

Amended April 11, 2011

The thirty-first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2010-2011 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, March, 28, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Rockwell, noting that the question that he was about to pose had been prompted by reading a consultant’s report on space use at the College, asked President Marx about the intended use of the property that had previously been known as the Fiber Arts Building (which the College now refers to as 79 South Pleasant Street), which is located in Amherst’s town center. The President responded that Amherst had purchased the building prior to the economic downturn in order to free up space at the core of the campus for faculty offices, by moving some administrative offices to this property. The renovations that would permit the move had been delayed until recently because of the economic downturn, he noted. The offices of Public Affairs and Human Resources, currently located in Converse Hall; the College’s investment group, currently located on separate floors within College Hall; and the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages (which offers courses in less-commonly-studied languages to Five-College students) will occupy the renovated space. The move will free up at least eleven (and possibly more) spaces in Converse that will be used as faculty offices. Dean Call noted that the Converse space has been offered to the Department of History, but that no final decisions have been made. Should the department choose to move to Converse from the Chapin basement, plans are under consideration to create office space there for newly hired tenure-track faculty on a temporary basis. Since the College plans to do a considerable amount of hiring in the coming years, and since these new colleagues will often overlap for several years with colleagues on phased retirement, it is anticipated that space will not permit some newly hired faculty to have offices in departments, at least initially, Dean Call said. The Committee agreed that it could be desirable for the cohorts of new faculty from different disciplines to get to know one another by sharing office space for a time.

At 3:45 P.M., the Committee was joined by members (Professors Heidi Gilpin, Lyle McGeoch, Javier Corrales, and Anthony Bishop and student members Pranay Kirpilani ’12, Rose Lenehan ’11, and Andreas Shepard ’11), of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the CEP’s recorder, Nancy Ratner, Researcher for Academic Projects and Associate Dean of Admission. Dean Call thanked the CEP for meeting with the Committee of Six and said that the members looked forward to discussing a range of issues.

Conversation turned first to some questions that Professor Rockwell had raised previously when reviewing proposals for new courses and in a letter that he had written to the CEP, and shared with the members of the Committee of Six. Professor McGeoch, noting that Professor Rockwell had brought important points to the attention of the committee, commented that this fall, the CEP had voted to adopt a class size of fifteen students as the lowest number that should be used routinely for a seminar. It had been agreed that proposals for classes with limits of this size would not require that faculty provide elaborate justifications for this enrollment limit. Professor McGeoch said that, when classes are proposed with enrollments that are limited to fewer than fifteen students, the CEP will examine with great care the justifications for such limits. Among the rationales that are commonly viewed as acceptable for these small class sizes are needs surrounding language instruction, writing-intensive courses, and limitations imposed by facilities/technology. Professor McGeoch noted that the CEP hoped that careful attention to

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proposals for small courses would help the College maintain broad student access to its curriculum.

Professor McGeoch noted Professor Rockwell's concern that over-enrollment in some classes is being addressed on a "case-by-case" basis," and that there most often are no stated criteria by which the College would know how the instructor planned to choose from among the "applicants" who pre-enrolled for his or her course. Professor McGeoch said that next year's CEP will refine its request for information on handling of over-enrollment and increase the size of the relevant box on the course proposal form. This would make it possible to provide to the Committee of Six the additional information that the CEP often solicits from faculty about how they will choose among over-enrolled students. Professor McGeoch commented that, in the future, the CEP would like to see the College publish, as part of course descriptions, the criteria that will be used in each class if it is over-enrolled. In answer to Professor Rockwell's concern about giving priority to particular categories of students, in terms of registration for a particular class, Professor McGeoch commented that the committee hasn't questioned this practice, as the categories of students who are advantaged have seemed reasonable.

Professor Rockwell shared another concern. He noted that, currently, there is no policy that requires that final course lists be established by any particular point in the add/drop period, and he wondered whether such a policy should be established. Some faculty, he noted, do not finalize their class lists until well into the semester, and as a result some students do not learn that they have been dropped from a course until late in the period. Students must often then scurry to find another course. The last several days of add/drop can become challenging for faculty, who must pick up students who may have missed a number of class meetings, and for students, who may be unable to set their schedules until late in the add/drop period. Professor Rockwell said that he does not understand why faculty need more than a couple of days at the beginning of the add/drop period to finalize their class lists. Professor Gilpin noted that faculty who teach courses that meet only once a week may need additional time to determine which students will remain in their classes. Professor Basu commented that it may take some time, as students shift their schedules, to determine which students are enrolled in a course and which are not, before a colleague can determine whether to add other students. Professor Umphrey suggested that it might be helpful if faculty establish waiting lists for over-enrolled classes. Professor Corrales said that he believes that, at one point, there was some discussion about asking the Registrar to communicate with faculty to encourage them to finalize their class lists by the second day of classes, so that students will know whether they have been accepted into their classes. Professor McGeoch, who said that he shares Professor Rockwell's concern about this issue, said that the Registrar has not yet been asked to communicate with faculty about finalizing their lists on this timetable, and that the CEP will consider ways of communicating broadly with faculty to encourage them to do so in the future.

Conversation turned to the issue of class scheduling. The members thanked the CEP for its work considering this question and the Class Scheduling Task Force for its efforts. Those members of the committees who had experimented with the online course scheduling tool that has been developed by Professor McGeoch offered high praise for it. The tool is available at <https://www.amherst.edu/people/facstaff/lamcgeoch/scheduler> (please note that you may need a Java applet to access the scheduler) and offers a quick and easy way to access detailed information on course schedules over a number of semesters, including preliminary schedules for future semesters. It is hoped that faculty and departments will find the tool helpful and will use

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the information that they obtain from it to inform their consideration of adjusting schedules before they are finalized, and to enhance their understanding of long-term scheduling patterns. Professor McGeoch said that the CEP believes that improving the availability of information about scheduling is essential; the committee expressed hope that a new level of awareness about under-used time slots will encourage faculty and departments to make better use of such slots.

Professor McGeoch reviewed the CEP's deliberations and conclusions about class scheduling, which are outlined in its [report](#) to the Committee. (The report of the Class Scheduling Task Force is included as part of the CEP's report.) Professor McGeoch pointed out that students' access to the College's course offerings is being limited by the current uneven distribution of courses within the week. In addition to increasing opportunities for students to choose from among a greater array of courses, another advantage of spreading courses more evenly across the week will be a more balanced utilization of classrooms. Growth in the curriculum that is anticipated as a result of the hiring of at least 18 new FTEs will (if classes are not spread more evenly across time slots and days of the week) result in the demand for classrooms exceeding the supply at peak times, Professor McGeoch noted. Among the problems that the CEP has identified with the current schedule are the following: there is too much clustering of courses in the middle part of the day, from 10:00 to 3:30, with a brief lull at noon; there are too few timeslots available for courses that are eighty minutes or longer; and there are too few courses taught before 10:00 and on Fridays. The CEP chose to propose some changes in the times at which courses of different lengths could be offered. The committee decided that it would be helpful if slots on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons are adjusted to create a new 80-minute slot at 1:00, and new possibilities are created for scheduling longer classes on Tuesday and Thursday mornings and on Fridays. The committee also chose to make a number of recommendations, rather than proposing any requirements at this time.

Professor Rockwell asked about the CEP's views on evening classes. Professor McGeoch said that the CEP's approach was to propose a circumscribed expansion of evening courses and a loosening of some previously imposed constraints, as outlined in the committee's second motion. The committee is recommending that the Dean be responsible for considering all requests for courses to be held at non-standard times and has proposed guidelines for him/her to apply when making these decisions.

Professor Ciepiela asked what issues the CEP considered before deciding not to propose that departments be required not to re-use a timeslot until all have been used. Professor McGeoch responded that it is hoped that voluntary measures can solve the problem with the clustering of courses; he said that the CEP does not believe that there is a crisis, at present, that would justify taking this step. Thus the committee, at present, feels that departments should be encouraged, but not required, to spread their courses fully. It was noted that there were different perspectives among those on the committee about this question. Professor Bishop commented that another reason for not proposing such a policy is that there would be a large number of exceptions (e.g., language and science departments) to such a rule. He noted that departments with structured curricula have good reasons for scheduling multiple courses in the same or overlapping time slots. In fact, he said, doing so opens up other timeslots within the day for other courses. In some disciplines, it was noted, different levels of introductory courses are taught at the same hour. This causes no conflicts for students and permits shifts of students among levels, even after the add/drop period. Dean Call noted that, at present, there are different practices among departments about distributing courses across time slots, and that some

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departments tend to cluster courses in particular slots. Professor Rockwell felt that it would be useful for the Committee to know which departments tend to have significant clustering and what the pedagogical impediments may be for spreading courses across time slots. He also wondered how these departments' clustering of their courses contributes to the overall problem of clustering across the curriculum, and by extension students' access to the curriculum. The practice among multiple departments of offering seminars on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Wednesday afternoons, was offered as an example of how individual departments' scheduling affects student access to the curriculum in an overall sense. Mr. Shepard commented that it is his impression that many seminars are being offered on Wednesdays at 2:00.

President Marx expressed the view that, based on the evidence, and on the fact that enrollment has increased and faculty hiring is increasing, there is a growing crisis in the amount of classroom space and available classroom seats at the College; he emphasized that a contributing factor to this challenge is the fact that the College is not using fully all of the course time slots that are available. He noted that the classrooms reserved for particular departments are not used as efficiently as they would be if they were assigned by the Registrar. This situation, the President said, promises only to get worse, as the supply of classrooms and seats goes down, and demand (as a result of increases in enrollment, some classrooms going offline, and an expected increase in the size of the Faculty) goes up. The shortage of space available for classes and reduced number of student seats will be exacerbated during some periods by the loss of a number of classrooms during the construction of the new science center. President Marx urged that additional ways to ensure that the courses be distributed across time slots be considered as soon as possible. He noted that the alternative of building additional classrooms, which is implied by the current pattern of under-utilization of space, would mean that the College would have fewer resources to devote to other needs, such as faculty positions, salaries, or financial aid, in addition to having a pedagogical cost. The President commented that course-bunching, which may cause everyone to eat at the same time, also adds pressure to increase the size of Valentine. Professor McGeoch said that he believes that providing more information about patterns of class scheduling and the growth of the College, and the possible repercussions of not taking action on this front, will serve as an inducement for departments, voluntarily, to spread their courses more broadly across time slots. Mr. Shepard suggested that moving some classes from high-use time slots to other slots would have a significant impact on improving students' access to the curriculum. It was also noted that, if faculty would be more flexible about the size of the classrooms in which they are willing to teach, that would also help to alleviate the problem of the availability of classrooms.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu asked whether the CEP had explored creating additional time slots during some late-afternoons, which have traditionally been preserved for athletics and labs. Professor McGeoch noted that it is his understanding from the Class Scheduling Task Force that there are hard limits in terms of how late in the day athletics practices and events can occur. The committees discussed the extent to which faculty, when planning the academic schedule, should take into account restrictions on time slots that may be imposed by needs surrounding athletics. Professor Rockwell suggested that the Faculty should be asked to consider whether more classes should be permitted to be held late in the afternoon into early evening. He noted that, if the proposal is not brought forward, the Faculty will not discuss this option. Professor McGeoch noted that extending classes later into the day is an option that

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has been incorporated into the committee's first motion, which allows for some time slots that will result in classes being held beyond 5:00 P.M.

Conversation turned to the possibility of having more classes at the other end of the spectrum, that is in the early morning. Professor Rockwell noted that, when he has offered classes at 8:30 in the morning, enrollments diminish. Offering such a course and not having students enroll has no mitigating effect on the problem of bunching, he noted. Professor Saxton agreed and said that she had had a similar experience when offering an-early morning class and had found it frustrating. The committees discussed whether offering additional courses that are popular and/or required courses at 8:30 in the morning might be an approach that would result in higher enrollments and serve the goal of spreading courses across time slots. The student members of the CEP offered the view that most students would adjust to a morning schedule in order to take required courses and/or popular courses. The committees agreed that the CEP should continue to monitor closely any changes that are implemented in the course schedule in order to determine their impact on mitigating the issues of course bunching and classroom utilization. It was noted that the CEP has recommended as part of its second motion that the Registrar report to the Faculty annually about course scheduling, assess the College's efforts to balance its schedule, and provide information about peak and non-peak times. Professor Bishop emphasized that the new course scheduler created by Professor McGeoch is an excellent way for everyone to monitor the magnitude of the class bunching problem, by department and across the College.

The committees next discussed the agenda for meetings with the Board on April 1. Included will be a conversation about the future of the library, the liberal arts, and the humanities; a discussion with the CEP about the committee's work this year; and a presentation by Dean Call about the demographics of the Faculty. The Dean noted that he had had a good conversation with department chairs on March 25 about the demographics of the Faculty, the FTE allocation process, and target-of-opportunity hiring.

The committees had a brief discussion about faculty hiring, including expectations for target-of-opportunity hiring. Professor Umphrey suggested that, to inform the FTE allocation process, it would be helpful for the Faculty to engage in a College-wide conversation about curricular directions, as the ways in which faculty positions will be prioritized will essentially have the effect of shaping the curriculum (the ten FTES left to be allocated for priorities recommended by the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP), are relatively few in relation to the overall number of FTES that will be allocated as a result of retirements). It was noted that the FTES made available as a result of retirements will not be automatic replacements for retiring faculty, and may be allocated for already established or new priorities, which makes even more important the need to consider the curriculum in broad ways. The Dean noted that, with the number of planned retirements by faculty in many departments, the CAP's revolving FTE bank for target-of-opportunity hiring (to which two FTES were initially allocated) could be quickly repaid in many cases. Thus the total number of FTES hired over time through this bank could be much higher than two, though he would expect that the target-of-opportunity process would only be used for exceptional opportunities. Professor McGeoch commented that proposals for target-of-opportunity FTES will require departments to bring forward a convincing case and a compelling candidate. He noted that the CEP has not yet had the opportunity to discuss the ways in which this tool may be used more broadly, since a number of constraints are no longer in place. President Marx, who commented that the target-of-opportunity program represents

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additional resources that are being provided for faculty hiring, noted that a number of departments are already bringing forward proposals for target-of-opportunity hires. Three such proposals will be reviewed this spring, according to the Dean, who noted that furthering the diversity of the Faculty should also be a consideration in all faculty searches. Professor McGeoch said that the committee will have a discussion on this topic very soon.

In response to the question of what proportion of faculty hiring will be done through the target-of-opportunity process, the President stressed that the procedures developed by the CEP will enable the College to take advantage of exceptional opportunities that may arise to hire stellar candidates who would be attractive to many institutions. The procedures will provide the flexibility that is often needed to respond and act quickly when making such a hire. Dean Call noted that, given current faculty demographics and planned FTE growth, he would anticipate that the College could hire approximately ten new FTEs per year for the next five years and thus there should be ample capacity within that cohort to include some target-of-opportunity hires. The President commented on the relative efficiency of the target-of-opportunity hiring process, since there is likely to be only one candidate put forward by a department for a position.

Conversation turned briefly to the topic of teaching evaluations for tenured members of the Faculty. Professor McGeoch noted that the CEP has not yet considered this issue, which was recently discussed by the Committee of Six. It has been suggested that all tenured faculty should evaluate their teaching in all of their courses each year by means of their choice, with the results belonging to them. Professor McGeoch noted that he would be in favor of considering such a proposal. At present, there is a requirement voted by the Faculty in 2007 that tenured faculty evaluate their teaching in one course each year, with the same parameters. Mr. Shepard noted that students would be strongly in favor of such a proposal. Professor Bishop said that he would support having teaching evaluations for all tenured faculty for all courses, but would only be interested in raising this issue again if there were some sense that there would be an outcome that was substantive. Professor McGeoch said that there would not be time for the CEP to discuss this issue this spring because of other pressing agenda items. It was noted that when the current requirement for teaching evaluations for senior faculty was approved by the Faculty in May 2007, it had been agreed then, by Faculty vote, that the policy would be evaluated six years after its implementation. Professor McGeoch, who commented that he has always found course evaluations to be informative, noted that he would like to see greater uniformity between the ways that the teaching of tenured and untenured faculty is evaluated. It would make sense to him for tenured faculty to evaluate all of their courses. Many members of both committees agreed, while noting that a cultural shift might be required if all faculty were to be required to evaluate all courses. Professor McGeoch agreed that the CEP would consider this issue in the fall of 2011.

The members of both committees agreed that the meeting had been productive and that the two committees should plan to meet once or twice per year going forward. The members thanked the CEP, and the committee left the meeting at 5:30 P.M.

The Committee returned briefly to the topic of the CEP's proposals regarding class scheduling. Noting the current inefficient use of the College's resources in terms of classroom utilization, which results partially from course-bunching, and the effect that bunching has on students' access to the curriculum, the members discussed the CEP's recommendations that departments would begin voluntarily to spread their courses across a greater number of time slots. The members decided to consider more carefully whether, perhaps, departments should be

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required to do so. As a first step, the members asked the Dean to consult with the Registrar to get a better sense of individual departments' distribution of courses, and with the CEP to try to determine which departments have valid pedagogical reasons for offering multiple courses in the same or overlapping time slots. In this way, the Committee could get a better sense of the number of exceptions that would need to be made if a requirement were to be put in place that departments not reuse a timeslot until all have been used.

The Committee next reviewed proposals for new courses and voted six to zero in favor of forwarding them to the Faculty. Conversation turned to the draft Faculty Meeting agenda for April 5. The Committee next voted to approve the final minutes of its meeting of February 28. The members voted six to zero in favor of forwarding the agenda to the Faculty.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

March 13, 2011

The Committee of Six
Amherst College

Dear Colleagues:

I write on behalf of the Committee on Educational Policy on the issue of class scheduling. In April 2010, the Committee of Six created the Class Scheduling Task Force, and charged it “to explore mechanisms to increase Amherst students’ access to the full breadth of the College’s curriculum.” The task force was charged with “drawing up proposals, including new scheduling options, for consideration by the Faculty,” and with reporting their findings and proposals to the CEP. The full charge to the task force is included in its November 2010 report, which is appended. The CEP appreciates the thorough study conducted by the task force and the comprehensive report that it produced on a difficult issue.

It is clear that student access to the College’s course offerings is limited by our current unbalanced distribution of courses within the week. Beyond opening opportunities for students, there would be a second advantage to spreading our courses more evenly across the week: the possibility of minimizing the need for additional classrooms to support an expanding curriculum. The 2006 CAP report called for the introduction of 18 FTEs, which (barring changes in how classes are distributed across the week) will mean demand for classrooms will exceed supply at peak times.

The main problems with the current schedule are:

- There is too much clustering of courses in the middle part of the day, from 10:00 to 3:30, with a brief lull at noon.
- There are too few timeslots available for courses that are 80 minutes or longer.
- There are too few courses taught before 10:00 and on Fridays.
- Departments have too little information on how different timeslots are being used.

Our *Motion 1*, which appears below, proposes some changes in the times at which courses of different lengths can be offered. The slots on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons are adjusted to create a new 80-minute slot at 1:00, and new possibilities are created for scheduling longer classes on Tuesday and Thursday mornings and on Fridays.

We believe that better sharing of information on scheduling is vital and can go a long way to improving the use of underused slots. As described later in this letter, departments and faculty now have access to software that provides detailed information on course schedules over a number of semesters, including the preliminary schedules for future semesters. There should be two benefits: the ability to adjust schedules before they are finalized, and better understanding of the long-term trends.

It would be possible for the College to adopt policies that could dramatically improve our distribution of courses, including requiring that departments not reuse a slot until all have been used; requiring that departments move classes to Friday; expanding the teaching day by introducing evening classes; and requiring that more classes be taught in the late afternoon. However, we believe that there is no crisis that would justify adoption of measures that would significantly change the rules by which departments schedule courses or the hours at which courses can be taught. We instead urge departments in the strongest possible terms to take account of course clustering and the need to reduce conflicts for students.

We do hope that departments will avoid unnecessary reuse of timeslots and will make better use of Fridays. (The new slots that we propose in the morning and on Fridays should facilitate this.) We hope that voluntary steps will suffice, and we are unsure how a reasonable mandate could be constructed. There are often good reasons for scheduling multiple courses at the same hour. (For example, in some disciplines different levels of introductory courses are taught at the same hour. This causes no conflicts for students and permits shifts of students between levels, even after add/drop.) We do not believe that our course distribution problem is so severe that a mandate is necessary.

We also do not believe that the College should move in a significant way to introduce evening classes. Only the shift of numerous classes to the evening would affect the daytime scheduling problem, and this would unacceptably limit the academic options for students who participate in the performing arts. Evenings are used in other important ways, too, such as for lectures, departmental film screenings, and study sessions. On the other hand, we do not think that the exclusion of evening classes should be absolute, and we offer a carefully circumscribed expansion of evening courses in the proposals in our *Motion 2*. The goal is to give departments slightly more flexibility in scheduling their courses.

It would also be problematic to significantly expand teaching in the late afternoon. This part of the day is already heavily used, not just for athletics but also for departmental colloquia and events.

The Education and Athletics Committee wrote to the CEP twice (in 2008 and 2009) with requests concerning afternoon scheduling. The 2009 letter, which is attached, was passed on to the task force but received no formal response from the CEP. We would like to respond to their proposals now.

The first proposal is that weekday afternoons from 4:30 to 7:30 be kept as free as possible from required academic activity, and the second is that afternoon courses longer than 2 ½ hours begin at 1:30, not 2:00. The CEP believes that while these are reasonable requests, scheduling pressures make it impossible to institutionalize the informal division between the class day and the athletic day that occurs at 4:30 or 5:00. There will always be conflicts of all kinds present in the College schedule, and we think it would a mistake to reduce the length of the class day at a time when there are too many conflicts at peak times.

The scheduling proposals in *Motion 1* maintain the status quo on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: courses of any length may begin at 2:00. In most cases, but not all, three-hour classes that begin at 2:00 are labs that have alternative meeting times.

Our proposal for Tuesday and Thursday interacts with athletics in a more difficult manner. To be a useful addition to the day, the new 80-minute slot at 1:00 should not be required

to overlap with courses that begin at 1:30 or 2:00. The majority of the CEP supports permitting courses of two hours or longer to begin at either 1:00 or 2:30, a proposal that is included in *Motion 1*. The difficulty, of course, is that 2 ½- and 3-hour classes could extend to 5:00 or 5:30 respectively. We anticipate that this is a question that the Faculty will want to discuss carefully.

To reiterate, we think that while the College has a scheduling problem, it is not a crisis. We believe that the mandates listed above are unnecessary at this time. If availability of classrooms becomes an issue, the College can reconsider ways of ensuring that all classes can be taught.

The CEP recommends that the Faculty approve the following two motions:

Motion 1: The Faculty approves the following times for courses:

1. Monday - Wednesday - Friday:

- 50-minute classes may be scheduled on the hour, at 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00. (A 9:00 class may start anytime between 8:30 and 9:00.)
- 80-minute classes may be scheduled at 8:30, 12:00, and 2:00, on Monday-Wednesday, Wednesday-Friday, and Monday-Friday. (A 12:00 class can start anytime between 12:00 and 12:30. A 2:00 class may start anytime between 2:00 and 3:00.)
- Longer classes of up to 110 minutes may be scheduled at 8:00 or at 2:00 or 2:30.
- Classes of two hours may be scheduled at 2:00 or 2:30.
- Laboratories, studios, and class meetings of longer than two hours may be scheduled at 2:00.
- On Fridays, any class longer than 80 minutes can begin as early as noon.

2. Tuesday - Thursday:

- 50-minute classes may be scheduled as follows:
 - 9:00, 10:00, 11:30, 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30.
 - The following alternative start times are acceptable: a 9:00 course may start at any time between 8:30 and 9:00; a 11:30 course may start between 11:30 and 12:00; and a 1:30 course may start between 1:00 and 1:30.
- 80-minute classes may be scheduled as follows:
 - 8:30, 10:00, 11:30, 1:00, 2:30
- Classes and laboratories of more than 80 minutes may be scheduled as follows:
 - Starting at 8:00 or later, and finishing by 11:20.
 - 2-hour meetings may start at 2:30.
 - Meetings longer than two hours may start at 1:00 or 2:30.

3. The new schedule of 50-minute and 80-minute slots will begin in 2012-13. The new longer morning and Friday slots are available in 2011-12.

4. Classes may be scheduled at times other than those provided above by permission of the Dean of the Faculty.

Discussion:

The motion above is a variation of one brought forth by the task force. We are enthusiastic, in particular, about the proposal to create a new 80-minute time slot at 1:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, sliding the slot currently at 2:00 to 2:30. We also support another of their recommendations, opening slots for long classes on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

The motion does not include the task force recommendation to move the 50-minute slots on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons later by 30 minutes. Although shifting these slots later would resolve a three-way conflict in the middle of the day, where the 80-minute slot conflicts with both noon and 1:00 pm 50-minute classes, it would exacerbate conflicts with labs and athletics, and we are unconvinced that there would be enough benefit to make the shift worthwhile.

We agree with the task force that the College should abandon the currently authorized evening course slots for 80-minute courses (at 7:30 MW) and for multi-sectioned labs (at 7:00 MWTh). The 80-minute slots are never used, and multi-sectioned labs can be scheduled easily with permission of the Dean.

Motion 2: The Faculty endorses the following recommendations on course scheduling:

1. The Dean of the Faculty should apply the following guidelines when considering requests for courses at non-standard times:
 - The Dean should consider whether the course time creates new scheduling conflicts for students and whether alternatives to that course are available. (Classes that meet at least two times a week create new conflicts if the requested meeting times are split across distinct time slots, for example a class that meets Monday and Thursday morning or a class that splits between standard and nonstandard times.) Requests that create significant scheduling problems, and for which no alternative sections exist, should be turned down.
 - As much as possible, classes should avoid unnecessary conflicts with courses in regular blocks.
 - Classes scheduled to meet after 4:30 should, in general, be second (or higher) sections of multi-section courses, so that students have alternatives within the standard schedule.
 - Departments may be permitted to offer occasional electives in the evening, even if the same courses are not taught during regular hours. Departments should take care that they have sufficient elective offerings during regular hours to ensure that evening courses are not required for completion of the department's major. If a course is taught in the evening, the next offering of the same course should be during regular hours.
2. Departments have the authority to schedule classes into any regular slots, subject to

the availability of classrooms. They should strive to use the possible course times as fully as possible. In general, they should avoid reusing slots until they have used all the available slots for classes of that particular length. When possible, they should schedule large-enrollment courses (over 80 students) at non-peak times. Departments that use fourth hours should avoid scheduling them at peak times. Classes that meet five days a week should avoid using two blocks of peak times.

3. If the Registrar discovers that there are too many classes and not enough classrooms in a given time slot, he or she should consider the best way to match room capacities, configurations (lecture versus seminar), and technologies to class requirements. Priority may be given to classes scheduled within the standard schedule over classes scheduled at nonstandard times. If necessary the Registrar may contact departments to suggest alternative times and/or alternative rooms for individual courses.

4. The Registrar should report to the Faculty annually about course scheduling, assessing the College's efforts to balance its schedule and providing information about peak and non-peak times.

5. Instructors should give advance notice when a course has required events and meetings outside scheduled times, such as evening exams, film screenings, and field trips. If possible, notice should appear in the course description (e.g., "This course requires occasional attendance on Wednesday evenings."), but in any event should be announced on the first day of class.

Sharing of Scheduling Information

The task force identified the lack of information about course scheduling to be an impediment to reducing the clustering problem, and we agree. We believe that there is substantial goodwill among the faculty on this question and that improved communication can make voluntary solutions possible.

A graphical computer program that displays courses, times, and enrollments for each semester since Spring 2010, is available at:

<https://www.amherst.edu/people/facstaff/lamcgeoch/scheduler>

The data for Fall 2011 is preliminary, with course enrollments based on either "target enrollments," submitted by departments, or on enrollment limits. Our hope is that, in future semesters, we can distribute preliminary data early enough that departments can adapt their own schedules to take advantage of low-enrollment slots in the overall schedule. We expect that the historical information on schedules, together with the opportunity to adjust schedules, will be useful in reducing clustering in future years.

Summary

The College has a class scheduling problem, but not a crisis. We can do a better job ensuring that student academic choices are not unnecessarily limited because too many courses are taught in a few slots. The addition of a new 80-minute course slot and new options for longer

classes should help us improve the distribution of courses. The ability to offer occasional evening courses should give departments new flexibility and provide a small amount of relief in the daytime schedule, without greatly disrupting other evening activities.

The CEP believes that these relatively minor changes to our policies, together with voluntary efforts based on improved information, can greatly reduce the scheduling problem. The Committee will continue to monitor this issue in coming years and is hopeful that the College can achieve a better distribution of classes without needing to make any dramatic changes in its approach to scheduling.

Best regards,

Lyle A. McGeoch, for the Committee on Educational Policy:

Anthony Bishop
Gregory S. Call
Javier Corrales
Heidi Gilpin
Pranay Kirpalani '12

Rose Lenehan '11
Rick Lopez
Lyle A. McGeoch, Chair
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Appendices:

1. New Course Grid (CEP Proposal)
2. Current Course Grid
3. Report of the Task Scheduling Task Force
4. Schedule A (Task Force Proposal)
5. Prose Version of Task Force Scheduling Proposal
6. November 2009 Letter from the Committee on Education and Athletics

New Course Grid (CEP Proposal)

	MWF	MWF	MWF		TuTh	TuTh	TuTh
08:00 AM				08:00 AM			
08:30 AM				08:30 AM			
09:00 AM	50 min	80 min	2hr	09:00 AM	50 min	80 min	2hr
09:30 AM	50 min			09:30 AM	50 min		2hr
10:00 AM	50 min			10:00 AM	50 min	80 min	
10:30 AM				10:30 AM			
11:00 AM	50 min			11:00 AM			
11:30 AM	50 min			11:30 AM	50 min	80 min	
12:00 PM	50 min	80 min		12:00 PM	50 min		
12:30 PM			Friday ONLY	12:30 PM			
01:00 PM	50 min			01:00 PM		80 min	2hr
01:30 PM				01:30 PM	50 min		2hr
02:00 PM	50 min	80 min	2hr	02:00 PM	50 min	80 min	2hr
02:30 PM	50 min			02:30 PM	50 min	80 min	2hr
03:00 PM	50 min	80 min		03:00 PM	50 min		2hr
03:30 PM				03:30 PM		80 min	
04:00 PM			2hr	04:00 PM	50 min		2hr
04:30 PM			2.5hr	04:30 PM			2.5hr
05:00 PM				05:00 PM			2.5hr
05:30 PM			KEY	05:30 PM			
06:00 PM			3hr	06:00 PM			
06:30 PM			2.5hr	06:30 PM			
07:00 PM			2hr	07:00 PM			
07:30 PM			>= 2hr	07:30 PM			
08:00 PM			80 min	08:00 PM			
08:30 PM			50 min	08:30 PM			
09:00 PM				09:00 PM			
09:30 PM				09:30 PM			
10:00 PM				10:00 PM			

Current Course Grid

	MWF	MWF	MWF		TuTh	TuTh	TuTh
08:00 AM				08:00 AM			
08:30 AM				08:30 AM			
09:00 AM				09:00 AM			
09:30 AM				09:30 AM			
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09:30 PM				09:30 PM			
10:00 PM				10:00 PM			

Report of the Class Scheduling Task Force

November 20, 2010

Kathleen Goff

Rose Lenehan '11

Catherine McGeoch

Catherine Sanderson

Introduction

The Class Scheduling Task Force received its charge in April of 2010, and met regularly during the spring of 2010 and the fall of 2010. Our charge was as follows:

The Committee of Six charges the Class Scheduling Task Force to explore mechanisms to increase Amherst students' access to the full breadth of the College's curriculum. The Committee of Six charges the task force with drawing up proposals, including new scheduling options, for consideration by the Faculty. The Committee asks that the task force consult broadly with the campus community, including the chairs of all academic departments, other members of the Faculty, students, members of the administration, Information Technology and Registrar's staff, and those who oversee and schedule co-curricular activities. The Committee of Six asks that the task force report its findings and proposals to the Committee on Educational Policy by November 1, 2010 and with the goal that proposals be brought to the Faculty for consideration at a Faculty Meeting no later than February 2011.

To understand the issues involved and identify problems, we gathered information from various sources, including the following:

- Examined schedules and scheduling guidelines from several other schools including the 5-Colleges.
- Distributed a survey in May of 2010 to all students about scheduling issues and potential solutions.
- Analyzed scheduling and enrollment data from recent semesters.
- Held two open meetings with faculty to discuss scheduling issues and potential solutions.
- Met individually with departments and campus groups with particular scheduling concerns (including Art and the History of Art, Asian Languages and Civilizations, German, Music, Theater and Dance, the Science Steering Committee, and the Education and Athletics Committee).

- Reviewed information on classrooms and classroom utilization from the Shepley-Bullfinch Space Use Framework Study, dated April 2010.
- Met with the student senate.
- Met with administrators.

These meetings and discussions revealed various problems and concerns about the current schedule. These concerns included all of the following:

- Courses are unevenly distributed among course slots, reducing options for students.
- Many courses overlap two or more slots, which exacerbates conflicts for students. In some cases these overlaps are allowed by the current schedule of time blocks; in some cases overlaps arise due to courses taught at nonstandard times.
- Concerns were expressed at the number of courses and course-related activities (e.g., exams, screenings, and field trips) that are scheduled in times traditionally reserved for extra-curricular activities, including athletics (4:30 to 7:00 pm and weekends) and rehearsals and performances (after 7 pm and weekend evenings).
- Room use at peak times currently exhausts campus resources. If the College grows, or if classrooms are taken off line for maintenance or construction, this will become a crisis.
- Five College Deans would like to know if courses could be scheduled to facilitate Five-College exchanges.

We discussed the advantages and disadvantages of various solutions intended to resolve these problems. Our discussions included the following general areas:

- Making changes to the current class schedule to remove conflicts and to open up new time slots
- Expanding the current 8:30 am-4:30 pm footprint for class times (start classes at 8 am, and/or continue until 5 pm or later).
- Developing new class scheduling guidelines. Ideas included stricter enforcement of rules regarding nonstandard times, and strategies for encouraging departments to avoid bunching classes in peak times.
- Improving the flow of information about class scheduling, to departments from the registrar, from departments to the registrar, and among departments.
- Improving classroom usage (making our room use more efficient), and increasing the availability and usability of classrooms at the College.

A. Proposals

Based on our extensive discussions with students and colleagues, as well as our review of course scheduling patterns over several years, we have a number of proposals to recommend to the faculty for adoption.

- 1) *We recommend that a two-year trial period be established for the new schedule and policies we propose. At the end of that time an assessment should be made whether student access to the full breadth of the College curriculum has improved sufficiently.***

While we are optimistic that our proposals will improve availability of courses to students overall, there is no way to predict how new patterns of course schedules will develop in response to new time blocks and policies. If problems persist, it may be necessary to adopt additional policies that we outline in Section B of this report.

- 2) *We recommend that the faculty adopt the new class time grid referred to in Appendix A as Schedule A.***

Schedule A (and its prose description *New Scheduling Guidelines*) makes a few changes to the current schedule, as follows:

- a) The 50-minute MWF classes are shifted by 30 minutes in afternoons. This eliminates a 3-way time conflict (with the very popular 12:30-2:00 time slot) that is allowed in the current grid.
- b) An additional 80-minute (2 times a week) class block is added TuTh 1-2:20. This addresses an observation in the Shepley-Bullfinch report, supported by our own analysis, that the number of 80-minute slots available is too low compared to the number of 80-minute classes offered.
- c) Classes, seminars, studios, and laboratories of more than 90 minutes may start at staggered times, beginning at 1:30 instead of 2:00 (finishing by 4:30). Additional time slots for these meetings are opened on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, Friday mornings, and earlier on Friday afternoons. Under the current schedule, all such classes begin at 2:00, which places significant constraints on departments with large proportions of studios, seminars, and labs. Despite the potential to increase conflicts at one peak time (TuTh 10 to 11:20), we believe that opening these additional slots will have little effect on the larger picture because the total number of these types of classes is relatively small.
- d) Evening time slots are no longer considered part of the standard schedule. We do not propose to eliminate these time slots; rather, we propose that evening and afternoon times be made available for course scheduling under certain restrictions outlined in Proposal 3.
- e) As part of the new schedule, we recommend that some classes be allowed to "slide" their starting times forward or backward, as long as no new time conflicts are introduced. For example a 12:30 MWF class could begin at 12:00 or even at 12:15. Sliding class times may be used to allow set up/tear down times for faculty members who must bring technical equipment or demonstration materials to class; to reduce the lunch-time rush at Valentine; or to allow a department to make a course more accessible to 5-College students. These alternative times are listed in the New Scheduling Guidelines.

- 3) *We recommend that when a request to schedule a course at a non-standard time is made, the Dean of Faculty should consider whether that course time creates new scheduling conflicts for***

students, and whether alternatives to that course are available. (Note that classes that meet at least two times a week do create new conflicts if the requested meeting times are split across distinct time slots (for example a class that meets Monday and Thursday morning, or a class that splits between standard and nonstandard times)). Requests that create significant scheduling problems (and for which no alternative sections exists) should be turned down.

Creative scheduling is sometimes necessary to meet exigent circumstances: we believe the Dean should continue the current practice of allowing departments to schedule courses at nonstandard times (on request). However, we propose the following guidelines and restrictions.

- a) As much as possible, classes scheduled within the 8:30 to 4:30 footprint should avoid unnecessary conflicts with existing class blocks.
 - b) Classes scheduled to meet after 4:30 should be second (or higher) sections of multi-section courses, so that students have alternatives within the standard schedule.
- 4) *We recommend that the following steps be used to improve the flow of scheduling information at the College.*
- a) Every class that does not have an enrollment limit should have a **target size**, which represents the Department's best guess about the maximum expected enrollment for the class. The Registrar will use this information when assigning rooms to classes at the time of preregistration. This information will be provided when departments submit class schedules to the Registrar for the upcoming year.
 - b) The Registrar should regularly report to departments which times are to be considered "peak times" and "underused times" in the schedule.
 - c) Faculty members should give advance notice when a course has required events and meetings outside scheduled times, such as evening exams, film screenings, and field trips. Ideally this kind of notice should appear in the course description during pre-registration (e.g., "This course requires occasional evening attendance."), but should certainly be announced on the first day of class.
 - d) During the week before when class schedules are submitted to the Registrar, departments are encouraged to make their preliminary schedules available to one another (perhaps via a website or by email to interested department chairs) and to check for conflicts -- for example, between large introductory courses, courses that are similar and so expect to attract the same group of students, or courses that are required for significant numbers of double-majors). The IT department should be asked to facilitate the development of such a system.
- 5) *We recommend that the Faculty endorse the following guidelines for departments to use when setting class schedules. In all cases, exceptions may be allowed for reasons of pedagogy or to coordinate with other departments or academic programs.*
- a) A department should not re-use a time slot until all time slots have been used once.
 - b) Whenever possible, large-enrollment courses (over 80) should be scheduled at non-peak times.
 - c) Departments that schedule fourth hours should avoid scheduling the fourth hour at peak times. Classes that meet 5 days a week should avoid using two blocks of peak times.

- 6) *In cases where the Registrar discovers that there are too many classes and not enough classrooms for a given time slot, she considers the best way to match room capacities, configurations (lecture versus seminar), and technologies, to class requirements. Priority may be given to classes scheduled within the standard schedule over classes scheduled at nonstandard times. If necessary the Registrar may contact departments to suggest alternative times, and/or alternative rooms, for individual courses.*

This recommendation simply codifies current practice, which allows the Registrar to cope with scheduling and space problems when necessary.

B. Additional Measures

Reasonable people can disagree – on the effect of a given policy, on how much change is needed, and on how to balance competing priorities. In this section we provide a list of additional measures that we do not (unanimously) support, and some recommendations that do not rise to the level of formal proposals. Our intention is to provide a useful framework for discussion, should the CEP or the Faculty wish to make adjustments to the policies we have proposed.

- 1) We do not recommend more dramatic schedule changes, such as expanding the standard academic day past 4:30 pm. The obvious advantage of expansion is that more course options are opened to students. The disadvantage is that expansion would interfere with students' (and faculty members') ability to participate in various academic and extracurricular activities, including department seminars, invited speakers, College-wide events, athletic practices, and music/theater rehearsals. A sizable proportion of Amherst students are involved in such activities.

We are persuaded that it is not reasonable to ask coaches of team sports to plan practices with positions missing, or directors to plan rehearsals with particular students missing. Nor is it reasonable to ask a student to choose between two majors (many students who major in music and/or theater and dance are double majors) or to forgo participation in varsity sports in some semesters. The athletic facilities and coaches, as well as rehearsal spaces and directors, are fully occupied Monday through Friday (and weekends), and these groups cannot "double up" on some days in order to avoid conflicts with classes on other days.

For these reasons we believe that afternoons and evenings should be available for class scheduling on a restricted basis. The Faculty may wish to discuss proposals for increasing (or reducing) the number and/or type of courses taught in afternoons and evenings. Here are three possible paths.

- a) Expand the standard schedule (time slots available without restrictions) to include some combination or subset of the times listed below.
- i) Classes may be taught on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 4:30 to 6:30 pm.
 - ii) Classes may be taught on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 7:30 to 10:30 pm.
- b) Reduce (or expand) the restrictions on courses taught in afternoon or evening slots, by changing the Guidelines for the Dean in Proposal 3. For example, allow a course to be taught in

afternoons or evenings if it is one of several electives offered by a department in the semester (not just a second section). Or, restrict afternoon and evening classes to particular time slots or days of the week.

- c) Add restrictions on the use of these times for course-related activities such as exams, review sessions, screenings, and field trips (perhaps by targeting particular days).
- 2) The Faculty may wish to discuss additional mechanisms or incentives to ensure that departments do a better job of spreading courses across the schedule. The following observations led us to not make such recommendations.
- Counts of classes per time slot suggest that schedules are not dangerously out of balance at present. (We do note that student enrollments per time slot show much greater imbalances.)
 - Many departments and individual faculty members have expressed eagerness to schedule their courses in under-used time slots, but they need better information about which times would be suitable.
 - Many departments must schedule certain combinations of courses at the same time, or at particular hours of the day, to meet pedagogical constraints and to co-ordinate with other departments and programs.

For these reasons, we do not think stricter rules are necessary; and many departments would ignore such rules for good pedagogical reasons. However, should the College wish to pursue additional measures along these lines, the following ideas seem to be the most viable:

- a) Define a "special" time slot to be the first meeting time of the day (before 10:00), or the last meeting time of the day (after 1:30, or later, depending on class length). Departments offering fewer than 8 sections in a semester should schedule at least 1 section in a special time slot; departments offering 8 to 12 sections should schedule at least 2 sections in special time slots; departments offering more than 12 sections in a given semester should schedule at least 3 sections in special time slots. (Adapted from guidelines at Bowdoin.)
- b) Establish a quota system for proportions of classes that must be scheduled at under-used times; or that must be scheduled without repeating time slots. (Adapted from guidelines at Williams.)
- c) Authorize the Registrar to consider how well departments follow scheduling guidelines – for example, how many times a department has already used a given time slot – to establish priority when assigning rooms to classes. (Adapted from guidelines at UMass.)
- d) Assign "costs" to time slots (peak times cost more, under-used times cost less) and grant each department an appropriate number of "credits" to purchase time slots. (Adapted from guidelines at Oberlin.)

We have no recommendations for achieving better balance in student enrollments, except to open new time slots as outlined in Proposals 2 and 3.

- 3) We have no particular recommendations for facilitating 5-College exchanges, except to note that sliding course times may be used to shift particular courses by 15 or 30 minutes to accommodate travel times for 5-College students. We have examined the schedules for UMass and Hampshire College (the two institutions with smallest travel time from Amherst College) to understand how

their class times might interact with our proposed schedule. In particular we looked for courses that an Amherst student could take at another campus that would overlap with just *two*, but not *three*, Amherst class blocks. They are as follows:

- The UMass MWF schedule consists of 50-minute slots throughout the day, with 15-minute gaps between classes, so class times shift away from the hour. Allowing 20 minutes for travel time, an AC student could take a UMass course at the following times: 8:00 am, 11:15 am, 12:20 pm and 4:40 pm.
- The UMass TuTh schedule consists of 80-minute slots throughout the day, again with 15-minute gaps. An Amherst student could take a UMass course at the following times: 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.
- The Hampshire MWF schedule consists of 80-minute blocks throughout the day (until 10 pm) with a break for lunch. Assuming a 15-minute travel time each way, each class requires 110 minutes, which must necessarily overlap three AC class blocks. However, Amherst students can take courses at 4:00 pm, 5:30 pm, and 7:00 pm.
- The Hampshire TuTh schedule consists of 80-minute blocks with a shorter lunch break. An Amherst student could take courses at 12:30, 5:00, and 7:00 pm.

It should not be too difficult to perform a similar analysis for other schools and to make this information available to interested students.

- 4) In the course of our discussions, it has become clear that problems with classroom quality and availability sometimes impose significant constraints on departments' abilities to achieve their curricular and pedagogical goals. We make no formal recommendations because classroom issues are outside the charge given to our committee. However we believe these issues need to be addressed by the College in the near future, and encourage the administration, CEP, and Committee of Six to set up mechanisms by which such discussions can occur. Here are some observations and suggestions.
- a) Many classrooms are overcrowded, poorly equipped, or otherwise unattractive to use. A person or committee should be appointed to receive complaints about classrooms and to work to resolve problems. Individual faculty members and departments should be polled to learn what problems exist. The general goal should be to widen the *multi-purpose* usability of each classroom.
 - b) There is a significant mismatch between the distribution of class sizes taught and the distribution of room capacities available on campus. In particular there is an immediate need for at least 10 more classrooms sized for classes of 20 or fewer students.
 - c) The Shepley-Bullfinch long-term target of 60 percent utilization of rooms specifies 48 total general-use classrooms (the number we have). However they note that our *current* 50 percent utilization rate requires 58 classrooms, 10 more than we have. We believe their target is over-optimistic given that rooms and class formats are not interchangeable; also, some of their recommendations for achieving such a target are simply not practical.
 - d) We understand that the new science center may be able to alleviate some classroom pressures by providing more "right-sized" classrooms. However it is expected that the total number of classrooms available on campus will be reduced (by about 4 to 6) during that project, and the

total number of seats will not increase from present numbers when construction is completed. Assuming that the College continues with its planned growth in student and faculty counts, the current difficult situation regarding contention for classroom space will soon become a crisis.

- e) It will be necessary to find new classroom spaces to meet the looming crisis. Solutions may include repurposing rooms that are not currently being used as classrooms; making "department-owned" classroom spaces available to the Registrar for general use, making meeting rooms available for classes for a portion of the day or week; or installing temporary classroom structures.
- 5) Finally, we have noticed that the Registrar is in an impossible situation regarding the preregistration system and the current time-line for scheduling classes and rooms. She is asked to assign classes to rooms without sufficient information about enrollments, and then asked to find new rooms to accommodate large enrollment swings during the drop-add period. It is illegal (against fire code) to schedule a class into a room that is too small to contain it. Given the current insufficiency of classrooms at the College, and the increasing number of requests for rooms with specialized equipment, there is no margin for error in the current process --- yet errors in estimating class sizes are inevitable. We recommend that the CEP work with the Registrar to develop more effective strategies regarding preregistration, time-line, and room scheduling.

Schedule A (Task Force Proposal)

	MWF	MWF	MWF		TuTh	TuTh	TuTh
08:00 AM			Friday ONLY	08:00 AM			
08:30 AM			Friday ONLY	08:30 AM			
09:00 AM			Friday ONLY	09:00 AM			
09:30 AM			Friday ONLY	09:30 AM			
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2hr	
>= 2hr	
80 min	
50 min	

Amherst College

New Procedures for Scheduling Courses (Task Force Proposal)

1. Monday - Wednesday - Friday:

- 50 minute classes may be scheduled as follows:
9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30.
The following alternative start times are acceptable: The 9:00 course may start any time between 8:30 and 9:00; the 12:30 course may start any time between 12:00 and 12:30.
- 80 minute classes may be scheduled at 8:30, 12:00, and 2:30, on Monday-Wednesday, Wednesday-Friday, and Monday-Friday.
The 2:30 course may start any time between 2:30 and 3:00.
- 110 minute studios and laboratories may be scheduled in any combination of two of the following times: 2:30 Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and 8:00 AM Friday only.
- Laboratories, studios, and class meetings of 2 hours or longer may be scheduled in afternoons, to finish by 4:30:
 - 2 hour meetings start at 2:30 MWF
 - 2.5 hour meetings start at 2:00 MWF
 - 3 hour meetings start at 1:30 MWF
 - On Fridays only, any of these classes may start at an earlier time, but no earlier than 12:30.

2. Tuesday - Thursday:

- 50 minute classes may be scheduled as follows:
 - 9:00, 10:00, 11:30, 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30.
 - The following alternative start times are acceptable: The 9:00 course may start at any time between 8:30 and 9:00; the 11:30 course may start between 11:30 and 12:00; and the 1:30 course may start between 1:00 and 1:30.
- 80 minute classes may be scheduled as follows:
 - 8:30, 10:00, 11:30, 1:00, 2:30
- Classes and laboratories of 90 minutes or more may be scheduled as follows:
 - To start at 8:30 or later, and finish by 11:20.
 - To finish by 4:30:
 - 2 hour meetings start at 2:30
 - 2.5 hour meetings start between 1:30 and 2:00
 - 3 hour meetings start between 1:00 and 1:30

3. Classes may be scheduled at times other than those provided above by permission of the Dean of Faculty.

Amherst College

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- 80 minute classes may be scheduled at 8:30, 12:00, and 2:30, on Monday-Wednesday, Wednesday-Friday, and Monday-Friday.
The 2:30 course may start any time between 2:30 and 3:00.
- 110 minute studios and laboratories may be scheduled in any combination of two of the following times: 2:30 Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and 8:00 AM Friday only.
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 - 2 hour meetings start at 2:30 MWF
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- Classes and laboratories of 90 minutes or more may be scheduled as follows:
 - To start at 8:30 or later, and finish by 11:20.
 - To finish by 4:30:
 - 2 hour meetings start at 2:30
 - 2.5 hour meetings start between 1:30 and 2:00
 - 3 hour meetings start between 1:00 and 1:30

3. Classes may be scheduled at times other than those provided above by permission of the Dean of Faculty.



AMHERST COLLEGE
Department of Religion

November 19, 2009

Dear Colleagues on the Committee on Educational Policy,

In May of 2008, the Education and Athletics Committee submitted to the CEP a proposal regarding the scheduling of academic commitments at the College (attached). Our understanding is that due to the chaotic circumstances surrounding the economic crisis that began at the start of the 2008-09 academic year, the CEP has not yet had the opportunity to respond to the proposal; we also understand that the CEP is due in the near future to take up the issue of the scheduling of academic commitments in a broader fashion. So we want to take advantage of the present moment to revisit the Committee's earlier proposal.

In 2008, the EAC's recommendation was that **the CEP take steps to keep weekday afternoons from 4:30 to 7:30 PM as free as possible from required academic activity**. This would effectively reserve the late-afternoon time slot for athletics and other co-curricular/extracurricular activities, and allow enough time for students to eat dinner and return to academics by 7:30 PM.

On reviewing current patterns in the scheduling of courses, we now wish to add a more specific proposal to the general recommendation of 2008: that **afternoon seminars that run longer than 150 minutes begin at 1:30 PM rather than at 2:00 PM**. This proposal remains in service of the project of reserving the late afternoon for extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, but takes into account the fact that there are significant differences between the way scheduling works with respect to science labs on the one hand and other types of courses on the other.

During the current semester (Fall 2009) 48 out of a total of approximately 610 regularly scheduled course meetings run into the 4:30-7:30 PM time slot. Of these 30 are science lab meetings (LAB), 15 are lecture/discussion meetings (L/D), and two are honors tutorials (TUT). The figures for the Spring of 2010 are similar (see attached lists of courses).

In view of these results, it might seem that addressing the scheduling of science labs would be more pressing than addressing the scheduling of lecture/discussion classes. But in fact, there are options for ameliorating conflicts between athletic commitments and science labs within the current scheduling regimen. Most large science courses offer multiple labs, and some science departments have in recent years taken care to ensure that some lab meetings will be available to students who have nonacademic commitments in the late afternoon. We therefore think that the best plan of action regarding conflicts between science labs and athletic commitments is to work with the heads of science departments to ensure that some lab meetings

will fall outside the 4:30-7:30 PM window for as many courses as possible, rather than to legislate a move of lab meeting times *en masse*.

This option is not available for courses that meet only one or twice per week in the same time slot. Of the lecture/discussion meetings that run into the 4:30-7:30 PM window during the current semester, ten are three-hour seminars that begin at 2:00 PM and meet once per week, four are late-afternoon classes in the performing arts that meet twice per week, and one is a humanities course that meets for 80 minutes in the late afternoon twice per week. To the extent that these results are representative of general scheduling patterns at Amherst, moving the start of three-hour seminars ahead would eliminate most of the current cases where non-science courses extend past 4:30 PM.

We understand that moving the seminar slot ahead would produce a new set of difficulties involving conflicts with early afternoon courses. We also understand that our proposal does not eliminate all potential for scheduling conflicts between athletic and academic commitments, and note in particular that we do not recommend that the option for instructors to schedule courses at times of their discretion, with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty, be eliminated. But we continue to believe that there would be significant value in the adoption of a scheduling policy intended to minimize conflicts between academics and athletics, and it seems to us that the proposal described above will have a significant positive impact at a relatively low cost.

Sincerely,

The Education and Athletics Committee

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Andrew Dole, Religion, Chair
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Donald Faulstick, Physical Education and Athletics
Benjamin Garmezy, Class of 2011
Carol Knerr, Physical Education and Athletics
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