TO:                             Steering Committee

FROM:               Susan Bakewell-Sachs, Interim Provost

RE:                            Final Recommendations on the Undergraduate Class Scheduling Grid

DATE:                            July 13, 2012

During the 2011-2012 academic year, we discovered that these 2009 recommendations were not acted upon. During the spring 2012 semester, I discussed the recommendations with the Council of Deans and Mr. Frank Cooper. I have also given additional thought to the recommendations and am now responding to each of the three recommendations. I generally agree with recommendation 1 and offer a couple of possibilities to help us gain better understanding of the 4th hour across the campus. I agree that guiding principles recommended in 2 are necessary for three-hour classes however I think we should have college-wide guiding principles first to support school discussions on how such three-hour sections would be appropriate. With regard to recommendation 3, I think we should wait to change times on the grid but have a suggestion for how we might proceed with piloting the idea. In general, I recommend that “Dean’s Office” should be used instead of Assistant Dean or other specific personnel since the Dean is responsible for the actions.

1.       The data gathered indicates that the campus community may be unclear about what the fourth hour is.  This seems to be confounded by the fact that the current scheduling system has no way to acknowledge that a course embeds a required contact fourth hour or similar experience or activity component unless the course uses the scheduling grid’s designated fourth hour time slots.  The data also show that scheduled additional contact hours are used across schools but are given names unique to a discipline’s needs.  CAP recommends that the campus be re-educated about the nature of the fourth hour concept of the curriculum.  This should include ways in which this time can be used and how to schedule it when contact-fourth hours are used.  (See Appendix B for the Record and Registration’s information sheet.)  In addition, Records and Registration has suggested creating a flag within the PAWS system that will identify courses that have an off-grid contact fourth hour as part of the class.  This flag can be maintained by each department during the scheduling of classes.  CAP supports the recommendation of Records and Registration.  In addition, CAP recommends that off-grid scheduling of fourth hours and that the flagging of a course in PAWS require the approval of the appropriate School Dean’s Office.

I agree that use of the 4th hour is unclear across the campus. It was conceived to help meet learning goals, facilitate pedagogy and offer enhanced learning experiences. Perhaps the course syllabus structure could include use of the 4th hour, which would make clear that the 4th hour is being used, help students recognize its use and improve our ability to assess use and impact. Department discussion regarding the value of the 4th hour might encourage use and also help to build understanding of the 4th hour. Perhaps the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning could lead a campus-wide discussion on use of the 4th hour and a celebration could be held to showcase best practices from across the College.

I support the recommendation to create a flag within the PAWS system that will identify courses that have an off-grid contact fourth hour as part of a class. Both the flagging and off-grid scheduling should require approval through the Dean’s office.

2.       Given the expressed interest across schools for 3-hour time blocks, CAP recommends that scheduling blocks A & C and/or B & D be designated as 3-hour blocks as well as 80-minute time periods.  This would mean that departments could schedule 3-hour classes on two days/week (e.g., one three-hour class on Monday’s A/C and the second three-hour class on Thursday’s A/C).  While it would be ideal for a department or program to schedule 2 such classes opposite each other, CAP recognizes that this may not be possible.  CAP also recommends that each school review its need for such classes and develop guidelines for use of daytime 3-hour class offerings.  Finally, CAP recommends that the scheduling of daytime 3- hour classes require the approval of the appropriate School Dean’s Office.

It has been generally accepted at the College that shorter, more frequent classes are preferred – hence the data show that 53% of classes are 50-80 minutes; this is consistent with teaching-learning research as well. It has also been accepted that three-hour blocks are used appropriately at times and by certain departments to meet students’ needs and for pedagogical and enhanced learning experiences. It would seem that 3-hour time blocks should be exceptions based on compelling circumstances. Moving to three-hour blocks in the schedule without principles regarding appropriate use for 3-hour time blocks could present scheduling challenges for which chairs and deans would need to establish decision-making principles. CAP is recommending that each school review the need for such classes and develop guidelines however college-wide guidelines would help to facilitate school conversations. Double blocks for liberal learning courses could make it difficult for majors with other double blocks because of labs, clinicals, student teaching etc. to get their classes. There should be a review process, perhaps through Records and Registration, to determine potential impact.

3.       The Records and Registration data indicate that the 4:00 – 5:20 pm slot has minimal usage as an undergraduate class time.  CAP suggests converting the Tuesday/Friday period (block K) to a designated time for colloquia or meetings with the understanding that if additional class meeting blocks become needed, this time slot would revert back to a primary class block time.  This proposal would partially eliminate the scheduling conflict (overlapping of 4th hour block k with Meeting Time IV) that currently exists in the Class Scheduling Grid.  (Conversion of block K to a meeting/colloquia time slot would eliminate the need for block k.)  CAP recognizes that there are two inherent conflicts in this recommendation.  First, large music ensembles are currently scheduled off-grid, meeting on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 4:00 – 5:20.  These offerings will need to continue to be scheduled off-grid.  Second, evening graduate classes begin at 5:00 thus limiting the participation of those enrolled in graduate classes on Tuesday evenings.

While I understand the worthwhile intent and the suggestion’s possible benefit in terms of providing a meeting time, I am concerned about reducing the time blocks for classes, particularly given the current (albeit temporary) increased size of the student body. Replacing the 116 occurrences noted in the data could be very difficult at this time. Perhaps we can work with records and registration to minimize the use of the 4:00-5:20 time in order to pilot the time for meetings/colloquia. As part of the process of updating the facilities master plan, the consultants are conducting a space utilization study, which will be completed in the fall – this will provide us with classroom use data that should help us determine the impact of removing time slots. I suggest that we wait for this data before finalizing this recommendation.

TO:                            Steering Committee

FROM:              Committee on Academic Programs

RE:                            Final Recommendations on the Class Scheduling Grid

DATE:                            June 2, 2009

**Charge:**

The Steering Committee requests that CAP examine the goals and rationale initially identified for the new class scheduling grid, relevant performance data gathered to date, and additional testimony to assess the design and operational use of the class scheduling grid and to make recommendations as appropriate.

It is suggested that CAP either appoint a subcommittee of largely its own members or a special ad-hoc committee, including in either case Frank Cooper, Director of Records and Registration, or another administrative designee who works with or whose job is affected by the grid.  Because administrative staffing, hardware, and software issues limit what is possible in this area, it is recommended that Frank Cooper chair this effort.

Among the sets of questions that might be usefully considered are:

1.       Does the College’s current class scheduling grid support the transformed curriculum?    Does the scheduling grid facilitate taking advantage of the fourth hour?

2.       Are needs of graduate classes accommodated?  What are the differences between day and evening classes?  Note:  There are faculty who want to begin teaching the 5:30 grid hour at 5:00, which is acceptable at the graduate level but not at the undergraduate level where it would conflict with a scheduled fourth hour.

3.       Does the grid support the needs of each individual school?  Are scheduling patterns different amongst schools?  What are the implications of scheduling off the grid?

4.       Does the grid support the needs of affected clients: students, staff, and faculty?

5.       Does the grid lead to the efficient utilization of classroom space and resources?

**Introduction**

In response to its charge to assess the design and operational use of the class scheduling grid and to make appropriate recommendations if necessary, CAP formed a subcommittee of representatives from across the campus communities and areas.   At the suggestion of the Steering Committee, the subcommittee was chaired by Frank Cooper.  Because of unique class scheduling needs representatives from Schools of Business, The Arts and Communication, Education, and Science were also members.  As a member of the Committee on Planning and Priorities when the current grid was designed Tom Hagedorn was included.  Finally, because of their expertise in specific areas, Shirley Daniels (RR), John Castaldo (Athletics) and Karen Roth (Auxiliary Services) also worked on the subcommittee.  The subcommittee reviewed detailed Records and Registration reports which documented the scheduling of classes and created two online surveys through which all faculty and students were invited to evaluate the current grid.

The Scheduling Grid Subcommittee Members were:

Frank Cooper, Records and Registration, Chair

Carlos Alves, Mathematics and Statistics

John Castaldo, Director of Athletics

Stephanie Cwynar, Student Government Association

Shirley Daniels, Records and Registration

Tom Hagedorn, Mathematics and Statistics

Elizabeth Mackie, Art

John McCarty, Business

Amanda Norvell, Biology

Karen Roth, Auxiliary Services

Barbara Strassman, Education and Chair of CAP

Brianne Stratton, Student Government Association

The purpose of this document is threefold:

1.       To report on the issues and concerns about the current scheduling grid that were identified through these discussions and through our analysis of the survey results (details from the survey are presented in Appendices A and B)

2.       Offer recommendations for scheduling grid procedures

**Data Collection, Analysis and Testimony**

We obtained diverse information to assess the class-scheduling grid:

1.       A sub-committee, reflective of campus communities, was formed to drive the data collection process and to formulate preliminary recommendations.  As noted above, this group included staff from Records & Registration, the Athletics Department and from Auxiliary Services. Academic departments with unique scheduling needs were also part of the sub-committee.

2.       A detailed report compiled by Shirley Daniels using all scheduled undergraduate courses that ran during the Fall 2007 semester was compiled.  This material is included in the notebook supplementing this report.

3.       Faculty members were surveyed in the Spring 2008 semester to assess their perceptions and level of satisfaction with the current scheduling grid.  The survey asked for “faculty role” so that the issues relevant to scheduling as done by chairs would also be solicited.  One hundred individuals responded to the survey.  The results of that survey are included in Appendix A under Faculty Testimony.

4.       Input on student perceptions and needs was solicited via a focused discussion with the Student Government Association (SGA) during the Spring 2008 semester.  This was followed by an online survey of students in theFall of 2008.  1063 students responded.  The results of that survey are included in Appendix A under Student Testimony.

5.       The Faculty Senate and CAP co-hosted an Open Forum on May 6, 2009.  Faculty who could not attend the Open Forum were invited to send input via email.

6.       The Faculty Senate Executive Committee gave written feedback on the Preliminary Recommendations.

7.       CAP met with Staff Senate on May 20th.  Staff who could not attend the meeting were invited to send input via email.

This report reflects the testimony gathered from each of the above sources.

Summary of Data Analysis and Testimony

The following highlights Fall 2007 data from the detailed report prepared by Records and Registration.  The full report is available in hard copy as Appendix A.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scheduling of Undergraduate Classes by School** | |
| School of Culture and Society | 34% |
| School of Sciences | 20% |
| School of Arts and Communication | 15% |
| School of Business | 8% |
| School of Nursing | 5% |
| School of Engineering | 7% |
| School of Education | 5% |

**Scheduling of Graduate Classes**

The Graduate Scheduling Grid provides for classes to be scheduled in two time periods:   5:00 - 7:40 and 7:40 - 10:10 pm.  This has proven effective for adult part-time students who comprise 90% of TCNJ’s graduatestudent population. Some departments have experimented with offering classes during the day to accommodate full-time graduate students. Currently the number of daytime course offerings is minimal and can be accommodated within the current grid structure. However, a substantial increase in number of daytime graduate classes would compromise the availability of classroom space during peak scheduling blocks. Because of the low volume of undergraduate classes being scheduled during the 4:00 - 5:20 window, the 5:00 start time for graduate classes is not a problem with availability of classroom space.  Graduate classes that begin at 5:00 maypose a problem for undergraduate students who have permission to take a graduate class.  This is an integral part of the campus’ 5-year programs. For example, in Fall 2007, 22 seats in graduate classes were filled by 17 undergraduate students taking 11 different graduate classes.  These numbers are expected to grow as new 5-year programs are fully phased in.  Students in 5-year programs take a graduate class in both the Fall and Spring semesters. To the extent that these courses are program specific and cater to cohorts in 5-year programs, they could be scheduled to begin at 5:30 similar to undergraduate evening classes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Undergraduate Scheduled Class Activities/Components** | |
| Lecture Discussion | 31% |
| Lecture | 11% |
| Seminar | 10% |
| \*Laboratory | 7% |
| \*Conversation Hours | 6% |
| Independent Study | 6% |
| Private Lessons | 6% |
| Independent Research | 5% |
| Lecture Studio | 5% |
| Internships | 3% |
| Clinical | 2% |
| Combined Lecture/Lab | 1% |
| Practicum | 1% |
| Student Teaching | 1% |
| \*Design Block | 1% |
| Large Major Ensemble | 1% |
| Language Instruction | 1% |
| Group Research | 1% |
| Others | 1% |

During the course approval process courses are given an Activity/Component which designates a method of instruction or pedagogy.  These Activity/Component designations are defined in MOA 62 and correspond to recommended class capacities and faculty workload.  Those highlighted with an asterisk are considered scheduled fourth hours and do necessarily correspond to the Wednesday meeting pattern time slots.

Approximately 30% of the fourth hours are scheduled during the Wednesday morning time slots, while about 46% are scheduled in the time contiguous with class lecture time.  In the current grid, 4 of the 5 daytime blocks have contiguous time available for the fourth hour.  Approximately 1/3 of the courses use the grid this way

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Undergraduate Peak Scheduling Blocks** | | | **Occurrences** |
| 1 | Tuesday/Friday | 10:00am – 11:50am | 305 |
| 2 | Tuesday/Friday | 12:00pm – 1:50pm | 293 |
| 3 | Monday/Thursday | 12:00pm – 1:50pm | 284 |
| 4 | Monday/Thursday | 2:00pm – 3:50pm | 278 |
| 5 | Monday/Thursday | 10:00am – 11:50am | 264 |
| 6 | Tuesday/Friday | 2:00pm – 3:50pm | 241 |
| 7 | Monday/Thursday | 5:30pm – 6:50pm | 232 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Undergraduate Least Scheduled Blocks** | | | **Occurrences** |
| 1 | Tuesday/Friday | 4:00pm – 5:20pm | 44 |
| 2 | Monday/Thursday | 4:00pm – 5:20pm | 72 |
| 3 | Monday/Thursday | 8:00am – 9:50am | 154 |
| 4 | Tuesday/Friday | 8:00am – 9:50am | 165 |

Across days of the week, usage of the 5th scheduling block (4:00 - 5:20pm) is low as compared with the other 4 daytime time blocks. 116 classes meet during the 4:00 to 5:20pm slot as compared with 683 in the 10:00 to 11:50am time slot.

Scheduling of evening undergraduate classes is inconsistent.  Some begin at 5:00 and others at 5:30.  Those that begin at 5pm may interfere with the contiguous fourth hour time slot for the 4-5:20 classes.  Additionally, several undergraduate classes must be scheduled on Wednesday evenings.  This also conflicts with the fourth hour time slot.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scheduled Class Lengths** | |
| Class Length | % Scheduled |
| 50 Minutes | 13% |
| 80 Minutes | 40% |
| 110 Minutes | 17% |
| 170 Minutes | 18% |
| 230Minutes | 7% |
| Other | 5% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grid Fit** | | | |
| 55**A**:  55% of the classes offered “Start and End Times Matched the Grid”  35**B**:  35% of the classes offered “Start Times Matched the Grid, End times were Off Grid”  10**C**:  10% of the classes offered were scheduled “Off Grid” | | | |
| *Interdisciplinary* | | *School of Culture and Society* | |
| A | 86% | A | 60% |
| B | 10% | B | 28% |
| C | 4% | C | 12% |
| *School of Engineering* | | *School of Business* | |
| A | 67% | A | 60% |
| B | 30% | B | 22% |
| C | 3% | C | 18% |
| *School of Science* | | *School of Nursing* | |
| A | 54% | A | 41% |
| B | 37% | B | 49% |
| C | 9% | C | 18% |
| *School of Education* | | *School of Arts and Communication* | |
| A | 30% | A | 22% |
| B | 63% | B | 73% |
| C | 7% | C | 5% |

The following highlights data from the two online surveys.  Appendix A includes the complete results of each survey.

1)      83% of students indicated that classes are scheduled according to the grid.

2)      73% of students prefer to take 2 classes per day and 67% actually schedule 2 classes per day.

3)      12% of students prefer to take 3 classes per day and in reality 22% schedule 3 classes per day.

4)      49% of students report that most of the scheduling problems result because of time conflicts with other required courses.  In the School of Engineering and the School of Sciences the rates were 58% and 56%.

5)      24% of all students felt that classes were too long.  41% of the School of Business students felt their classes were too long.  (The majority of classes in the School of Business utilize the two hour time blocks.)

6)      69% of faculty are VERY STATISFIED or SATISFIED with the current scheduling grid.

7)      66.7% of the faculty report utilizing the fourth hour

8)      There is a desire to have 3-hour class time slots available at times other than 8:30 on Wednesday or in the evening.

9)      A number of faculty suggested replacing the Wednesday afternoon meeting block with classes.  Some also suggested the campus going to a M/W/F and T/Th schedule with meetings scheduled as necessary during a possible lunch period.

**Emerging Issues**

Fourth Hour

The current scheduling grid was created to enable the transformation of the curriculum.  To support the concept of fourth hour in the many ways it could be used in the curriculum, the current scheduling grid was designed to be flexible.  Discrepancies in faculty and student reporting of fourth hour usage and in the data available from Records and Registration may suggest that the campus community is unclear about this element of the transformed curriculum and in how it is reflected in scheduling.  67% of the faculty who responded to the survey report using the fourth hour in their courses.  Only 37% of students responding to the survey report having a class with a scheduled fourth hour.  It is apparent that the concept of a fourth hour is not clearly defined or understood by the campus community.  Based on the data from Records and Registration and information from the surveys, it is apparent that many courses include a scheduled lab, practicum, or conversation hours, each of which incorporates additional contact hours into the class but does not get recognized as “a fourth hour” in the scheduling grid.

Scheduling of 3-hour Classes, Seminars, and Colloquia

The success of the College’s transformed curriculum and the growing intellectual community on campus has increased the scheduling demands.  There is an expressed desire for more free time in the schedule to enable common lunch times, seminars, outside speakers, meetings and other community building events.  The current grid limits the time available to support the college’s efforts to build intellectual community.  The current grid also forces 3-hour classes to meet off grid, typically being scheduled on Wednesday mornings or in an evening so as not to “lock students out” of other classes.

Dining Services

To best serve the campus community, Dining Services keeps data on consumer behavior.  Specifically, Dining Services is able to track how many consumers are served in each venue and at what hours.  Since the adaption of the current scheduling grid, Dining Services has noted that the peak lunch hour is between the end of the 11:20 class period and before the start of the 12:30 class period.  While it has been a challenge for Dining Services to meet the high demand in this sixty-minute period, they have risen to the challenge.  Dining Services does note that long lines are common and seating is extremely challenging in four of the main campus dining venues.  Customers continue to articulate their frustration with the long lines and lack of seating.

**Recommendations**

The current scheduling grid appears to be functional; overall there is general satisfaction with how it supports academics and programs at the College.  CAP acknowledges that no single grid will be ideal for all schools, programs, or student life functions and experiences.  For the academic, interdisciplinary programs, and student life activities to all function smoothly it is essential that all college constituents be aware of how the scheduling grid works and most productive ways to schedule “off grid”, when needed.  CAP also acknowledges that changes in the scheduling grid would affect room usage and availability.

At the conclusion of this work, CAP has 3 specific recommendations.  CAP also notes that it is to the campus’ benefit for all constituents to be fully informed prior to the institution of changes.

1.       The data gathered indicates that the campus community may be unclear about what the fourth hour is. This seems to be confounded by the fact that the current scheduling system has no way to acknowledge that a course embeds a required contact fourth hour or similar experience or activity component unless the course uses the scheduling grid’s designated fourth hour time slots.  The data also show that scheduled additional contact hours are used across schools but are given names unique to a discipline’s needs.  CAP recommends that the campus be re-educated about the nature of the fourth hour concept of the curriculum.  This should include ways in which this time can be used and how to schedule it when contact-fourth hours are used.  (See Appendix B for the Record and Registration’s information sheet.)  Inaddition, Records and Registration has suggested creating a flag within the PAWS system that will identify courses that have an off-grid contact fourth hour as part of the class.  This flag can be maintained by each department during the scheduling of classes.  CAP supports the recommendation of Records and Registration.  In addition, CAP recommends that off-grid scheduling of fourth hours and that the flagging of a course in PAWS require the approval of the appropriate School Assistant Dean.

2.       Given the expressed interest across schools for 3-hour time blocks, CAP recommends that scheduling blocks A & C and/or B & D be designated as 3-hour blocks as well as 80-minute time periods.  This would mean that departments could schedule 3-hour classes on two days/week (e.g., one three-hour class on Monday’s A/C and the second three-hour class on Thursday’s A/C).  While it would be ideal for a department or program to schedule 2 such classes opposite each other, CAP recognizes that this may not be possible.  CAP also recommends that each school review its need for such classes and develop guidelines for use of daytime 3-hour class offerings.  Finally, CAP recommends that the scheduling of daytime 3- hour classes require the approval of the appropriate School Assistant Dean.

3.       The Records and Registration data indicate that the 4:00 – 5:20 pm slot has minimal usage as an undergraduate class time.  CAP suggests converting the Tuesday/Friday period (block K) to a designated time for colloquia or meetings with the understanding that if additional class meeting blocks become needed, this time slot would revert back to a primary class block time.  This proposal would partially eliminate the scheduling conflict (overlapping of 4th hour block k with Meeting Time IV) that currently exists in the Class Scheduling Grid.  (Conversion of block K to a meeting/colloquia time slot would eliminate the need for block k.)  CAP recognizes that there are two inherent conflicts in this recommendation.  First, large music ensembles are currently scheduled off-grid, meeting on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 4:00 – 5:20.  These offerings will need to continue to be scheduled off-grid.  Second, evening graduate classes begin at 5:00 thus limiting the participation of those enrolled in graduate classes on Tuesday evenings.

CAP’s Final Recommendations:  Class Scheduling Grid                            1