciplines (or perhaps different divisions) with at least one of the pair falling outside of the student’s major;
- Senior year: a non-major capstone experience in Block 8, intended to create engagement across disciplines and divisions.

We imagine that many of the two-block pairings would be built by and between departments, including interdisciplinary collaboration for the middle of the above sequence; the 2-block FYP would be under the auspices of the college.

As mentioned above, this proposal stems from a desire to maximize the potential of the Block Plan and to return to its early emphasis on flexibility. Our proposal aims to balance flexibility and structure, creating space for diverse experiences and instructional formats, while retaining some consistency of experience so as to bolster the communal project of our CC community.
Many of these components can be decoupled from the others, and so a third proposal might be to take the elements that garner the most support, while jettisoning those without support.
Appendix 1

Ideas for how to restore and maintain flexibility of formats (Rethinking the Block Plan?)

Reimagining the Block

- **Hybrid schedule (calendar designed with some blocks, some extended format)**
  - Each semester = 2 blocks, and one stretched period in which 2 classes run simultaneously
- **“Build your Block” (Psych Dept. model)**
  - Paired block “quarter system” – I.e., 2 classes of 7-8 weeks, two faculty alternating days
- **Mandatory two-block experiences**
  - Set aside blocks 1-2 and 5-6, say, for two-block experiences. The types of classes would vary: two-block courses; 2 linked one block classes with different students and faculty each block; the “build your block” formula; sets of related single and/or double block classes with students taking two; thesis/independent project blocks.
- **Expand 2-block course options**
  - 2 or 3-block extended courses
  - Thematic block clusters
  - Different options for different years? Longer blocks for first years? Different options for seniors
- **Add different two-block combos**
  - Two blocks, two over eight weeks, blocks and quarters. Faculty could keep the option of teaching one block while others could participate in the two-block format

Additional options to consider

- **Multi-Credit Courses**
  - 3,4,5-credit courses as a part of the block plan or hybrid models
- **Adding online offerings for classes**
  - Promote flexibility
- **Open up blocks at different hours of the day**
  - Limit co-curricular and extra-curricular to a set period (e.g. 3-6 p.m.)
  - Support student work-study
  - Give students a stipend?
- **Changing the Academic Calendar**
  - Get rid of block 4—3 in fall and 5 in spring
  - 7-block year with the 8th block a semester-long tutorial
    - First years only?
  - Three blocks, winter break, three blocks, spring break, two blocks. Half courses in December and A block
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- **Restore J block / Use of Summer Blocks**
  - 12 month calendar
  - 10 block year with students taking 8 and faculty teaching 5

- **Building Breaks into Blocks**
  - Lengthen block: 20 days, 3 ½ day break
  - Shorter block breaks, shorter fall or spring break
  - Adding a mandatory one-day break per block

- **Build more non-classroom days into blocks**
  - Lengthen blocks to do this

- **Enhance Use of Internships and Adjuncts**
  - Experiential learning through internship as courses or adjuncts more connected to course: increase focus on skills.

- **Synergy semesters organized around big questions**
  - Linked programs, packages with multiple courses. Run in parallel with blocks. Could require two packages instead of gen ed. Could relate better to how students learn now and how information is configured
  - A collection of classes with the same students taught over a semester with normal system along side

- **Rethink Learning Path/Curriculum**
  - What if we reversed our order—start with specialization and end with the interdisciplinary