

RETENTION TASK FORCE
RECOMMENDATION TO IMPLEMENT MULTI-TERM REGISTRATION
Endorsed by the Retention Task Force 14 November 2014

Pending consultation with and endorsement by the university Registrar, implement a system of multi-term (two-semester) scheduling and priority registration, operating on either a Fall/Spring or Spring/Fall cycle. Scheduling and registration for Winter and Summer terms would continue as currently exists.

Rationale: The current practice of priority registration and scheduling for the Fall and Spring semesters could be enhanced in terms of both student support/advising and operational efficiency through implementation of multi-term registration. Under the proposed scenario, simultaneous registration for either (1) the Fall and subsequent Spring, or (2) Spring and subsequent Fall semesters would be an option for students during the Spring or Fall Priority Registration periods, respectively. A similar program was recently initiated at Cleveland State University; Michigan State University has a similar program for combined summer and fall registration. The data indicate that 82% of undergraduate and 78% of graduate students take advantage of the multi-term scheduling option. In the first year of implementation, Fall-to-Spring retention rates increased 3 ppt, and Fall-to-Fall retention increased 2 ppt. Cleveland State is also using the multi-term registration process to enhance class scheduling and degree-planning systems. All of these potential advantages exist for WKU; in addition, WKU's policy on required advising and use of Platinum Analytics (neither of which are in place at Cleveland State) suggest even greater possible value.

Components:

1. Development of multi-term schedules would follow the current process and final deadline for the relevant first semester. To address the additional workload associated with building a two-semester schedule, the process would be initiated earlier, with additional time allocated for each phase.
2. Recognizing that some unanticipated changes to the schedule for any term are inevitable, departments would be expected to develop schedules as close as possible to the anticipated final schedules for both terms. Addition of class sections would be permitted at any time, but deletions/changes to meeting day or time requested after the beginning of priority registration would be permitted only under limited circumstances, and once other options for retaining the original class section parameters had been exhausted. Room changes would continue to be dynamically assigned and adjusted in accordance with current practice.
3. Registration under the alternative Fall/Spring and Spring/Fall cycles:
 - a. Under a Fall-and-subsequent Spring cycle, Fall incoming students as well as continuing students would be eligible to enroll for one or both available semesters. Spring incoming students would register for their first semester as currently practiced. During priority registration (beginning in March), these and all continuing students would be eligible to enroll for Fall and the subsequent Spring. Priority registration would continue to follow policies and procedures described in WKU Policy 1.3140.
 - b. Under a Spring-and-subsequent Fall cycle, Fall incoming students would register for their first semester via ATP or other means as currently practiced. During Priority Registration (beginning in November), these and all continuing students would be eligible to enroll for Spring and the subsequent Fall. Students entering WKU in the Spring would be eligible to enroll for both the Spring and subsequent Fall semesters. Priority registration would continue to follow policies and procedures described in WKU Policy 1.3140.
4. Students would still be required to meet with their advisor each semester, even if they elect to participate in multi-term registration. For such students, advising during the non-registration semester would involve confirming/adjusting course enrollments for the upcoming semester and, more importantly, provide greater opportunity for formative advising and consultation.
5. Billing and distribution of financial aid would still occur on a semester-by-semester basis.

Potential Advantages:

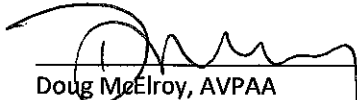
1. Students would be better able to manage their degree planning, as schedules for the upcoming two semesters would be available during the advising period. Faculty and departments would be positioned to more efficiently and effectively manage their class scheduling and workload assignments, for the same reason. Degree planning and class scheduling by students and their advisors would be further enhanced through implementation of comprehensive prerequisite-checking (see Challenges below).

2. New students would establish a stronger connection to WKU and their degree program earlier in their careers, which might yield a retention advantage.
3. There is greater opportunity for more formative advising of students during the non-registration semester.
4. Multi-term registration enables more effective implementation of a managed wait-list system and class schedule management via Platinum Analytics.

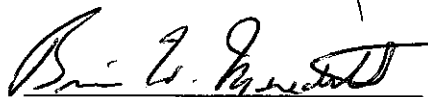
Challenges:

1. Multi-term registration requires additional back-end work by the Office of the Registrar (cleaning up of class rolls, communication with students, etc.), which in turn would be facilitated by comprehensive implementation of prerequisite-checking.
2. A Fall/Spring cycle likely necessitates holding some seats in reserve for incoming students, as ATPs continue well past the Priority Registration period. A Spring/Fall cycle eliminates some of the difficulties associated with registration of incoming students that exist under a Fall-Spring cycle. This might be best accomplished by utilizing predictive analytics.
3. Consideration of students needing to re-take majors courses that are part of a defined sequence will need to be addressed. This might be best accomplished by utilizing predictive analytics to hold a small number of seats for these students, as well as through implementation of a robust wait-list system.
4. Under a Spring/Fall cycle, sabbatical requests for the following Fall semester would still be pending at the time departments build the schedule; as such, departments would need to anticipate and plan for both possible outcomes of Fall sabbatical requests. Staffing plan requests for the following Fall semester would need to be factored into the schedule-building process as well.
5. Currently, registration holds are placed on students for various reasons, including outstanding account balances and fines. Thought would need to be given as to how best to maintain appropriate accountability on students during the non-registration semester.

Submitted for approval on Behalf of the Retention Task Force:


Doug McElroy, AVPAA

Recommended/Not Recommended:


Brian Meredith, Chief Enrollment and Graduation Officer

07 January 2015

Approved/Not Approved:

A. Gordon Emslie, Provost and VPAA