

To: Deans – to be distributed to all individuals involved in course scheduling in units and colleges

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Subject: Enhancing Student Success Through Strategic Course Scheduling and Space Utilization

Overview

Student success is at the heart of our mission as a university. One of the most impactful yet often overlooked factors influencing student experience is the structure and availability of course schedules. Efficient use of classroom spaces and time slots is not merely a logistical concern—it is a strategic imperative that directly affects academic outcomes, student satisfaction, and institutional effectiveness. This memo outlines steps that the institution will be taking towards the goal of providing the best student experience while also making efficient use of space resources. This memo outlines guiding principles that will inform scheduling practices for undergraduate courses at the University of Utah starting Spring 2026, with full implementation by Fall 2026.

The Student Experience

Students thrive in environments where they can build balanced schedules that accommodate academic, personal, and professional responsibilities. When course offerings are concentrated in limited time blocks or spaces, students face:

- **Scheduling conflicts** that delay graduation.
- **Limited access** to required courses.
- **Increased stress** due to back-to-back classes or long gaps between sections.
- **Reduced engagement** when courses are scheduled at suboptimal times or in overcrowded rooms.

By contrast, a well-distributed schedule across the full range of available times and spaces promotes flexibility, equity, and academic performance.

Strategic Use of Space and Time

To support our students effectively, we must optimize the use of all available instructional spaces and time slots. This includes:

- **Expanding course offerings** into underutilized morning, late afternoon, evening, and Friday time blocks.
- **Leveraging all campus facilities**, including satellite locations and hybrid/online formats.

- **Aligning scheduling practices** with student demand patterns and program pathways articulated in functional four-year degree plans.
- **Coordinating scheduling** to optimize scheduling practices and reduce peak-time congestion.

Course Schedule Optimization Guidelines

The principles above can be implemented by following the practices outlined in this section.

Space Utilization Requirements

University resources are a precious commodity which must be used wisely to ensure space on campus is utilized efficiently, which helps us to meet USHE utilization standards.

Academic classroom space is subject to usage oversight by the Office of the Provost. Stewardship is given to the Office of the Registrar for the scheduling of General Assignment Classrooms; however, use of all classrooms/labs should meet state utilization guidelines as follows:

USHE Standards for:	Room Utilization Rate (RUR)	Seat Occupancy Rate (SOR)
Classroom Use	33.75 hours per week	66.7% classroom seat occupancy
Teaching Lab Use	22.5 hours per week	80% lab station occupancy

Time Distribution Metric Requirements

Historically, it has been common for departments to schedule courses during “primetime,” with the most commonly requested time being Tuesday/Thursday 10:45-12:05 pm. There are not enough classrooms across campus to place all requests during this hour, nor give every department their first choice. Moreover, focusing most courses in these time slots disadvantages students who often have to balance their schedules and make difficult choices about which courses they can accommodate. Instead, the guidelines below should be followed in scheduling:

- Class section offerings should be balanced equally between MW/F and TH sections.
- Primetime is defined as 9:00 am – 2:00 pm, Monday through Friday (subject codes with five or fewer sections are exempt).
 - For Spring 2026, departments are required to spread their schedule such that:
 - no more than **50%** of classes are scheduled in primetime, and
 - the remaining **50%** are to be scheduled outside of primetime hours.
- Friday should be considered an instructional day as it represents 20% of the available classroom space on campus. Units should consider using MWF pattern to more effectively use spaces on Fridays
- With the exception of courses with specialized space needs, departments should not expect that courses will be assigned the same space on a continuing basis. Classes not filling to 66% of room capacity may be reassigned to an alternative space to optimize utilization.
- Departments should be prepared to select an alternative time if appropriate classroom space cannot be scheduled during the initially requested day/time proposal.

- Rules have been created in CLSS to help determine number of sections scheduled in each time slot. Course schedules should be validated early and often during the initial build period to ensure the 50/50 distribution, and that maximum thresholds are not exceeded.

Beginning Fall 2026, the metrics will shift to also require distribution by day of the week.

- Departments will be required to spread their schedule such that
 - no more than **30%** of classes are scheduled on MWF in primetime
 - no more than **30%** of classes are scheduled on TH in primetime
 - the remaining **40%** are to be scheduled outside of primetime hours

Role of Departments and Colleges in Scheduling

The *department chair or their designee* has the responsibility to:

- Schedule classes according to the [University Standard Time Blocks](#). The use of standard time blocks allows students to reduce course conflict and select the courses they need. Classes not adhering to standard time blocks will be subject to a lower priority during the scheduling process and may not be placed if available space cannot be procured.
- [Spread sections](#) to provide opportunities throughout the day. This is especially critical for courses that carry GE/BD designations.
- Limit the number of classes scheduled by your department during the same timeframe (meeting hour/days)
- Review historical enrollments to help identify capacity adjustments needed to be in alignment with anticipated enrollment, informing appropriate classroom assignment.
- Determine proposed class offerings and submit schedules in CLSS no later than posted deadlines.
- Ensure that scheduling actually supports the functional four-year degree plan (e.g., two required courses not being offered solely at the same time).
- [Review course fill rates and monitor enrollments](#) during the registration period to:
 - Determine if enrollment warrants opening additional seats or opening a new section. Course sections that reach 95% capacity or higher limit students' ability to optimize their schedules and should be prioritized.
 - Review wait-list information and provide resources to move students into high demand courses.
 - Follow Activate guidelines for low enrollment courses that do not meet the exceptions.

The college *associate dean or designee* has the responsibility of working with Departments to coordinate scheduling activities and to:

- Ensure courses that carry GE/BD designations in the 1000 and 2000 level, that do not have any pre-requisites other than Writing or Math, are evenly distributed across the week. As much as possible, balance the anticipated enrollment across the MWF versus TR timeframes.
- Coordinate across departments to ensure that courses that satisfy different GE requirements are not all offered at the same time and on the same days. Ideally, no more than 2-3 of these courses would overlap, and should be programmed in a way that allows

students to build a workable schedule with GE/BD-designated and major courses across the various requirement areas in a given semester.

Tools to Support Schedule Optimization

The Office of the Registrar has several tools and mechanisms available to help you assess your departmental and college offerings, some of which are highlighted below.

- The Heatmap in CLSS is a powerful tool to visualize how departments are fulfilling the need to spread courses throughout the week, and can help deconflict across offerings.
- Rules have been created in CLSS to help determine number of sections scheduled in each time slot. Course schedules should be validated early and often during the initial build period to ensure the required class distribution, and that maximum thresholds are not exceeded.

The “View By” function in CLSS allows you to view your schedules by day of the week and time offered. CLSS provides the ability to export data to excel for additional review.

Implementation Timeline and Support

The Spring 2026 course schedules must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office via CLSS workflow by 5 pm on **Friday, August 1, 2025**.

Scheduling Specialists will be available to help with the process throughout the summer. Office hours will be held each Monday afternoon through June and July from 3-4 pm in person at the Scheduling Office, 40 SSB. Departments can schedule an individual consultation for assistance with available tools by emailing scheduling@utah.edu.

A video tutorial will be available on the CLSS Canvas page to walk schedulers through running the course validation process.