**Optimum Class Scheduling to Support Student Success**

In support of Vision 2020 with its focus on student success, the Office of the University Registrar has engaged the academic community in providing a more flexible schedule of classes with the primary emphasis on student course needs for degree completion. The schedule of classes is intended to encourage student success and persistence and eliminate any academic completion barriers. In addition, the schedule of classes should encourage student exploration in finding courses that satisfy degree requirements, while also providing flexibility for relevant learning experiences. Better grouping of courses, such as standardized class meeting patterns, helps busy working students plan their schedules.

Schedule planning begins with an examination of the degree audit record system (DARS) output, which shows the number of students by level (e.g., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) who need specific courses. These data are compared to previous same-term schedules to help assure capacity requirements are met. The schedule is then evaluated with the following class-scheduling principals. Once evaluated and adjusted, the class schedule is sent to department chairs and directors for additional modifications. Before going live, the schedule returns to the Registrar Office for a final review.

**Standardized Class Meeting Patterns**

This principal focuses on creating a schedule of classes that utilizes established start times and meeting patterns in order to maximize student choice when registering for classes. This schedule reduces the likelihood that students will face time conflicts, and thus allows for a more streamlined and consistent class schedule.

This focus has enabled the institution to reduce class sections that do not adhere to a standard meeting pattern from 345 in Fall 2010, to 96 in Fall 2013, a 72% reduction. In addition, “off pattern” sections for the spring semester between 2011 and 2014 have been reduced from 382 to 84, a 78% reduction. This benefits students by providing predictability of consistent class schedules, helping students manage their time. While an optimum ratio of standard and off-pattern classes is difficult to estimate, we do know that a percentage of off-pattern classes will remain to meet the varying needs of students and certain program requirements.

**Increase Options for Evening, Weekend, and Online Courses**

In today’s higher education environment, course and degree flexibility are paramount. In response to the changing face of course and degree delivery, the University has developed the “Your Degree, Your Way” initiative. The goal of this initiative is to provide classes in a manner that meets students where they are, such as evening, weekend, online and hybrid offerings. Over the past two years, the University has increased the flexible nature of the schedule of classes by increasing the number of classes approved to be offered online or in a hybrid mode from 155 in 2010 to 316 currently, a 104% increase.
**Remain on Track for Degree Completion**

The focus of this principal is to validate that course offerings meet student degree requirements. While flexible scheduling is essential, it cannot stand alone. In 2012, the Office of the University Registrar developed processes that compared information extracted from the student degree audit system (DARS) against the schedule of classes housed within the student information system (PeopleSoft). These processes reviewed student specific degree requirement needs, including general education, and matched them with the courses offered during a specific term in order to determine if enough sections were being offered, thus ensuring students would have the appropriate course selection to stay on track. This information was made available to the academic departments in order to inform the development of their schedule of classes. Additionally, the Office of the University Registrar regularly reviews the DARS information and communicates with those departments needing to add or increase course offerings as a result of student need.

As a result of this initiative, the University has been able to more readily respond to student need based upon data, rather than relying on student inquiry or anecdotal information. In addition, the University has been able to more readily predict the number of sections needed related to degree requirements, as well as determine the optimal meeting times and modes of delivery that would benefit students most.

**Ongoing Review for Continuous Improvement**

Planning and implementing an optimal class schedule to meet every student’s need for degree and certificate completion is challenging and requires a nimble academic culture. Teaching schedules and faculty hiring need to adjust to the changing demand of students. Also, teaching modes must change to meet student demand for online and hybrid offerings. We have made progress by meeting with deans, department chairs and directors and by presenting updates at the Institute for Teaching and Learning, but acknowledge that more work is needed to improve class scheduling. We are accountable for the success of our students, to see them complete their degrees and certificates on time with the least amount of student loan debt. Optimal class scheduling is an essential component for student success. We will continue to work with deans, department chairs and directors to improve class scheduling for all students.