



The Office of the Registrar

University Scheduling Initiatives

Why

As a public baccalaureate institution, we have the obligation of providing access to a higher education in hopes of providing opportunities to better one's life and become positive contributors to society. Developing class times that maximize the chance for students to develop workable schedules to make progress towards their degree as efficiently as possible is one major piece of the solution.

Things to Consider

- An institution's most expensive resources are its facilities and faculty.ⁱ Courses that are under-enrolled, for example, create underutilized instructional space, while over-enrolled classes suggest that institutions are poorly managing their course catalogs.ⁱⁱ
- In the 2012 National Student Satisfaction Survey, respondents indicated that course availability was a top concern, especially for nontraditional/neo-traditional students (e.g., over 25 years of age and those who are employed full-time)ⁱⁱⁱ
- A survey conducted by AACRAO of over 700 undergraduate colleges and universities, found that the most popular factors in the overall scheduling process included faculty availability (90.7 percent), time block popularity (76.5 percent), and courses scheduled at the same time from year to year (71.4 percent). ***Notably, the least-influential factor in scheduling for undergraduate students is "driven by data collected from student plans of study," suggesting that relatively few institutions consider student data and plans of study when making course scheduling decisions.***
- In a study using data from over 105,000 students from Clemson University, Dills and Hernandez-Julian found that students perform best on Tuesday/Thursday or Monday/Wednesday courses that meet in the afternoon. However, if institutions do offer courses that meet three times per week, students perform better in the morning.

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These empirical studies confirm that there is an association between course schedules and student outcomes.^{iv}

- Structured schedules “help working students balance jobs and school by using structured scheduling of classes to add predictability to their busy lives.”^v
- By following standard set scheduling patterns with compatible start and ending times, the overall schedule fits together with less conflict in a consistent and equitable manner. Overall, institutions implemented time-block scheduling because: Use of scheduling regulations permits efficient exercise of available classroom space as well as provides an orderly framework for instructional planning to reduce course concentration. Use of standard time blocks also allow students greater flexibility and opportunity in scheduling classes offered by different departments or colleges.^{vi} The time blocks allow University of Iowa to standardize the general class assignments and time sequences to facilitate consistency between terms, as well as help students manage and schedule their course load. This model is also useful in helping the institution utilize all classrooms across the campus.^{vii}

Scheduling Unit Initiatives

- During the fall 2022 schedule build, all CWU courses shall begin at the top of the hour. Exceptions may only be considered by the college dean and must not be during the 10am - 2pm peak time.
- Collaborate and contribute to the university efforts of providing students a 4-year course offering spreadsheet that is consistent across CWU, easy to read, and maintained in a consistent and constant manner.
- Implement structured scheduling options for departments. This will assist in ensuring course credit hours are being met, provides an easy template for departments to simply match the number of credits for the course with the appropriate meeting pattern, will provide ease in student scheduling, and improve space utilization for the university.
- Begin to implement the courses distribution strategies and begin offering a higher number of courses at 8am and courses at the hours of 4, 5, and 6pm. These efforts will help in attracting students and allow CWU in adapting to the new demand and student population trending to CWU. We must adapt now or risk lower enrollment, a longer time to graduation for students, low retention rates, and being behind the curve on what student are looking for in course scheduling.

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- Provide quarterly reports and metrics to colleges enabling them to make informed strategic decision for their departments.
- Create a University Scheduling Task Force that can inform and provide recommendations and can give input on anything scheduling.
- Start to investigate and explore software to assist departments with collecting, understanding, and predicting best academic schedules for students and the department.

How

- Introduce and announce initiatives at the Registrar Operations Conference, The ROC. We will provide details and resources to faculty and staff to understand the initiatives and direct them to the resources and tools available to them. This effort will include regular check-ins from the Registrar staff Scheduling unit to assist in implementation along with regular training sessions.
- Support and sponsorship from the administration for the university scheduling strategy and timeline
- Provide a university approved timeline regarding our initiatives on university scheduling efforts for the university and its implementation in fall 2022.
- Continue to collaborate with IS, department chairs, and A-deans to refine and leverage current queries, reports, and software. Provide training, check-ins, and create resources for departments to implement the initiatives.
- Create a University Scheduling Taskforce to evaluate and recommend CWU sanctioned best practices, strategies, and software to always be engaged and help identify trends to improve and maximize CWU scheduling efforts.
- Work with IS and Department chairs to provide quarterly reports with data that can inform the schedule build for future quarters.

Outcomes

- Student satisfaction and ease of creating an optimal schedule. Increase student success by ensuring needed courses are available and students stay on track with their degree plans towards on-time graduation.
- Cost savings for colleges and department. Stark State College was able to save \$2 million in instructional costs and increase their tuition yield by \$1.3 million after one year, by offering more courses at the times students desired. This led to an increase in the number of credits students were enrolled in (Smith, 2016).^{viii}
- Better utilization of classroom space and management of classes. Contributes to on-going cost containment efforts through efficient space utilization and good stewardship of our valuable institutional resources.
- Improvement in students time to graduate. Effective class and classroom scheduling is critical to the academic mission of the university. It enables students to take the classes they need in a timely manner. Ensure that both classes and classrooms are scheduled efficiently to support the needs of students, faculty, and the institution.
- Improved processes and the data available for scheduling future quarters based on data, student need, and student demand.

ⁱ Opidee, I. "Staying on the College Grid." University Business, December 2014.

<https://www.universitybusiness.com/article/staying-college-grid>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ 2012 National Research Report: National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report." Noel-Levitz, 2012. p.9.

https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/shared/Papers_and_Research/2012/2012_Student_Satisfaction_Report.pdf

^{iv} Dills and Hernandez-Julian, Op. cit., p.653.

^v The Game Changers." Complete College America. <http://completecollege.org/the-game-changers/>

^{vi} Standardized Time-Block Model." Office of the Registrar, University of Iowa.

<https://registrar.uiowa.edu/standardized-time-block-model>

^{vii} Tier Project Findings: University of Iowa," Op. cit., p.7.

^{viii} Smith, A.A. "Fixing Capacity with Better Class Scheduling." Inside Higher Ed, October 2016.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/10/28/capacity-problems-plaguing-colleges-may-be-due-poor-scheduling>