

**State of California  
M e m o r a n d u m**

**CAL POLY**

*San Luis Obispo, California*

**To:** University Registration & Scheduling Committee

**Date:** November 6, 2003

**Via:** Paul J. Zingg  
Provost

**From:** Cornel Morton  
W. David Conn  
Co-Chairs, Council on Student Success

**Cc:** Council on Student  
Success

**Subject:** Cal Poly's Course Registration System

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As Co-Chairs of the Council on Student Success, we have been directed by the Council to ask for an early study of the University's course registration system leading to recommendations for improvement.

The Council is very concerned about the limitations of the present system. At a time when the University's budget is under extreme pressure and most academic departments are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the demand for class enrollment, it is particularly important that available seats are assigned as equitably and efficiently as possible.

The Council requests that the committee start in the present (fall 2003) quarter by considering the overall needs of the University in this area and developing a vision of what an "ideal" course registration system might look like. During the upcoming winter quarter, the Council hopes that the committee will be able to engage in detailed planning for improvements to the existing system that might feasibly be implemented within a few months. By the beginning of the spring quarter 2004, it is hoped that decisions regarding these potential improvements can be finalized, making it possible to educate and inform the entire campus community in readiness for summer or fall implementation.

The Council recognizes that there are many inter-related issues to be considered. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. As a general principle, who should control which students occupy the seats in a class (e.g., is this a decision for administrators or for faculty?)
2. What principles should govern the assignment of registration priorities to the general student body (e.g., should we continue to use the present system or something like it, giving priority in a student's first quarter plus three more, or should we change to something different, such as a system based on seniority)?

3. What principles should govern the assignment of additional or special priorities (e.g., should we continue to give special priorities to groups such as athletes and, if so, what criteria should be used in their selection)?
4. Should we change (e.g., from 16 to 14) the number of units for which a student may enroll during the first rotation and should the limitation apply to all students, including those using special priority? (Note: the committee has already twice endorsed a proposal to change from 16 to 14 units.)
5. Now that most students register on-line, is it possible (and would it be desirable) for the registration period to be shortened?
6. How long should the add-drop period be (recognizing that the published period for adding may be different from the *effective* adding period, due to “zeroing out” and other practices)? Would a shorter add-drop period impose a special hardship on entering students?
7. What mechanisms, if any, should instructors have to influence or control the assignment of spaces in a class (e.g., under what circumstances, if any, should they be allowed to “zero out”)?
8. Can (and should) we eliminate the need for in-person “crashing” of courses? Can we make the process of adding courses more transparent and predictable? Should we attempt to identify/develop, and implement, a wait-listing system for registration, and would this entirely replace the present permit system? If the permit system is retained, are there ways of improving it (e.g., reducing the number of permits that must be processed manually)?

The committee is encouraged to explore other relevant issues and options, as it deems appropriate.

Clearly, the issues are quite complex. Furthermore, the Council does not wish to raise expectations unreasonably, especially given that the resources needed to implement some desirable changes would be difficult to find in the present budget climate. However, it may be possible to achieve other improvements at little or no cost, and the Council would like to identify and move forward with these without delay.

Thank you for your cooperation!