

REPORT OF THE FOLLOW-UP CLASSROOM COMMITTEE FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES SEPTEMBER 2014

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Committee Staff: Rose Razaghian, Executive Director for Academic Planning and Analysis, Columbia College, Office of the Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences

BACKGROUND: In 2011-12 then Vice President Nicholas Dirks convened a Classroom Committee to figure out how best to utilize and improve our classroom stock and to create optimal scheduling procedures. That committee issued a comprehensive report, an Executive Summary of which is attached here (Appendix 1). Among its recommendations was one that urged periodic review of the classroom situation to see if the recommendations in the original classroom report had been implemented and if new problems had arisen. In spring of 2014 Vice President Madigan appointed a smaller Follow-up Classroom Committee to do just that, it being clear that the crisis in classroom availability is still with us. What follows is the Follow-up Committee's report.

SUMMARY: In reviewing progress since the prior Classroom Committee report, the Follow-up Committee found that many things have improved: most classrooms now have appropriate electronic equipment; the new schedule of classes was implemented with minor changes, though compliance with its guidelines is spotty in some schools, especially in regard to Friday classes, only a few more of which have been scheduled than was previously true; and encumbered classrooms are being released for Registrar use in greater numbers and with more timeliness than before. However, the basic fact remains that we are increasing our student numbers, our M.A. programs, and our Continuing Education programs at a rapid clip, but we are not increasing our classroom stock (See Appendix 2 on the Growing Demand for Classroom Space.). The most egregious of the lost opportunities to do so was the Northwest Corner Building, which added only one additional large classroom and one seminar room to our total classroom stock. At the same time, because of lack of enforcement and oversight, departments are still not scheduling classes over the full range of times and days of the week but are clumping classes together in a few popular time slots, making it extremely difficult to match demand and availability in those hours. We below identify the most pressing remaining problems, make recommendations for solving them, and provide the relevant data to support those recommendations.

I. New Classroom Space and Interschool Sharing

The major source of our problems is simple: we do not have enough classroom space to accommodate our teaching needs. This is especially true when large classrooms are required. Consequently, the Classroom Committee, recognizing that the problem is simply going to grow worse, makes the following set of recommendations aimed at expanding our classroom stock now or in the future. We are also cognizant of the fact that in the future we will face new problems, including the increasing use of online technologies for delivering instruction that may mean physical classrooms will not be used for a given class on every day on which they currently meet. At the moment this is a rare phenomenon, but we need to keep track of changing patterns of classroom use so that we can in future make appropriate adjustments in how we assign rooms. We also address here the fact that to get rooms, the Registrar currently has to borrow classrooms from other university schools, such as Social Work. Some of those schools charge hefty sums for such use.

1. That to alleviate late-day classroom congestion (caused in part by the marked increase in classes for working professionals in M.A., SEAS, and SCE classes after 4:10 P.M.), the university consider leasing midtown classroom space and/or making use of space at the Columbia School for Children in the late afternoons and early evenings.
2. That schools at Columbia should not charge other schools for the use of their classrooms space or use of the technology housed in that space. Arts and Sciences should request the Provost to formulate and disseminate such a policy as is done at Ohio State and other universities.
3. That the University Space Committee be charged with identifying any under-utilized space on the Morningside Campus that could be converted to classroom use, including office space or departmental library space when the contents of those libraries are moved elsewhere.
4. That to alleviate classroom shortages at every level, the university commit to retaining as Registrar-controlled classroom space the majority of rooms in Uris when the Business School moves to Manhattanville.
5. That each department each semester be required to report to Rose Razaghian, Executive Director for Academic Planning and Analysis, all classes that do not meet regularly in their assigned classroom space because content is being delivered digitally. This will allow Arts and Sciences to monitor the frequency of this practice and modify scheduling policies accordingly.

II. The Schedule of Classes

The Schedule of Classes is the primary tool for utilizing classroom space optimally. At the time of the last Classroom Committee report, the Schedule was rationalized to put all the schools in

the Arts and Sciences construct, as well as SEAS, Barnard, and SIPA, on the same schedule and to lengthen the teaching day. (SIPA and SCE have not yet come into full compliance, though Barnard and SEAS have largely done so.) The committee also developed scheduling guidelines that invited departments to spread their classes across the full range of available days and times, including Fridays, and to avoid clumping classes together in a few preferred slots. It is to be understood that in asking departments to utilize Fridays for seminars or language classes, we do not intend for such classes to be scheduled after 3 p.m. on that day, and we urge all tours and orientations for incoming students to refrain from indicating that students have no classroom obligations on those days. We have again refined the Schedule, though it remains largely in line with changes made last time, and have again revised the guidelines for departments to use in the scheduling process. In addition, we have attempted to address the specific problems caused by the 150-minute classes that SEAS now schedules for the 4:10 hour and that effectively take a number of large classrooms out of circulation over two lecture periods. Specifically, we recommend:

6. That we adopt the attached schedule of classes for all classes held in Registrar-controlled rooms (Attachment 3), which will be uniform across all of the Schools of the Arts and Sciences, SEAS, SIPA, and Barnard, with the exception that the 5:40 lecture slot will be available as an alternative to the 6:10 lecture slot for SEAS.
7. That if the severe shortage of large classrooms at the 4:10 hour on Monday through Thursday continues, SEAS move the 150-minute classes scheduled at that hour to Fridays or begin those classes at 5:40.
8. That in order to insure that departments spread their classes across a wide range of days of the week and times of day, we adopt the following revised guidelines for scheduling classes (Attachment 4).
9. That faculty who wish to request specific rooms or to request changes in their classroom assignments do so only through their ADAs or the staff person in their department or school charged with scheduling classes. This is to avoid incomplete information being available to those with scheduling responsibilities and so that all the interlocked systems for delivering information about rooms and schedules be properly aligned. Faculty should realize that not all individual requests for assignments or room changes can be honored.
10. That students giving campus tours and orientation sessions be trained to refrain from promising incoming students that they will have no Friday classes and that literature about internships make clear that these can be scheduled on any day of the week and not only on Fridays. Finally, that any printed or web material stating that students have no Friday classes be revised to remove such statements.

III. Classroom Caps

Some of the classroom problems that have too often marred the first days of each semester could be alleviated if we adopted a capping policy that would allow us to better monitor anticipated class size and assign rooms accordingly. If we had such a policy, there would be less need to change classrooms in the opening weeks of the semester, a process that often causes a cascade

effect whereby many classes are disrupted to accommodate one whose size has been miscalculated, especially when that class requires the use of one of our few large classrooms. It should be noted that the majority of classes will not need caps, but classes anticipated to contain over 80 students will. Developing caps will involve determining how many spaces are needed for those students for whom the course is a requirement and determining how many spaces should be left for incoming students, including in language classes.

11. In order to avoid the problems that often occur in procuring rooms for big classes at the start of each term, we recommend that Arts and Sciences adopt the attached capping policy and begin its implementation for fall term 2015 (See attachment 5).
12. That especially in departments with large M.A. enrollments, incoming students go through pre-registration in the semester or summer before they matriculate, acknowledging that some enrollment choices may change after orientation and advising. Nonetheless, departments that have experimented with this process have found that it is a good indicator of eventual enrollments.

IV. Sound Abatement

Faculty have reported that classrooms located around the main green, especially in Hamilton and Kent, can be adversely affected by ambient noise, specifically amplified sound used in activities on Low Plaza and by leaf blowing equipment in the fall months.

13. We urge that the committee determining when amplified sound can be used on the green be conservative in its approval processes when classes are in session. Student political and social activities on the green and Low Plaza are important. Careful consideration should be given, however, as to when sound amplification is really necessary for their success.
14. Leaf blowing is different. We strongly recommend that Facilities mandate that all such activities be scheduled before 8:30 A.M. or on Saturdays.

V. Implementation

We anticipate that implementing these changes will not be easy since few faculty understand the ins and outs of scheduling and classroom use, and departmental administrators sometimes have difficulty making faculty comply with such rules. Therefore, we recommend the following measures to maximize both understanding and compliance.

15. That in order for all affected parties fully to understand the new capping policy, schedule of classes, and guidelines for scheduling classes, that the Chair of the Follow-up Classroom Committee, along with the Registrar, Rose Razaghian, Executive Director for Academic Planning and Analysis, and other members of the Committee as needed, will

make a series of presentations about these policies to a variety of groups this coming fall: ADAs above all, but also DUSs and DGSs, Chairs, EPPC, PPC, COIs, and the full faculty. That this will be done not only for Arts and Sciences, but also for SEAS, SIPA, SCE, and Barnard as needed.

16. That Rose Razaghian, working closely with the Office of the Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences during the implementation phase, be charged with monitoring compliance with the guidelines for scheduling classes and capping classes and, with the assistance of the Registrar when needed, for negotiating with the faculty and appropriate departmental staff to adjudicate problems.

Appendices

1. Executive Summary of the Report of the Arts and Sciences Classroom Committee, 2011/12
2. Growth in Classroom Demand in Registrar Rooms, 1997/1998-2012/13
3. Schedule of Classes: Arts and Sciences and SEAS Master Day/Time Schedule in Registrar Classrooms
4. Guidelines for Class Scheduling
5. Guidelines for Pilot to Place Caps on Courses