



Academic Transformation Working Group: Time Use & Scheduling

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Transformation Working Group Charge:

CU Denver teaches to a predominantly commuter, working student population. The need to work while attending college predictably conflicts with and imposes hardship on the affected learners and instructors. Given CU Denver's aspiration to make education work for all, it is imperative that we rethink and adapt the inherited Carnegie-inspired academic calendar cycles and instructional time grids to meet the multitasking needs of our student populations, in a way that is financially affordable, flexible, and work-life-balance-friendly to all of our learners without compromising academic rigor and quality.

Taking the needs of diverse learners into account, this working group will explore the following questions:

- Is the organization of classes that we currently have meeting learner needs?
- Are there ways to better utilize summer, evening, and weekend schedules to better support our learners' schedules and time to graduation?
- What does our data on classroom availability tell us about students' current scheduling needs?
- What does our data regarding online course engagement tell us about our students' needs for flexibility in course scheduling?

Goal

Explore possibilities for re-envisioned course schedules and instructional time grids that optimize use of learner and instructor time, and account for campus-wide learner supports.

Charge

This working group will study carefully the constraints imposed on the academy by federal financial aid access considerations, credit-hour definition and requirements for accreditation, and other relevant concerns. With these variables in mind, the working group will make recommendations for changes to course schedules and instructional time grids in a manner that allows us to be responsive to the time management and financial needs of our students.

Our Work:

The Academic Transformation Working Group for Time Use and Scheduling included campus community members from multiple areas. The team met every other week starting in November and engaged in thoughtful group discussions about the charge set forth. We collected important information and insights through presentations from OIRE and the Registrar's Office, collaborated across units using a Miro Board, and collected information from students and faculty through surveys. The group also participated in a webinar hosted by Inside Higher Ed about course scheduling and student success. All of this allowed us to think deeply about how we currently approach time use and scheduling and to provide insights and recommendations on how best to support our students, faculty, and staff.

The surveys were to collect specific information related to student and faculty experiences and preferences. The student and faculty surveys were completed, and we have received the results.

Insights & Findings:

CU Denver is a system of interlocking parts that must be maintained, supported, and given agency to improve for the betterment of all of us. We believe that having consistent experience, transparency between colleges, and robust training and onboarding to understand the university armature for success- students, faculty, and staff could assist in creating this culture.

Alignment of the Organization of Classes with Learner Needs

Upon examining the current organization of classes and the efficacy in meeting learner needs, it is found that while generally satisfactory, improvements can be made. Enhancing the availability of in-person and hybrid courses is crucial for international students, who face limitations on online credit hours due to VISA status requirements, and for veteran students relying on VA benefits. To address this, it is recommended to prioritize increasing the accessibility of in-person and hybrid course options to better cater to the diverse needs of these student demographics.

Summer, Evening, and Weekend Course Offerings to Expedite Graduation

In evaluating ways to better utilize summer, evening, and weekend schedules to support learners' needs and expedite graduation, it was found that offering more robust summer courses could significantly benefit students.

Classroom Availability Data to Understand Student Scheduling Needs

Upon examining our data on classroom availability and its implications for students' scheduling needs, it is evident that while there is an abundance of midsize classrooms, our current

prioritization of large classes for scale courses limits our flexibility to meet preferred class sizes of 25 to 50 students.

Flexibility in Course Scheduling

In examining our data regarding online course engagement and its implications for student scheduling needs, it is evident that students prefer multi-modal course options, attending both in person and online. Specifically, for Undergraduate students enrolled in Spring 2023, 17% were exclusively enrolled in online classes, 36% were enrolled in only in-person classes, and 47% were enrolled in a mix. On the other hand, Graduate students tend to select either in-person or online exclusively, with only 18% being in mixed modality.

Recommended Actions

There are several recommendations that came out of this working group that will allow units to strengthen the work that they are already engaged in and possibly consider other ideas that could enhance the opportunities available for students. Further, we recognize that not all recommendations may be best suited for different units and their student populations or current resources at this time. The recommendations are organized according to the units that we believe would be best suited to evaluate and operationalize the actions.

Registrar's Office Actions

- Enhance transparency in course selection by clearly indicating course modality in descriptions on course registration schedules, particularly course expectations for hybrid sections. (In progress).
- Enhance communication by announcing the final exam schedule earlier and posting it publicly on a dedicated website.
- Improve the usability of the Class Search user interface for streamlined course discovery and selection.

Cross-campus Coordinated Actions

- Establish a "no-bumping" policy to prevent the displacement of scheduled classes by non-class events.
- Coordinate core and required classes during the summer semester for better student accommodation and timely graduation.

- In coordination with the Faculty Workload and Parity Group, review and revise faculty workload and hiring plans to support expanded course offerings if the program offers this option to students.

Recommendations for Schools and Programs to consider

- Consider offering diverse course modalities, including in-person and online, to accommodate student preferences.
- Examine preferred class sizes to balance student preference, instructional effectiveness, and cost efficiency.
- Consider opportunities for students to switch courses early in the semester if their current course is unsuitable, specifically in courses with high D,F, and W rates.

Recommended working groups to evaluate and operationalize actions

- **Academic Calendar and Breaks:** Coordinate a cross-unit working group to revise the academic calendar based on the recommendations of the 2023 Observances + Holidays working group. Implement two shorter breaks during the Fall semester, similar to CU Boulder's mode and coordinate spring break dates with local school districts. Additionally, consider initiating the semester earlier and adjusting breaks accordingly to optimize the academic schedule in coordination with other Auraria Campus stakeholders.
- **Space Planning Evaluation:** Work with facilities to evaluate current space and configurations to assess if we could invest in more flexible room configurations for scalable capacities and increased course offerings.
- **Standardization of 8-Week Courses:** Establish a cross-unit working group to determine how to operationalize 8-week online and in-person courses for programs that wish to adopt this format. The working group should address several key issues, including but not limited to, the admission of new students mid-semester, the packaging of financial aid, and census reporting.
- **Course Planning & Scheduling:** Establish a cross-unit working group to enhance course planning and scheduling. This group should focus on increasing information sharing at campus and departmental levels, prioritizing advanced planning to optimize resource allocation, and exploring and investing in systems for proactive course scheduling based on student needs and analytics. Additionally, the group should evaluate predictive analytic tools allowing programs to anticipate course demand and minimize conflicts.

Contributing Members

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