



Date: February, 24, 2020

To: Christine Bovis-Crossen, Provost & Vice President Academic

From: Michael Bluhm, AVP Enrolment Services & University Registrar

Re: **Student Budget Consultation Report 2020/21 Response – Course Offerings**

Dear Dr. Bovis-Crossen,

I'm writing in response to the TRU Student Union 2020/21 Budget Consultation Report. As you know, TRU students have identified course offerings as one of their top priorities for the coming year, including concerns with respect to scheduling and registration.

The related recommendations in the 2020/21 TRUSU report are as follows:

- 5.d) Improve course delivery in terms of frequency, scheduling, and cancellations/ changes to facilitate timely paths to graduation
- 5.e) Improve course registration in terms of information, user-friendly processes, and waitlisting

Response to Recommendation 5.d)

Decisions with respect to which courses are offered, frequency of offerings, and changes to offerings including cancellations all reside in academic departments.

With respect to scheduling, Enrolment Services manages a centralized scheduling system for the majority of courses offered. Since 2016, a great deal of effort has gone towards shifting localized manual scheduling practices into a coordinated centralized process that leverages technology now available via the software product we use called Infosilem. However, while fewer each year, some academic departments still choose to pre-determine all or some of their specific course schedules which are then provided to Enrolment Services to be entered into the scheduling system as non-variables. The TRUSU report mentions Law and Biology specifically. Law determines all of their own scheduling, and Biology and Chemistry determine their own lab schedules.

Our scheduling process and technology allows us to define constraints known as course combinations. Course combinations are groupings of courses that are known to be required by students in any given term, in a typical progression pattern, in order for them to progress in their program and thus need to be scheduled conflict-free. The

Enrolment Services scheduling team continues to work with academic departments to refine course combinations and improve conflict-free availability of required courses.

The TRUSU report also refers to scheduling issues with respect to the size and capacity of rooms. Courses are never intentionally scheduled in classrooms that are not of sufficient capacity to accommodate the course's enrolment limit. The Enrolment Services scheduling team relies on room capacities that are provided by the Facilities department. With a great deal of change to classroom space in recent years, a new external consultation on space utilization is now underway. This will provide for an opportunity to ensure documented room capacities and physical spaces are aligned and accurate.

Response to Recommendation 5.e)

The TRUSU report indicates student frustration with the lack of information provided about courses at the time of registration – specifically that some courses don't indicate who the instructor is. This information is provided by the academic departments. If it is available, it is included in the schedule. However, it may be that it is unknown in June when registration opens who the instructor for certain courses and/or sections will be in September or January.

With respect to the registration interface and the how-to information that is available, the feedback provided by the TRUSU report is appreciated and will help to inform our planning for future registration cycles. We seek to continually improve this process and the experience for students.

Regarding waitlists, this is an inherently complex element of registration. Our direction and advice to students will continue to be to register as soon as possible. The earlier a department can see excess demand for courses/sections the sooner they can assess if and how they may be able to meet that demand. Related changes in recent years have led to significant reductions in the number of students who face unknown waitlist outcomes through the first few weeks of a semester. In January 2018 there were over 2,000 students still on waitlists after the first two weeks of the semester; in January 2020 there were just 65 students remaining. We will continue to seek improvements to this process.

Conclusion

In summary, the aspects of the above recommendations that pertain to Enrolment Services will remain the focus of process and communication improvements across the Division. Within the context of this being a budget consultation it is not felt that additional resources are needed at this time, and have therefore not been requested, in order to improve on Enrolment Services related outcomes.