

# Scheduling Task Force Proposal August 2017

## Task Force Makeup

The Scheduling Task Force was composed of stakeholders from across the university, including representatives from each academic college, the Graduate School, International Studies, Council of Chairs, JUMP Program, Gulf Park campus, Faculty Senate, Student Affairs, Residence Life, Registrar's Office, Athletics, Financial Aid, Institutional Research, Admissions, University Communications, Online Learning, Student Government Association, Aramark Food Services, and Provost's Office. See Appendix 1 for the full member list.

## The Charge

Student success and retention continues to be the primary concern campus wide in conjunction with enrollments in various terms and sessions. Mini sessions have been offered for several years; however, the 10-day timeframe caused some concerns with student's abilities to have time for outside assignments. The Provost recommended an expansion of the 10-day mini session to a 14-day intersession beginning Summer 2017. This change caused further review of the academic semester start and end dates. Provost Steven Moser charged the Scheduling Task Force with proposing changes to the academic calendar in order to accommodate the expansion of intersession courses. Offering three 3-week intersessions (in January, May, and August) necessitates shortening the summer, fall, and spring terms, thereby occasioning the opportunity to review the academic calendar and our standard meeting patterns.

## Proposal Summary

The Scheduling Task Force proposes two changes, to be implemented starting Fall 2018:

- Shorten the fall and spring semesters to 15 weeks each, inclusive of exam week
- Establish a predominantly 4-day class schedule that is standardized (M-TH) for fall and spring, on both Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses, with the opportunity to offer some courses, especially lower-level and GEC courses, on a 3-day day schedule (MWF).

The Task Force reviewed multiple meeting pattern options and solicited feedback from the units and divisions represented by its membership. See Appendix 2 for the proposed meeting patterns and academic calendars.

## Federal Guidelines

The following federal guidelines impacted the schedule recommendations:

- Federal financial aid guidelines require fall and spring semesters to meet for at least 15 weeks, with a week defined by at least one meeting day in a business week.
- A three-credit course must meet for a minimum of 2250 minutes, inclusive of exam periods, so a shorter semester requires longer class periods.

## Institutional Factors and Student Benefits

The Task Force considered the following institutional factors in making its recommendations:

- Moving to a predominantly 4-day schedule, especially for upper-level courses, will allow syncing Hattiesburg and Coast meeting patterns for increased opportunities to offer IVN sections between campuses.
- At present, strong student and faculty preference for 2-day courses overburdens the Tuesday/Thursday meeting times and room usage, so a 4-day schedule for most courses will better distribute demand between Monday-Wednesday and Tuesday-Thursday patterns.
- Four MWF meeting periods that overlap with MW morning and midday offerings will be available. Courses in which students or instructors benefit from briefer meeting times, such as lower-level or some GEC courses, can remain on MWF, while allowing for the majority of course numbers to be scheduled on MW or TTH periods.
- Laboratory and studio courses can also be offered on Fridays to meet program, student, and faculty needs. Executive format offerings remain an option for applicable programs.
- The schedule has been designed to allow students to move between MWF and MW courses as necessary without missing a meeting period.
- Offering most upper-level courses either MW or TTh will allow for longer class periods in more advanced courses.

## Faculty Benefits

- The proposed meeting patterns will allow many faculty members to be assigned two-day teaching schedules, with Fridays and non-teaching days available for course preparation, meetings, and research & creative activity.
- Standardizing most courses for two-day meeting patterns will ensure that many faculty members will not need to alter course preparations based on varying 2- and 3-day schedules.

## Contact Minutes

Courses scheduled using 2-day meeting patterns meet for a total of 26 periods. Dividing the minimum required contact minutes (2250) by 26 meetings results in periods of 86.5 minutes. Periods were set at 90 minutes instead, resulting in 2340 contact minutes, which allows for one missed meeting as a result of any emergency school closure. Courses scheduled using 3-day meeting patterns meet a total of 38 times. Dividing the minimum required contact minutes (2250) by 38 results in periods of 59.2 minutes, so periods were set at 60 minutes for a total of 2280 contact minutes. The meeting patterns shown below are based on a 3-hour credit course. Departments are responsible for ensuring that courses with varying credit hours meet the IHL guidelines for contact minutes. IHL requires 750 minutes per credit hour.

## Room Utilization Impact

The shortened semester requires longer class periods, which reduces the number of periods available in a given day. Representatives from the Task Force worked with representatives from Ad Astra, the university's scheduling software vendor, to determine the impact of the proposed schedule on space utilization. While a final utilization report is being reviewed, early indicators show a balanced weekly space utilization can be achieved. Final numbers will be shared at a later date. Although the proposed patterns will result in an overall reduction in the number of sections possible given available classroom space, it does allow for more courses to be shifted to MW patterns, thereby reducing the burden on TTh courses on the Hattiesburg campus. The Gulf Park campus is already on a 4-day schedule, so no adverse effects on space needs are anticipated.

## Scheduling and 7-week Offerings

The shorter semesters will permit two 7-week semesters each fall and spring. These shorter semesters can be used to provide more scheduling options for students and faculty. They are *not* designed for students to squeeze more courses into fall and spring.

- For instance, a student could take two 7W1 courses, two 7W2 courses, and one regular-term course, for a total of 15 credit hours even while only being enrolled in three courses at a time. Taking fewer courses at once allows for briefer periods of more intensive focus.
- Academic units are asked to schedule 7W1 and 7W2 courses in pairs, either within the unit or in conjunction with other units, to distribute courses between the two shorter semesters, maximize offerings in both terms, and optimize room utilization.
- 7W2 courses can also be used for students who need to find an additional course in the second half of the semester in order to maintain minimum credit-hour requirements for state financial aid.
- With the approval of the Chair and Dean, a faculty member could be assigned to teach the assigned semester load in one 7W term, allowing flexibility for research/creative work and service assignments.

- Block classes that meet once per week for 195 minutes for the regular term will also meet standard contact minutes. However, when scheduling block classes, departments will be required to offer another course or collaborate with another department to share room assignments in order to maintain maximum space utilization. For example, a class that meets Monday block, 8-11:15 am in Room ABC will need to pair the block time and room assignment with another course offering on Wednesday, 8-11:15 am in Room ABC.
- To minimize schedule conflicts for students and maximize space utilization, block classes will need to meet according to the schedule outlined instead of combining any two back-to back meeting patterns.

### Internships, Clinical, etc.

Some courses require a minimum number of weeks of instruction and ordinarily do not follow the typical semester and/or meeting patterns since they meet off campus and are focused on specific skills or experiential learning. To avoid grade changes after the term ends, these courses should be scheduled to start with the preceding intercession and continue throughout the regular academic session. Completing the course when the term ends allows for grades to be processed efficiently and accurately for all students.

### Relevant Research on Intensive Courses

The Task Force's initial charge emerged from the establishment of three, 3-week intercession terms. Research by Daniel (2000), Austin and Gustafson (2006), and Kucsera and Zimmaro (2010) indicates that shorter-term or intensive courses can be more effective than regular semester courses. E. Daniel notes that "time-shortened" or intensive courses are especially convenient for non-traditional students seeking alternative delivery formats, but more importantly, she found in her review of the research that students found time-shortened classes more demanding, connected ideas more efficiently, and benefitted from longer class periods, which allow for a variety of pedagogical methods such as discussion and group work. More recent studies by Richard, Layton, Curl and Broussard (2015) found that students in intensive courses outperformed peers who took the same course in the 16-week term, even when variables such as starting GPA were considered.

### For Further Reading

Austin, A. M., & Gustafson, L. (2006). Impact of course length on student learning. *Journal of Economics and Finance Education*, 5(1), 26-37.

Daniel, E. (2000). A review of time-shortened courses across disciplines. *College Student Journal*, 34, 298-306.

Kucsera, J. V., & Zimmaro, D. M. (2010). Comparing the Effectiveness of Intensive and Traditional Courses. *College Teaching*, 58(2), 62-68.

Richmond, A., Murphy C., Curl, L. & Broussard. (2015). The Effects of Immersion Scheduling on Academic Performance and Students' Ratings of Instructors. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42 (1), 26-33.

Tatum, C. (2010). Accelerated Education: Learning on the Fast Track. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, 3 (1), 34-50.

Thornton, B., Demps J., & Jadav A. (2017). Reduced Contact Hour Accelerated Courses and Student Learning. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 18, Retrieved from <http://www.aabri.com/jip.html>.

### Review Process

The Scheduling Task Force met monthly in October 2016 – April 2017 reviewing research, course offerings and meeting pattern options to accommodate the 15-week semester. After the Scheduling Task Force agreed on a proposal, each member was asked to seek feedback from the representative area. Questions and concerns were accommodated and/or addressed within the final proposal.

In early May 2017, a focus group of student leaders had an in depth discussion on the proposal and completed a short survey. Survey results indicated an 83% approval rating.

When determining space utilization based on the new meeting patterns, the fall 2016 term meeting patterns were modified within Astra Schedule. Fall course offerings were adjusted for TTH classes to MW to balance 2-day offerings. Optimization results indicate consistent utilization given the patterns and space available.

### Next Steps

The proposal has been widely distributed and vetted on both campuses through multiple channels. The proposal will need to be endorsed by the Provost Council prior to being submitted to the Executive Cabinet. If approved, the University Calendar Committee and the Provost Office will develop a marketing campaign to communicate the changes to the University community.

If approved, the Registrar's Office will make system adjustments for the new meeting patterns and calendar sessions prior to the Fall 2018-Summer 2019 schedule-entry timeframes tentatively planned to start late September 2017. Departments will be encouraged to review enrollment projections from Platinum Analytics in creating the new schedule.

## Appendix 1

### Scheduling Task Force Members

Representing	Member	Sub-committee
Admissions	Kate Howard	Marketing
Athletic Academic Support	Kylie Amato	Scheduling
College of Arts & Sciences	Eric Tribunella	Curriculum Planning
College of Business	Brigitte Burgess	Curriculum Planning
College of Education & Psy	Jeff Hinton	Curriculum Planning
College of Health	Kathy Yadrick	Curriculum Planning
College of Nursing	Anita Boykins	Curriculum Planning
College of Science & Tech	Doug Masterson	Curriculum Planning
COST – USMGC	Danielle Greenhow	Scheduling & USMGC
Faculty Senate	David Holt	Scheduling & USMGC
Council of Chairs	Ann Marie Kinnell	Curriculum Planning/JUMP
Financial Aid	David Williamson	Budgeting
Graduate School	Carolyn Cawthon	Marketing
Graduate School	Karen Coats	Scheduling
Institutional Research	Michelle Arrington	Budgeting
International Admissions	Petra Marlin	Scheduling
International Admissions	Sarah Egerer	Marketing
Online Learning	Tom Hutchinson	Marketing
Provost Office	Amy Miller	
Provost Office	Debby Hill, Chair	
Provost Office	Lashonda Thompson	Budgeting
Registrar’s Office	Nichol Green	Scheduling
Registrar’s Office	Robin Johnson	Scheduling & USMGC
Residence Life	Scott Blackwell	Marketing
Student Government Assoc.	Cameron Cloud	Scheduling
University Communications	Chelsea King	Marketing

## Appendix 2

# Proposed Meeting Patterns (3 timeframes)

- MWF – 60 min; 45 min break between (primarily for GEC and lower division courses)
- MW/TTH – 90 min; 15 min break between (primarily for upper-division courses and IVN)
- Night classes – 195 minutes
- Block classes MUST BE paired in the same room with another block class at the same time (MW together or TTH together)

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday			
8:00 - 9:30	8:00 - 9:00	8:00 - 11:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - W	8:00 - 9:30	8:00 - 11:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - TH	8:00 - 9:30	8:00 - 9:00	8:00 - 9:30	8:00 - 11:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - T	8:00 - 9:00	8:00 - 11:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - MW	
9:45 - 11:15	9:45 - 10:45		9:45 - 11:15		9:45 - 11:15	9:45 - 10:45	9:45 - 11:15		9:45 - 10:45		
11:30 - 1:00	11:30 - 12:30	11:30 - 2:45 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - W	11:30 - 1:00	11:30 - 2:45 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - TH	11:30 - 1:00	11:30 - 12:30	11:30 - 2:45 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - M	11:30 - 1:00	11:30 - 2:45 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - T	11:30 - 12:30	11:30 - 2:45 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - MW
1:15 - 2:45	1:15 - 2:15		1:15 - 2:45		1:15 - 2:45	1:15 - 2:15	1:15 - 2:45		1:15 - 2:45		
3:00 - 4:30	3:00 - 4:00	3:00 - 6:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - W	3:00 - 4:30	3:00 - 6:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - TH	3:00 - 4:30	3:00 - 4:00	3:00 - 6:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - M	3:00 - 4:30	3:00 - 6:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - T	3:00 - 4:00	3:00 - 6:15 PAIRED In Same Room, Same time - MW
4:45 - 6:15	4:45 - 5:45		4:45 - 6:15		4:45 - 6:15	4:45 - 5:45	4:45 - 6:15		4:45 - 5:45		
6:30 - 8:00		6:30 - 9:45 - night class	6:30 - 8:00	6:30 - 9:45 - night class	6:30 - 8:00		6:30 - 9:45 - night class	6:30 - 8:00	6:30 - 9:45 - night class		
8:15 - 9:45			8:15 - 9:45		8:15 - 9:45		8:15 - 9:45		8:15 - 9:45		

# Fall 2018 – Proposed

15 Weeks in Regular Term – August 29 - December 7

August							November								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
			1	2	3	4						1	2	3	
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
26	27	28	29	30	31		25	26	27	28	29	30			
September							December								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
						1							1		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
30							30	31							
October															
S	M	T	W	T	F	S									
			1	2	3	4	5	6							
7	8	9	10	11	12	13									
14	15	16	17	18	19	20									
21	22	23	24	25	26	27									
28	29	30	31												

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|------------------------|----------------------|
| Fall Intercession      | Aug 6 - 23           |
| Fall Full Term starts  | August 29            |
| Fall Session 1         | Aug 29 – Oct 8       |
| Labor Day              | September 3          |
| Fall Session 2         | Oct 9 – Nov 29       |
| Fall Break             | Fall Break Oct 18-19 |
| Thanksgiving           | Nov 21- 23           |
| Scholar Day (no class) | Nov 30               |
| Exam Week              | Dec 3 - 6            |
| End of Fall Term       | December 7           |
| Grades Due             | December 10          |

- Intercession
- Start of Term
- Fall Term
- Holiday
- Exams
- End of Full Term
- Grades Due

# Spring 2019 – Proposed

15 Weeks in Term – January 24 – May 10

January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

  

February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

  

March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

  

May						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

- Winter Intercession January 3 - 23
- Spring Term starts January 24
- Spring Session 1 January 24 - March 8
- Mardi Gras March 11 - 15
- Spring Break March 4 - 5
- Spring Session 2 March 18 - April 26
- Easter Holiday April 19 & 22
- Scholar Days (no class) May 2-3
- Exam Week May 6-9
- End of Spring Term May 10
- Grades Due May 13
- Summer Intercession May 13 - 31

- Intercession
- Start of Term
- Summer Term
- Spring Term
- Holiday
- Spring Break
- Exams
- End of Full Term
- Grades Due

# Summer 2019 - Proposed

- Intercession
- Start of Term
- Summer Term
- Spring Term
- Holiday
- Exams
- End of Full Term
- Grades Due
- Summer I
- Summer II

15 Weeks between Sp & Fa  
May 13 – Aug 22  
(including the Intercessions)

May						
s	m	t	w	t	f	s
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

July						
s	m	t	w	t	f	s
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

June						
s	m	t	w	t	f	s
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

August						
s	m	t	w	t	f	s
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

- Summer Intercession May 13 - 31
- Full Term June 3 – July 31
- Summer Session 1 June 3 - 31
- Summer Session 2 July 1 - 31
- Holidays May 27; July 4 & 5
- Exam Week Last Day of Class
- Grades Due Aug 1

Intercession May 13-31	Summer Full Term June 3-July 31	Summer Session 1 June 3-June 28	Summer Session 2 July 1-July 31
14 class meetings 165 minutes/class 2310 total minutes Exam – last class day	15 class meetings 150 minutes/class 2250 total minutes Exam – last class day	20 class meetings 115 minutes/class 2300 total minutes Exam June 28	20 class meetings 115 minutes/class 2300 total minutes Exam July 31
Meeting Pattern - every day for 3 weeks (M-F) May 27 - holiday	Meeting Pattern - 2 days per week. (MW or TTH)	Meeting Pattern – meet every day for one month (M-F)	Meeting Pattern – every day for on month (M-F) July 4 & 5 - holiday
8:00-10:45 11:00-1:45 2:00-4:45 5:00-7:45	8:00-10:30 10:45-1:15 1:30-4:00 4:15-6:45 7:00-9:30	8:00-9:55 10:15-12:10 12:30-2:25 2:45-4:40 5:00-6:55 7:15-9:10	8:00-9:55 10:15-12:10 12:30-2:25 2:45-4:40 5:00-6:55 7:15-9:10