

**Notes from the Committee Meeting  
on February 20, 2008 of the  
Consideration of Undergraduate Four hour courses at FSU**

**Present:**

(Chair) Susan Fiorito, Chair of the University Curriculum Committee  
Kim Barber, University Registrar, Director of Admissions  
George Bates, Chair of the University Graduate Policy Committee  
Sara Hamon, Faculty Administrator, Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Bruce Lamont, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, College of Business  
Karen Laughlin, Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Joe Nosari, Associate Vice President, Office of the Provost  
Judy Nunez (representing Bruce Janasiewicz, Undergraduate Studies, Mapping and  
Community College Relations)  
Bob Pekurny, Chair of the Senate Liberal Studies Committee  
Anne Rowe, Dean of Faculties

**Charge:**

Larry Abele has asked the Senate Steering Committee to consider the feasibility of converting some or all of FSU's undergraduate curriculum to four hour courses. Dr. Jayne Standley, Faculty Senate President invited each of the individuals above to participate in one meeting to open discussion on this topic to see where we go from there. Each person was invited for his/her area of expertise or job function. Susan Fiorito will chair the committee.

The Steering Committee has identified several areas of discussion: What happens to the unified course numbering system? Is there enough space for a 2 hour MW, two hour TTH and no classes on F. configuration? If not this configuration, how would the classes meet? What is the effect of one course in a college on other college's degree programs that require that course due to requirements of outside accrediting or professional associations? With legislative mandate for 120 courses, what topics would we lose in the curriculum? What are the costs pro or con of such a transition?

*The following comments were made throughout the meeting and grouped as best as possible by topic*

**Reasons given for the conversion of hours:**

- Students would take fewer courses at one time therefore they would have more time to focus and study topics in depth.
- Faculty and administration would like to see more depth in courses-more writing
- Curriculum does need revisions
- According to the Provost's representative, the driving motivation is to give students a better education
- Some say there would be possible budgetary savings in the long-term

**Faculty Senate Steering Committee Questions:**

**What happens to the unified course numbering system and transfer credits?**

- Prerequisites are state mandated

- Liberal studies statewide for the most part are three hours and thus the conversion would create transfer concerns and pose challenges
- Student transferring in without the AA would be difficult to convert a three hour course to a four hour credit
- At lower division – articulation with community college is a concern
- A number of community colleges are now designated as senior institutions offering bachelors so upper division transfer would be problematic as well
- After speaking with the UF, Dean Laughlin felt that the transfer issues may not be insurmountable. Following is a summary of the email regarding this issue:
  - The UF would accept the three credit version and the student would not be required to take any additional credits. UF would simply substitute the three credit course for their four credit course. Also UF would only calculate three credits (instead of four) into the student's pre professional GPA.

### **Space Concerns:**

- Larger classes would be dependant totally on the large classroom building and other lecture halls which are already booked solid
- If classes could be structured as three contact hours and one hour online then the space problem may not be as severe. However not all classes are suited to this scheme.
- With all courses converting to four hours there would be real space issues; space concerns could stop this dead in its tracks
- Monday-Thursday 50 minute scheduling would make it possible but some faculty feel they need to teach their subject matter in one time block
- The 500 seat classroom requests now exceeds accommodation
- It is true that fewer courses would be scheduled however, there would be a loss of time slots with the addition of one hour to each course
- Expanding official University operating hours would be one way to offset the loss of standard meeting time but who will teach at those hours?
- The current University standard meeting time model allows for scheduling classes on MWF's from 8 am – 9:30 pm for a total of 11 standard time slots, however, the last two, late evening slots are not heavily used. When talking about MWF time slots, the typical number used is 9 which is from 8 am – 6:30 pm. The TR schedules have 9 time slots from 8 am – 9:30 pm. For practical purposes, this totals 18 time slots in a week. A two-hour MW/TR schedule within existing operating hours would result in 5 time slots for each day combination, allowing for 15 minutes between classes. Under this model classes would be scheduled from 8 am – 8 pm. This would drop the University from a total of 18 time slots in the existing model to 10. Further analysis would be needed to see if the reduction in time slots would still provide enough space in light of a reduction in course offerings.
- No matter what, core classes would still be there, thus not eliminating the very largest classes
- The only rooms now that we have any consistent degree of flexibility in are classrooms of 30 or less. Most 40+ rooms to the large lecture halls are booked consistently through the week until evening hours or Friday afternoons.
- Maximum efficiency in the scheduling process would be needed. One possible result would be greater centralization of scheduling and enforcement of standard meeting times.

The net result will be a lower priority on instructor choice of rooms, days or times.  
Additional staff would be needed

- Another class room building would be invaluable but we can not count on this for two and one half to three years from the time that funding is appropriated
- Class schedules are built approximately one year out so we are talking about a long term planning period
- Mixing a large number of three hour courses with four credit hours courses would complicate the scheduling situation further and might hamper progression to degree if required classes were offered at conflicting times or non-standard start and stop times

#### **Concerns with requirements of outside accrediting or professional associations**

- How would AP courses be handled from high schools?
- We would need to revisit the process of handling these students and their credits
- What will happen with Dual enrollment?
- There are concerns with the Engineering program since it is a joint program with FAMU

#### **With legislative mandate for 120 courses, what topics would we lose in the curriculum?**

- Liberal studies must be 36 and there is a 120 hour rule for most degree programs (of course there are some exceptions)
- SACs mandates a certain distribution of courses

#### **What are the costs pro or con of such a transition?**

- The conversion seems so labor intensive without new faculty- there is a feeling it is a way for a few to do more work
- This must be tied into the AOR
- What are we valuing at FSU? Can there be a Pathways of Excellence in Teaching?
- Some said that faculty morale would be low with the same 2/2 teaching load which would add up to eight hours/semester (16 hours/year) compared to the current typical load of six hours/semester (12 hours/year) unless teaching loads are reduced with a 2/1 load thus assigning faculty to the same number of hours faculty now teach.
- The result of this would be to move students through the University at a much faster rate
- The conversion would mean a 25% increase in teaching time and a 25% reduction in classes, which could mean that all electives would be deleted.
- There may be more control and a more focused vision for the Liberal Studies program
- Having a mixed curriculum offering four and three hour courses at the same time will be difficult. There needs to be some money from Westcott to fund this
- Questions that need to be asked: does this change make our programs stronger?
- This will result in graduate students teaching more hours, is this best for them?
- What will be considered the standard load for graduate assistants on waivers? 8 or 12 hours?
- In a quest to improve graduation rate do we hope that students take 16 hours each semester?
- 2 hour modules would allow programs to cover more breadth
- A positive note is the open door to repackaging courses, cross-discipline, broader approaches
- In order to do this it would probably be about a five year process
- Give rewards and resources for these conversions

- It can energize people to make changes if money is given to do this
- We need to find places for faculty to be excellent
- All mapping needs to be redone as well as all courses need to pass through the curriculum committees at all levels
- What is the motivation for faculty to do this with an ever increasing need to balance teaching and research?
- Details can be worked out with time and money supporting this change
- No matter what, faculty have to buy in for this to work
- One idea to reduce four hours of contact to three hours of classroom time in a four credit course would be for students to take all exams outside class time. This would have scheduling benefits to back out all evaluative processes and move assessments out of the classroom to a testing center
- Increasing the testing center load would require additional space, funding and staff to expand seats and staff resources

### **Example of four hour conversion in a Graduate Program:**

- The College of Business has converted their MBA program and is in the process of converting their Masters and PhD programs to two/four hour courses (modules).
- BL indicated that faculty viewed this conversion as somewhat negative in that the administration was trying to extort more work, more contact hours, more content for same pay. In effect the administration was asking for more teaching and less research.
- One motivation for this change was trouble staffing some courses
- The University of Florida upper division business courses are all four hours.

### **Examples of courses at FSU that are currently four hours**

- modern language
- Statistics
- Some science classes

### **Questions:**

- We need to rethink pedagogically if we can offer this to only upper division
- Can we make it voluntary?
- Should we go to legislature with this idea?

### **General Summary**

Conversion of three hour classes to four hours can be done if:

- Faculty buy into the conversion
- Money and other support (release time) is given to make the appropriate changes
- AOR is tied to increased teaching hours
- Space allocation for classes is turned completely over to central administration with additional staffing
- Some courses such as liberal studies try it out first having enough funds and resources to do it right.
- Enough thought is given so coordination with community colleges.