

February 1, 2010

To: University Faculty

From: Phil Cafaro, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy

Dear Colleagues:

I have proposed a change in the university class schedule for consideration by the CSU faculty, faculty council and administration. The main goals of this proposal are to increase individual faculty members' options for their teaching schedules and to free up more time for faculty research. This proposal has been modified in response to comments from several dozen faculty members. Here it is.

Proposal

Currently, we have the following class schedule:

MWF (day classes mostly 50 minutes each)

8-8:50 a.m.

9-9:50

10-10:50

11-11:50

12-12:50 p.m.

1-1:50

2-2:50

3-3:50

4-4:50 or 4-5:15 (this slot available for both 2-a-week (MW) and 3-a-week (MWF) classes)

After 5 p.m. (anything goes, mostly used for once-a-week, 2 and ½ hour classes)

TR (day classes 75 minutes each)

8-9:15 a.m.

9:30-10:45

11-12:15

12:30-1:45 p.m.

2-3:15

3:30-4:45

After 5 p.m. (anything goes, mostly used for once-a-week, 2 and ½ hour classes)

This schedule is not followed absolutely, but by somewhere between 85% to 95% of the classes scheduled each semester.

My proposal is to increase the number of slots allotted for 75 minute, twice-a-week classes. I would do this by changing three more of the post-1 p.m. slots on MWF from exclusively 50 minute slots to flexible 50 or 75 minute slots, and by adding an additional 75 minute slot at the end of the day TR.

The new schedule would be as follows, with changes **in red**:

MWF (morning classes 50 minutes each)

8-8:50 a.m.

9-9:50
10-10:50
11-11:50
12-12:50 p.m.

MWF (afternoon classes either 75 minutes MW or 50 minutes MWF)

1-2:15
2:30-3:45
4-5:15

After 5:30 p.m. (anything goes, mostly used for once-a-week, 2 and ½ hour classes)

TR (day classes 75 minutes each)

8-9:15 a.m.
9:30-10:45
11-12:15
12:30-1:45 p.m.
2-3:15
3:30-4:45
5-6:15

After 6:30 p.m. (anything goes, mostly used for once-a-week, 2 and ½ hour classes)

Rationale

The rationale for this change is three-fold. First, it would help accommodate those faculty members who prefer teaching two days a week rather than three—without forcing those who prefer three day-a-week classes to change.

Currently, many faculty members with this preference cannot teach twice a week. The proposal would allow more faculty members with this preference to teach twice a week in both fall and spring semesters, rather than just one of them. It would allow more junior faculty members who would prefer to teach twice a week to do so.

I note that in a time of tightening budgets, where some faculty members may be asked to increase their teaching loads, increased scheduling flexibility may become even more valuable than it is now.

Second, accommodating more faculty members who would prefer to teach twice a week rather than three times a week would increase research productivity. This is my main motivation for making this proposal.

In my discussions with faculty members, many of them have stated that they get more research and writing done during semesters with twice-a-week rather than three times-a-week teaching. This is particularly the case in the College of Liberal Arts (my college), where teaching loads are higher than in the sciences and where *time* is a more important limiting factor than *money* in research productivity.

Demands for research productivity are increasing at CSU. In a time of economic recession, this schedule change is one inexpensive way that the university can facilitate this. I note that junior faculty members, acutely conscious of the need to publish or perish, have been particularly enthusiastic about this proposal.

Third, this proposal would improve teaching, because it would increase the faculty's ability to "right size" class meeting lengths. Many faculty members believe their classes work better in two

75-minute weekly meetings than in 3 50-minute weekly meetings. This seems particularly true for discussion classes and upper division classes.

Of course, many teachers prefer shorter, more frequent meetings, generally or for certain classes (particularly for lower-division classes). These preferences can be accommodated by the proposed schedule change, since the number of slots available for three day-a-week classes would only decrease by one slot. No one would have to give up three day-a-week classes who preferred them.

Potential Problems

In discussing various scenarios for changing the schedule, five main potential problems have been flagged by faculty and administrators. All could be easily accommodated by this proposal.

First, some faculty members worried that they would be forced to move from a three times a week schedule. An earlier, radical version of this proposal envisioned moving the university to a four day week of classes, Monday through Thursday, with Friday held open as a day for faculty research and student study. And this really would have forced people to give up 50 minute three day a week class meetings.

The current proposal would not. It would still leave sufficient three day a week slots (eight) for those who want them. With the great numbers of faculty who would like to teach more classes twice-a-week rather than three times-a-week, this will leave plenty of slots for those who want to continue teaching three times-a-week.

Second, the earlier, radical version of the proposal was open to the objection that it would make Thursday night the new Friday night, lengthening the weekend by one day and turning CSU into another Sodom, Gomorrah, or Boulder. Some schools around the country which had largely dropped Friday classes have moved to reinstate them, in part to cut down on student partying.

This proposal would avoid this problem, since Friday mornings would still be heavily used for class meetings (no partying Thursday night without paying the penalty) and Friday afternoons would continue to be used at least moderately for class meetings (this will of course depend on how strongly faculty move to two-a-week from three-a-week classes).

Third, the administration had expressed the worry that it would be hard to find enough classrooms to accommodate a four day teaching week. Again, this might have been a real problem with the previous, more radical proposal. With the new proposal, it should not be a serious problem.

This proposal substitutes 15 slots (8 MWF and 7 TR) for 15 slots (9 MWF and 6 TR), straight up. So the exact same number of classrooms is there to be assigned. In addition, more classrooms are coming on line as CSU completes new buildings.

Fourth, Lorree Morse in the registrar's office shared the worry with me that it might be hard to fill the later slots (MW 4-5:15, TR 5-6:15). Apparently, we CSU faculty members prefer to teach 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This could be an issue, but it is one we are dealing with already. Once the new schedule is in place, faculty will be able to put in for more favorable slots, just as we do now, and we will sometimes have to take less favorable ones, just as we do now. This issue is manageable, if we think making the change is worth having to teach the occasional class first thing in the morning or later in the afternoon.

Fifth, many departments have their own specific scheduling issues. Art has extra long studio classes, some applied departments may schedule practicums at unusual times, etc. There are

good reasons for these aberrations and this proposal is emphatically *not* meant to force changes in such cases or enforce greater uniformity in scheduling.

On the contrary. This proposal increases the flexibility of departments and individual faculty members to choose the teaching schedules they want, in order to improve teaching and research at Colorado State University.

The Upshot

In summary, moving to this new schedule would maximize scheduling options for faculty members and departments. It could make a real improvement in efficiency and faculty research productivity. It would allow more faculty members to teach on the schedules that best fit their teaching styles and goals. Like any change, it would take some getting used to and not everyone would like it. But overall it would be a substantial improvement with a minimum of disruption to the status quo.

Faculty at Colorado State University who have taught at other universities report that many of them teach on a “hybrid” schedule (shorter blocks earlier in the day, longer blocks later in the day). I have heard that this approach works well at North Carolina State University and Purdue University, among others. Many of Colorado State University’s peer institutions have moved to schedules which allow for more flexible scheduling and more two-days-a-week teaching (see appendix A).

I have circulated this proposal widely among faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and it has garnered wide approval. See appendix B for a partial list of CLA faculty supporters.

Thank you for your attention to this proposal. If there is any further information I can provide as you consider it, please let me know.

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Appendix A – How Do Other Universities Do It?

Several years ago, Kyle Saunders in Political Science looked into how our peer institutions schedule their classes, as part of his effort to reform CSU's scheduling. The following is what he found during a "relatively quick" search. At a minimum, this shows that there is wide variation in how universities schedule their classes and that various schedules can all "work." It suggests that we should feel free to create a schedule that works best for us here at Colorado State University.

The phrase "hybrid" below refers to a schedule where class slots switch from shorter to longer lengths at some point in the day, such as in the current proposal before you.

Internal and CCHE peers

North Carolina State has a hybrid schedule, MW/WF starting at 1:30. MWF 8,9,10,11,12

Ohio State quarters, all 75 minute blocks, usually MW/TR/or WF, except for intro courses.

Oklahoma State 50 minutes on MWF, 75 minutes TR, no hybrid at all

Michigan State has a complete mess of schedules, but usually TR is 70 minute block, MWF is 60 minute block, with some exceptions

Purdue hybrid schedule, MW starts at 2:30

Univ. of Illinois, System (UIUC) all courses 80 minute blocks (MW/TR) except for intro courses or courses with recitations (which are MW 50 minutes for lecture, then 50 minutes on Friday for all recitations)

Iowa State no hybrid, in fact only 60 minute blocks MWF and TRF

Kansas State hybrid schedule, 50 minute classes MWF at 8, 9, and 10; 75 minute blocks starting MW at 11:30.

Oregon State, System at Corvallis courses 110?!! minute blocks, MW/TR

Texas A&M exact same schedule as we currently have

Univ. of Georgia pure MWF/TR schedule. No hybrid at all.

Univ. of Missouri, System (Columbia) much like Washington State, all sorts of alternatives, it seems some colleges are on MW/TR 75 minutes others are three days a week.

Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln No hybrid at all, straight MWF/TR, with a few exceptions.

Virginia Polytechnic Inst. Hybrid schedule, beginning MW at 1p. MWF/TRF 8,9,10,11,12

Washington State all sorts of alternatives, some colleges are on MW/TR 75 minutes only, some are MWF/TRF. Interesting amalgam.

In summary, there's absolutely no standard among our Research I peer groups. Some have a hybrid schedule with a free Friday afternoon, some have only 60 minute blocks, some are straight MW/TR (some with F recitation/labs).

Appendix B – College of Liberal Arts faculty in support of proposed schedule change

As a Faculty Council representative-at-large for the College of Liberal Arts, I queried my colleagues in CLA on the proposed schedule change. 9 out of 10 members, at least, were supportive, encouraging me to go forward with the proposal. Since then it has been modified in ways that I believe would alleviate the concerns of the few faculty members who voiced misgivings.

The following is a partial list of CLA faculty members who support the proposal.

Steven Shulman, Professor and Chair, Department of Economics

Irene Vernon, Professor and Chair, Ethnic Studies Department

Alexandra Bernasek, Associate Professor, Economics Department

Courtenay Daum, Assistant Professor, Political Science Department

Lynn Kwiatkowski, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology

Katie McShane, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy

Karrin Vasby Anderson, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies

Tara O'Connor Shelley, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

Marius Lehene, Associate Professor, Art

Patrick McKee, Professor, Department of Philosophy

Jason LaBelle, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology

Maura Velasquez-Castillo, Associate Professor, Foreign Language and Literatures

Scott Moore, Associate Professor, Political Science Department

Rosa Mikeal Martey, Assistant Professor, Journalism & Technical Communication

Michelle Stanley, assistant professor of flute, Music Department

José Luis Suárez-García, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Mark Fiege, Associate Professor, History Department

Jason Sibold, Assistant Professor, Anthropology

Kyle Saunders, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

Gamze Cavdar Yasar, Assistant Professor, Political Science

Michael Lundblad, Assistant Professor of English

Ursula Daxecker, Assistant Professor, Political Science

Barbara Sebek, Associate Professor, English

Katherine Browne, Professor , Department of Anthropology

John Calderazzo, Professor, Department of English

Ruth Alexander, Professor, History Department

Peter Seel, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism & Technical Communication

Douglas Murray, Professor, Sociology

Eleanor Moseman, Assistant Professor, Art Department

Lori Peek, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

Valerie Assetto, Professor, Political Science

David Milofsky, Professor, Department of English

Sara Saz, Professor of Spanish, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Anita Alves Pena, Assistant Professor, Economics

Jamie Switzer, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism and Technical Communication

Laura Thomas, Associate Director, Writing Center, Writing Across the Curriculum

Michele Betsill, Associate Professor, Political Science

Eric Ishiwata, Assistant Professor, Department of Ethnic Studies and Political Science

Ann Magennis, Associate Professor, Anthropology Department

Fred Knight, Assistant Professor, History Department

Martin Shields, Associate Professor of Economics

Troy Lepper, Research Associate, Department of Sociology

Sue Doe, Assistant Professor, English

Ann Little, Associate Professor, History

Mary Van Buren, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology

Ellen Brinks, Associate Professor of English

Maite Correa, Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Jeff Snodgrass, Associate Professor, Anthropology Department

Greg Dickinson, Associate Professor, Communications Studies

Michael Carolan, Associate Professor, Sociology

Ramaa Vasudevan, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics

Fabiola Ehlers-Zavala, Assistant Professor, Department of English

Jennifer Cross, Sociology, Assistant Professor

James Lindsay, Associate Professor, History Department

Elizabeth Tropman, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy