

California State University, Northridge
Academic Affairs

REPORT

Ad Hoc Group to Recommend Course Scheduling Alternatives
August 24, 2005

Charge: Provost Hellenbrand

1. We've had expressions of interest in seeing whether there are other ways to schedule C1-C6 classes, other than the M/W/F and T/TH formula of one and two hours, in order to fit longer class periods that meet on fewer days. So, we are asking a group to explore whether indeed there are ways to conceive of the day and/or week differently to get this done. Alternatively, we are interested in hearing whether technology--synchronous or non-synchronous--can be used to facilitate these time blocks without "disrupting" the scheduling of other classes tremendously.
2. We are asking that the project be exploratory and follow these guidelines:
 - a) not project a major change in credits--say moving classes from three to four credits.
 - b) stay within the space utilization guidelines of the CSU.
 - c) ensure that the campus be able to generate the FTES to meet targets
3. The summer meetings are exploratory. At the end of August, I'd like a 5-10 page report, at most, that indicates paths for further exploration. At that point, we will see if the committee wishes to continue and/or has material to pass to EPC, ERC, Provost's Council, Council of Chairs, etc.

Membership of the Group:

Janice Bell, Accounting
Kavoos Blourtschi, College of Science and Mathematics
Ron Fischbach, Health Sciences (Co-Chair)
Eric Forbes, Admissions and Records
Arlinda Eaton, College of Education
David Moon, Art
Gordon Nakagawa, College of Humanities
Jerald Schutte, Sociology
Diane Stephens, Academic Resources and Planning (Co-chair)
Renate Wigfall, College of Engineering and Computer Science

Additional Consultation:

Department Chairs Lien (Mathematics), Rosas (Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures), and Stepanek (Computer Science); E-mail input from two additional faculty members and one department chair.

Discussion and Recommendations

California State University, Northridge has the opportunity to re-think its approach to course scheduling in order to (1) improve student learning, (2) assist students in balancing education, family, and work life, (3) ensure appropriate utilization of classrooms, and (4) provide opportunities for connections within the campus community.

Appendix A includes visual representations of models discussed by the group convened by Provost Hellenbrand during summer 2005. It should be noted that the models are not mutually exclusive. That is, it is possible for the university to use one or two of these models, particularly those with three-hour time blocks, concurrently. While the focus is on three-unit, C1-C6 lecture courses, all of the models presented would permit one- to five-unit C1-C6 courses and laboratory experiences within our existing capacity, as long as particular rooms and sets of rooms use the same schedule scenario.

Appendix B provides the university description of C classifications for the purpose of our discussion.

Rationale for Longer Class Periods:

One of the most significant outcomes of the group's discussions was the desire to move away from one-hour (50 minutes, with 10 minutes passing) time blocks for three-unit classes. The rationale for longer class periods is three-fold. First, student learning in some courses is best accomplished with longer time blocks, especially when interaction and discussion occur frequently. Second, the use of technology in classrooms, while efficient, can be time-consuming for set-up at the beginning of class periods. Third, anecdotally, movement to a two-day a week schedule for much of our

student population may be highly desirable in order to balance university life with work and home life. Additionally, many of our students also enroll in local community colleges, most of which schedule their courses on MW/TR (Appendix C).

Models presented in Appendix A provide for either MW/TR or MR/TF for series of 1.5 hour (75 minute, with 15 minutes passing) class periods during the bulk of daytime hours. Each of these models also allows for a “block” day.

Block Days:

The group recommends that the designated block day—either Friday or Wednesday--be used to test different scheduling models and share best practices. Options identified by the group include: mixed mode delivery with on-line, reduced seat-time through compressed schedules (such as a six-hour class for eight weeks, four-hour class for 12 weeks, etc.).

The “block” day consists primarily of three-hour sections. In order to encourage scheduling during the “block” day (particularly if it is Friday), the group recommends that certain sets of courses have required offerings on those days. Recommendations include requiring a particular percentage of general education offerings, service learning courses, and first year student experiences (such as the Freshman Seminar).

Start and end times for the “block” days could differ. A start time could be at 8:00 a.m., with other blocks at 11:00 a.m., and 2:00 p.m. Alternatively, the block day could start at 7:00 a.m., with other blocks at 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. (The latter option fits better with 4:00-7:00 classes, but a 7:00 a.m. start times would be a major cultural shift.)

Currently, some classes are taught on Saturdays as a block day. Saturday scheduling should continue and could be combined with Friday sections to facilitate 1.5

hour classes or combined with on-line to facilitate mixed-mode classes. However, Saturdays are not likely to be fully utilized for the near future.

The group recommends that the schedule be Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday, with Friday as a block day. This schedule is consistent with six of the seven community colleges in our area. Additionally, it satisfies the desire expressed by the Departments of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures and Mathematics to use a four-day-a-week schedule for four-unit courses. When unscheduled by students, the block day can be available for student team interaction.

Block days would also help to support the growing relationship between the greater San Fernando Valley community and the University. Some recent examples of the University's efforts to knit stronger ties to the community include: support for the CSUN intercollegiate athletic program; development of the Valley Performing Arts Center; progress of the Community Service Center in Monterey Hall; utilization of jogging and other recreational facilities; and President Koester's initiatives to build bonds with the local business community. Conversion to block day scheduling would provide for one additional weekday during which campus facilities would be available for planned community activities. Should Friday be the day designated for all day blocking there would exist the potential for events to be planned over a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday span.

Block scheduling would also encourage faculty professional development. With the current scheduling plan faculty find it very difficult to find one time slot, let alone one day, during which faculty members within a department or college can meet to pursue professional development.

Evening Sections:

The group also explored alternatives for afternoon and evening scheduling. One model discussed could be of particular interest to working adults. That is, offering evening courses from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m., 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., and 8:30 – 10:00 p.m. This would allow part-time, evening students to accomplish three courses in two evenings per week. However, the group agreed that the 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. schedules also should be retained, particularly for students in education and credential programs who work in K-12. It was generally agreed that the simultaneous offering of this additional evening scheduling plan, along with the traditional evening schedule, would offer sufficient positives to offset any possible negatives resulting from the conflict between the two schedules.

Additional Recommendations:

Surveys: Recommendations of the group are based on minimal consultation and anecdotal information. We highly recommend that two surveys be conducted during fall 2005 to determine the “market” for revised scheduling alternatives. Students and campus departments should be surveyed in separate instruments (Appendix D). The student instrument should focus on student demographics, demands placed upon student’s time other than school, and work schedules.

Student Enrollment Pattern Study: A study of the patterns by which students “hit” the SOLAR system, while limited by constraints of the current schedule, could inform us about desirability of current scheduling options.

Student Services: Course scheduling models will have varying impacts on campus services. Services should be available to students during scheduled course hours and

days. These include advising, financial aid, custodial, food service, bookstore, Library, etc.

Redefine Lecture Room Utilization: CSU definitions of space utilization do not match with the realities of course scheduling (e.g., Friday nights and Saturdays). Current metrics also do not accommodate on-line and mixed mode delivery. A possible outcome or area for further development would be to create a better model for determining lecture room utilization for CSUN. A model that includes FTES generation as an outcome would better represent efficient utilization of capacity.

Consultation: In addition to consultation with requisite faculty and administrative groups, consultation with Chairs from selected departments would be very helpful.

Potential Constraints:

Faculty work hours: The Educational Policies Committee (EPC) for CSUN constrains the number of hours of consecutive faculty work. Block days and two-day work weeks could result in long hours of teaching that should include sufficient rest periods. The group recommends that the EPC policy be revisited. Additionally, there should be acknowledgement that faculty/student interaction and advisement can take place effectively on-line.

Availability of Part-time Faculty from the Professions: Many professionals whom we employ in order to enrich the educational experiences of our students are available only in blocks of three hours. Scheduling that replaces three-hour blocks with shorter time periods could limit availability of qualified professionals to teach sections. However, scheduling that increases the number of three-hour teaching blocks such as all day Wednesday or Friday would increase the availability of qualified professionals to teach sections.

Conclusions:

The *Ad Hoc* Group to Recommend Course Scheduling Alternatives recommends that the campus community actively explore moving to a standard course schedule of two-day per week sections (1.5 hour sections for 3.0 unit courses) that includes a fifth day each week (preferably Friday, to be consistent with our local community colleges) with three-hour blocks. It is further recommended that the courses offered on the fifth day be required courses, general education courses, and high demand courses to guarantee enrollment and utilization of facilities.

Appendix A

Course Scheduling Models

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August 2005

TRADITIONAL SCHEDULE (3 UNIT, C1-C6)

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM						
7:00 PM						
8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

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THREE TWO-DAY BLOCKS (3 UNIT, C1-C6)
MR, TF, WS

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM						
7:00 PM						
8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

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THREE TWO-DAY BLOCKS (3 UNIT, C1-C6)
MR, TF, WS
Evenings with Possibility of Three Courses in Two Days

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM						
7:00 PM						
8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

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TWO TWO-DAY AND TWO ONE-DAY BLOCKS (3 UNIT, C1-C6)
MW, TR (F and S)

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM						
7:00 PM						
8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

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TWO TWO-DAY AND TWO ONE-DAY BLOCKS (3 UNIT, C1-C6)
MW, TR (F and S)
Evenings with Possibility of Three Courses in Two Days

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM						
7:00 PM						
8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

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TWO TWO-DAY AND TWO ONE-DAY BLOCKS (3 UNIT, C1-CS)
MR, TF (W and S)
Evenings with Possibility of Three Courses in Two Days

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
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8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

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TWO TWO-DAY AND TWO ONE-DAY BLOCKS (3 UNIT, C1-C6)
MR, TF (W and S)

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 PM						
1:00 PM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
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8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						

Appendix B. C-Classification Categories and Descriptions

Course Classification Number	Description	Class Hours Per Unit of Credit	Minimum		
			Class Size		
			LD	UD	GD
C-1	LARGE LECTURE – Lecture courses in any discipline with more than 50 enrollments.	1	Facility Limit (50)		
C-2	LECTURE DISCUSSION – Lecture courses in any discipline in which class participation is a planned portion of the instructional method.	1	40	40	40
C-3	LECTURE - COMPOSITION LECTURE – COUNSELING LECTURE – CASE STUDY Business, education, English, and psychology courses in which students write, are counseled or study law cases.	1	30	30	30
C-4	LECTURE/RECITATION – Courses in any discipline in which student participation (discussion) is the primary instructional method.	1	25	25	25
C-5	SEMINAR – Courses in any discipline using seminar methods of instruction.	1	20	20	15
C-6	SEMINAR/CLINICAL DEMONSTRATION – Nursing and psychology courses in clinical processes and education courses involving individual testing, such as driver training in a simulator.	1	20	10	10

Appendix C. Community College Class Scheduling

	Occurrence	Running Time	Time Occurrence
Pierce College			
	MW	1hr. 25min.	Morning/ Late Afternoon
	TTh	1hr. 25min.	Morning/ Late Afternoon
	M/ T/ W/ Th	3hr. 10min	Late Afternoon/ Evening
LA Valley			
	MW	1hr. 30min.	All day
	TTh	1hr. 30min.	All day
	M/ T/ W/ Th	3hr. 10min.	Evening
LA Mission			
	MW	1hr. 25min.	Morning/ Afternoon
	TTh	1hr. 25min.	All day
	M/ T/ W/ Th	3hr. 10min.	Late Afternoon/ Evening
COC			
	MWF	50min.	Morning
	MW	1hr. 20min.	Morning/ Afternoon
	TTh	1hr. 20min.	Morning/ Afternoon
	M/ T/ W/ Th	2hr. 50min.	Afternoon/ Evening
Moorpark			
	MW	1hr. 20min.	All Day
	TTh	1hr. 20min.	All Day
	A/ T/ W/ Th	2hr. 50min.	Evening
Antelope Valley			
	MW	1hr. 20min.	All day
	TTh	1hr. 20min.	All day
	M/ T/ W/ Th	3hr. 5min	Afternoon/ Evening
Santa Monica			
	MW	1hr 20min.	Morning/ Afternoon
	TTh	1hr 20min.	All day
	M/ T/ W Th	3hr. 5min.	Evening

Source: Department of Academic Resources and Planning 8/19/2005

Appendix D. Recommended Survey Content

Potential Content to Include in Questions for Alternative Class Scheduling

Survey of Students

Information:

Residence (Distance from Campus)
Employment Status
Unit Load
Student Status (LD, UD, Transfer; multi-campus))
Days per week on campus
College and Degree objective (including # of Major changes)
Family status (Spouse, Kids, Head of Household)
Age, sex and income

Opinion:

Preference (1 vs. 1.5 vs. 3 vs. 6 hr classes)
Preference (2 vs. 3 day attendance)
Preference (early morning, morning, afternoon, evening)
Preference (Sat only; Sat + weekday and Sat + weeknight)
Preference (importance of open admin offices)
Preference (time until graduation)
Preference (tolerance for commute time)

Survey of Instructors

Information:

Residence (Distance from Campus)
Employment (full-time, part-time, FERP)
Teaching Load (number of classes & units)
Days on Campus
Hours on committee work
College and Department
Family Status
Age and sex

Opinion:

Preference (1 vs. 1.5 vs. 3 vs. 6 hr classes)
Preference (2 vs. 3 day teaching rotation)
Preference (early morning, morning, afternoon, evening)
Preference (Sat. only; Sat + weekday)
Preference (release time for aberrant scheduling)
Preference (best time for admin duties)