

Multiple-Term Registration (MTR) Faculty Focus Group

March 1, 2006

3:30 – 4:30

SU 218

Present: Ashby, L; Butler, K; Eastep, M; Edlen, P; Ellington, M; Fabianic, D; Feyer, M; Fletcher, C; Furterer, S; Gallagher, S; Giordano, P; Greenwell, R; Haran, K; Hennig, L; Hepner, L; Higginbotham, P; Holmes, St; Illasarie, W; Jacinto, G; Jefferson, A; Kohn, R; Leli, P; Logiudice, F; Oberbeck, D; Oetjen, D; Pohl, C.A.; Poisel, M; Prucha, A; Raymond, G; Rente, M; Rusnock, J; Sharp, R; Sindlinger, J; Skivers, R; Slaughter, D; Smeir, L; Smilie, T; Stebbins, C; Sundaram, K; Sweet, H; Vega, M; Vittes, E; Waleski, J

The general consensus of the group was that two-semester registration works well, and that registering for summer and fall at the same time has few problems. But adding the third semester—spring—creates a variety of difficulties.

All agreed that the inability to guarantee accurate pre-requisite checks is a problem.

All agreed that MTR takes more time for faculty schedulers and advisors due to the following:

- Having to get permission to change scheduled classes
- Additional advising because students re-register now, and advisors have to advise for spring semester at least two times. (One faculty advisor kept a log and determined that each student took twice as much time under MTR.)
- Counseling faculty who have schedules that, for legitimate reasons, must be changed: sabbaticals, health issues, grant release time
- Finding faculty who can teach in a specific pre-scheduled time for those faculty who, for legitimate reasons (resignation, change of job assignment, etc), change or abandon their spring schedules
- Because of PeopleSoft, to change any part of a schedule requires an entire new course to be built and, related to that:
- Building a course in PeopleSoft is very labor intensive

Other issues not related to an increased work load were also raised concerning the multiple-term registration of classes. Here are faculty observations:

- The quality of instruction is lowered because courses are scheduled, faculty members leave, the courses are not allowed to be cancelled, and so less-qualified instructors are hired in order to staff the class
- New faculty hires are frequently not identified when the three-semester schedule is created. Therefore, instead of having faculty under-used for only fall semester, now they are under-used for fall and spring semester.
- There is less curricular flexibility. Courses might be opened in spring to react to a demand or to take advantage of an opportunity (teacher becomes available unexpectedly) but there are no rooms so the course can't be scheduled and students already have their schedules
- Sabbaticals are announced after the full three-semester schedule has been required

- MTR limits the possibility of changing a mode of course delivery, again restricting flexibility and slowing down change
- Students now sign up for more classes than the plan to take because they aren't sure what course they will need in the spring (will they pass the prerequisite, for instance), so they cover all bets by signing up for all the possible courses they may need, knowing that there will be no seats if they wait. This leads to much greater inefficiency of class space use. Related to this
- A responsible administrator sees a full class, opens a new section, students who have over-booked seats drop the courses they don't need, and now there are unused seats
- Special problems with Field Placement and students who don't reach the required GPA, pull out of the Placement, but all the work has been done for the Placement
- Curricular changes that go through the university process now can't be scheduled as immediately because the Spring schedule is due a year in advance, rooms are taken, and students have registered for less-valuable classes
- New catalogs aren't published until late spring, after MTR occurs. Students register for the following Spring without knowing of curricular changes
- Limited Access programs have always registered students individually for each semester so MTR is no benefit at all—but these programs still have the problems
- Prediction of need for seats and classes is more difficult because of the greater lead-time
- New grad students sign up for more generalized courses in spring because they haven't had the fall class experience to know what specialized courses they may want to take
- New classes get added but students don't know about it because they have already scheduled the spring semester and they don't re-look at course offerings

The following were suggestions to improve the system:

- Announce sabbaticals earlier
- Permit students to view spring semester schedules but not register for them
- Provide money to hire more advisors
- Modify PeopleSoft to better identify pre-requisite issues
- Create a system that makes it easier to make changes to spring schedules
- Identify and notify students whose failure of a course requires them to change their MTR schedule
- Publish the catalog earlier
- Tighten up class-drop policies
- Build more classrooms

Dr. Sandra Furterer, Assistant Department Chair and Undergraduate Program Coordinator in Industrial Engineering and Management Systems, distributed a poll that she designed, asking for student opinion about MTR. Of 170 majors in her department, 97 or 57% responded. The four page report and five pages of student comments are a welcome addition to the information we are gathering about university response to the multiple-term registration policy. Much thanks to Dr. Furterer.