

Response to Scheduling CWT Report

College Planning Council

April 2020

Executive Cabinet charged the Strategic Scheduling Collaborative Work Team (CWT) with analyzing and maximizing scheduling effectiveness and enrollment for all SLCC sites through the following:

1. Establish scheduling guiding principles, policies and procedures including timelines for class schedule review by academic term, and timely decision making for schedule optimization and resource allocation;
2. Recommend improved scheduling technologies (if appropriate);
3. Identify and monitor measures for the effectiveness of the academic schedule;
4. Recommend adjustments; and
5. Provide general oversight of the scheduling process.

Challenges and Standing Committee

The Planning Council commends the Scheduling CWT for its efforts to look holistically at the challenge of scheduling. The CWT identified three overarching challenges to conducting effective strategic scheduling. These included the challenges of optimizing space during peak times, improving the usability of technology to navigate the schedule, and aligning the hiring and scheduling processes to ensure we have qualified faculty to teach. The report concluded that these challenges and the implementation of the recommendations require that the CWT continue as a standing committee.

Because our response below includes directions for this ongoing committee, we respond to it first. We agree that a standing committee should continue to monitor and continue to influence the scheduling process. The committee will continue under the executive sponsorship of the provost who can determine ongoing membership. The committee will report periodically to the planning council and will draft an annual report each year to be submitted as part of the college planning process.

Guiding Principles

The CWT identified five guiding principles. After review the planning council suggests the following revisions.

SLCC Scheduling Guiding Principles:

1. The first priority is student need. Next comes FTE counts and space utilization. These must be balanced, but when they conflict, student success controls. First ensure students can access the classes they need to graduate.

2. Pathways reform should assist the College in rationalizing scheduling. Instead of trying to predict student need, we are moving toward telling students what they need. Use default scheduling where we can. Nudge students towards suggested schedules.
3. Recommend courses to students through analytics that improve likelihood of enrollment, passing, and completion. This should include recommending not just courses but locations, modalities, and times.
4. Prioritize the student user experience over college internal needs.

The CWT also include a fifth principle regarding the adjunct compensation model. This has been moved to a recommendation and not a guiding principle. As the standing committee continues its work it should look to these principles for decision making and propose any changes that it deems necessary.

In addition to long-term guiding principles, the CWT also suggested three tactical short-term adjustments:

1. Privilege gateway and general education courses during peak times.
2. Analyze and prune courses with low fill rates that also have “low degree requirement impact.”
3. Determine what our site missions are and scheduling accordingly, including our SLCC Online “location.”

These ideas are supported but need clarity and definition. It appears that the first principle *may* be at odds with the overarching guiding principle of access and success. We ask that the committee define “low degree impact” and “peak times.” These may also be good items to track and to add to metrics from the recommendation below. We also remind the committee that SLCC Online has a strategic direction. For more info please contact the strategy lead for [Strategy #3](#).

Implementation Recommendations

The CWT made five recommendations under the sections of scheduling technologies, measuring scheduling effectiveness, and the adjusting the adjunct compensation model. We respond to each recommendation below.

Scheduling Technologies

Recommendation	CPC Response
Adopt a technology (like College Scheduler or ScheduleMule) which should assist students in building their schedule	To expedite this process, the president has authorized the purchase College Scheduler. Implementation should move forward immediately.
Build a simple recommendation engine that would produce an email to students: “Here’s a course schedule we think you would like.”	We agree but need more information prior to deciding. We authorize further development of this recommendation. The strategic scheduling standing committee should oversee its development. The proposal should include when recommendations are made, how recommendations are provided to students, an estimate of effort required to implement, and what the potential benefit for students would be.

Build analytical tools for associate deans, department coordinators, and scheduling staff	<p>We direct the office of data science and analytics to work with the strategic scheduling standing committee to develop a proposal for a data application to meet this need. The data application needs to follow the development process as established by the Analytics Strategy Committee.</p> <p>This work should consider the recommended metrics below and continue developing and refining them.</p>
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Measuring Scheduling Effectiveness

The Scheduling report included several suggested metrics for tracking scheduling effectiveness:

- Student satisfaction with course availability.
- Average credit hour load: are we witnessing a higher average credit load as a result of our changes?
- Higher percentage of credit load at single campus/site. Are more students able to construct an entire schedule at a single campus, or is our class schedule forcing them to travel between campuses?
- Add/drop rates. Are we having fewer people add and drop in the first days?
- Higher fill rates.
- Higher room utilization rates.
- Students take the same number of credit hours that they planned on in Degree Works.

These metrics are a starting point. They need further refinement and clear definitions. The charge of the standing committee to oversee the development of a report or dashboard that can be shared with leaders to monitor the effectiveness of scheduling. The committee should engage the office of data science and analytics and follow the development protocol established by the analytics strategy council. If further engagement by industry professionals (like Ad Astra) is needed to refine and establish the metrics we encourage the committee to engage the expertise.

Once this report/dashboard is available, the committee should bring a report back to the planning council indicating what insights have been learned along with ways they are using these insights. The committee should continually re-evaluate the proposed metrics for value and how much they might contribute to the effectiveness of the schedule.

Adjunct Compensation Model

The CWT suggested that strategic scheduling may require a different adjunct model—such as a tiered pay model—particularly for departments with many gateway courses. We interpret this as a recommendation to explore an adjunct model that is more aligned with a strategic scheduling approach. If the committee feels that this is worth further exploration we encourage it to include a study and suggest adjustments as part of its annual report next year.