

SPH Faculty Assembly Resolution 2008-1

Class Scheduling & Technical Support

Based on numerous discussions and input from the School of Public Health teaching faculty, four major sets of issues related to class scheduling and teaching efficiency have been identified and need to be brought to the attention of the administration.

1. A unified master schedule for the school is urgently needed. It is essential that the following issues are resolved:
 - a. To maximize and increase academic efficiency, a master schedule that takes into account frequency and duration of courses throughout the week should be considered. As the school increases its course load, a comprehensive plan must be in place to accommodate the varied academic needs.
 - b. The time slots for classes should be unified. The current system is problematic and often leads to conflicts. This is most acute when an instructor chooses his/her own start time for class, e.g., one class starts at 8:30 am and parallel with that another one starts at 9:00 am. Thus, one course may end at a time incompatible with the beginning of another course that a student may wish to take. This issue must be addressed by higher administration; it can be done almost immediately (to be ready for the spring semester).
 - c. The unified time slots would facilitate reserving fixed times for school-wide meetings, seminars, and other official gatherings, so time can be set aside in advance for the whole academic year.

2. As the school grows and number of teaching faculty and classes increases, we strongly recommend that the administration consider acquisition of a commercially prepared software program for course and classroom scheduling. This could be used in combination with a comprehensive course management system or as an independent software package. We anticipate that the software would:
 - a. Keep track of and schedule classes in non-conflicting time slots
 - b. Schedule classes and seminars in classrooms appropriate for class size
 - c. Link scheduling to student registration to automatically prevent students from registering in time- conflicting classes.
 - d. Enable faculty to track online the scheduling and registration process.

3. It is desirable that the school utilizes a common and unified computer system for a web-based course management system. While Blackboard is currently recommended, it is not universally adopted. Nor is it clear that it is a viable long-term system, as it currently does not support distance learning. It is confusing for students if one class uses Blackboard, another uses Elluminate, etc. Unfortunately, the lack of a single platform becomes confusing for students and for IT support. We propose that the SPH administration investigate and recommend the adoption of a single course management system that instructors interested in web-based system would utilize.

4. The most urgent issue regarding teaching efficiency is the lack of technical support services for teaching. Often classes start before or after IT support staff is on the premises. Consideration should be given to expanded support hours and the development of policies to put in place in the eventuality any of the following scenarios occurs:
 - a. If class starts at 8:00 am and the light bulb in the projector is burnt out, how can a new one be obtained?
 - b. Students often get their material via e-mail or from Blackboard and need to print it out before class. Similarly, instructors may need to print teaching material right before the class time. It would be desirable to have a dedicated printer for teaching faculty and students and to have requisite technical support personnel available to oversee and assist in trouble shooting technical problems.

Therefore, we recommend hiring student workers who would provide audiovisual and technical support for the teaching mission of the SPH.

Approved by the SPH Faculty Assembly, October 22, 2008