

Academic Senate
Fall 2008

For at least the past 20+ years, building the Schedule of Classes has been a process where each Department Chair informs the registrar what classes will be taught and the registrar schedules these classes. Involvement by the Dean/Provost has been limited to funding additional courses that are requested by the department and/or funding more course sections if registration numbers indicate additional need. In other words, this has been a decentralized process with departments exercising significant autonomy in determining their annual course offerings. Although this system has generally worked, students at the “end of the registration line” often feel disadvantaged in securing classes. This has been particularly true in years when Westmont has enrolled large first-year classes.

The registration of first-year students for Fall 2007 was most difficult and a number of last minute decisions were required that created problems for faculty and students. Although registration went more smoothly this summer, primarily because of a smaller new class of students, problems surfaced, some of which could not be addressed during the summer.

As a result, the attached data was assembled to summarize how registration went (from a student’s perspective). Hopefully, the experience of the past two summers will be a catalyst for us to consider a number of issues. The following questions are offered as a partial list of issues we may want to consider:

1. What are reasonable expectations for the “last student” to register to have in terms of class availability? What are unreasonable expectations?
2. How many GE courses (and which ones) should every first-year student be able to take in the first semester? In the first year?
3. Should every student be able to take an “Intro” class from every department in the first year of enrollment?
4. Is there a maximum class size we desire for any/all classes at Westmont?
5. Is there a minimum class size below which the class is subject to cancellation? If so, is it a different number for a required class vs. an elective class?
6. Who decides when a class is to be cancelled and how the faculty resource will be reassigned?

7. If a class has a consistent historical low enrollment, how is it determined what the frequency of this course offering will be?
8. Should Department Chairs be provided with minimum expectations as to the number of lower division GE classes that will be offered each year?
9. Some departments offer few (if any) electives annually. Other departments offer multiple electives and seminars each year. Some classes that are “required” are only required because the department has multiple-tracks within the major. Is there a need to determine whether teaching resources need to be redistributed between departments? If so, who would do this review?