ON SCHEDULE

Windward Community College Spring 2006
Survey of Student Class Scheduling Preferences

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WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE - SCHEDULING SURVEY
SPRING 2006

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 2006, Windward Community College (WCC) faculty, students, and administrators examined the current (traditional) class scheduling options at the college.

For other than evening and weekend classes, most WCC classes have traditionally been scheduled in one of the following formats:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAYS OF THE WEEK</th>
<th>CLASS DURATION IN MINUTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday - Wednesday - Friday (MWF)</td>
<td>75 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday - Wednesday (M/W)</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday - Thursday (T/Th)</td>
<td>75 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There does not appear to be any controversy about the scheduling times of the evening, weekend, or Tuesday/Thursday classes; however, the scheduling format of the MWF and MW classes is being debated.

The debate on the scheduling centers on:

- **Student learning efficacy** of three (per week) 50 minute classes compared to that in two (per week) 75 minute classes.
- **Student scheduling preference** - student perceptions of learning efficacy, student commuting to WCC preferences, conflicts with work schedules and other student responsibilities.
Faculty preferences for the schedule (faculty perception of student learning efficacy, faculty commuting preferences, possible conflicts with other faculty responsibilities).

Administrative concerns: Student learning efficacy, maximizing classroom usage, enrollment, availability of faculty to fulfill secondary responsibilities; willingness of students to enroll in later classes if many MWF classes shift to a MW schedule.

Global concerns: The current mix of MWF and MWF classes causes student scheduling problems with start/end times and classroom usage patterns; if the college shifts most MWF classes to a MW schedule, there will not be sufficient classrooms for all classes in “prime time” - some classes would have to be shifted to later start/finish times - will students attend later classes?

HONOLULU COMMUNITY COLLEGE (HCC) EXPERIENCE

In 2003, the same rescheduling debate occurred at HCC. At that time, the basic scheduling guidelines called for either MWF or T/Th classes and the grid of class start/finish times was tailored to ensure student access and maximum classroom usage for the schedules: uniform start/finish times.

Faculty who chose to schedule MW classes were expected to begin early (8:00 - 9:15) instead of 8:30 - 09:20) or end late (12:30 - 1:45) so that traditional MWF “prime-time” schedules and use of classrooms would not be affected.

A survey of students who had taken both MW and MWF classes was conducted to determine student MW or MWF preference (and reasoning). That study revealed that a majority (82%) of respondents preferred the MW schedule.

The college then shifted many (most) of its MWF classes to the MW schedule.

A subsequent Fall 2004 followup study (after the shift), revealed that students continued to overwhelmingly (90%) prefer the MW schedule for most classes. Faculty continue to have the option to schedule MWF classes, but in many disciplines the shift is now complete.

A review of scheduling preference studies conducted at mainland community colleges demonstrates that students across the country prefer the two day a week class schedule. For example a 2003 Glendale (AZ) Community College survey found that 69% of Glendale students preferred a two day a week schedule, 21% preferred a once a week schedule, and only 10% preferred the traditional three class per week schedule. (ERIC Document: 482 501)

Advantages of the MW schedule:

- Accommodates student work/family schedules (Friday is open)
- Reduce commuting, reduces traffic congestion, lowers fuel consumption
- Provides students a full study day on Friday
- Facilitates faculty meetings on Fridays (most A.A. don’t teach on Fridays)

Disadvantages of the MW Schedule

- Some students/faculty prefer three 50 minute classes
- Some classes have to be scheduled outside of “prime time”
- Concerns about faculty not appearing on campus on Fridays
- Long break between Wednesday and Monday classes

WINDWARD CC SCHEDULING STUDY

As the Windward CC community examined the issue, WCC faculty member Toshi Ika
gawa learned of the HCC studies and contacted HCC researcher David Cleveland to secure a copy of the report.

The subsequent discussions between them led to the design of the Windward CC Spring 2006 student scheduling study - reviewed, approved, and endorsed by the Windward CC administration and governance bodies.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The 2004 HCC questionnaire was used as a rough draft of the questionnaire. Toshi shared coordinated the WCC revision process. After several revisions, the ultimate WCC questionnaire was created.

The questionnaire was printed in hard copy for manual entry and posted on the HCC website for online entry by Windward CC students.

The hard copy version of the instrument is attached to this report.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

WCC faculty member Toshi Ika
gawa coordinated the administration of the survey. A pilot test with an ICS class revealed an HCC website data collection glitch which was promptly corrected.

Windward students were contacted and encouraged to participate in the survey via mass e-mail, instructional faculty in classrooms, and by an array of other publicity strategies.

ADEQUACY OF THE RESULTING SAMPLE

Windward CC enrolls approximately 1,400 students (just over 1,000 Full Time Equivalent Students).

While the array of strategies employed in this study to ensure a reasonable sample of the student population certainly do not qualify as a random or even a tight, stratified
sample, the size of the sample and the diversity of student respondents suggest that the sample should fairly adequately represent the Windward student population.

The fact that almost all WCC students are in the Associate of Arts Program (as compared to a college like Honolulu CC with two dozen professional/technical programs) also suggests that the student population is fairly homogeneous (academically) and, therefore, there is less need to tightly stratify the sample.

Simple tests of validity reinforce this conclusion. For example, a comparison of population and sample demographics reveals that sample demographics parallel student population demographic statistics.

For example, 68% of the Windward student population is female; 73% of sample respondents are female.

FINDINGS

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER

The gender distribution of respondents closely parallel those of the WCC student population distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>WCC Student Population (Fall 2005 MAPS data)</th>
<th>Schedule Survey Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36% under 21</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AGE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>WCC Student Population</th>
<th>Schedule Survey Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 21</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 26</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27+</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACADEMIC GOAL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>WCC Student Population</th>
<th>Schedule Survey Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few classes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.A.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate/Professional</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# CREDITS COMPLETED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits Completed</th>
<th>WCC Student Population</th>
<th>Schedule Survey Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 15</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 30</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 45</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 or more</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AT WCC BY SPRING '06:

HALF DON'T TAKE NIGHT CLASSES - THOSE WHO DO, WANT MORE CHOICES

51% of respondents reported that they don’t take/want evening classes.
Among the nearly half who, apparently, do (or want to) take evening classes, 18% report that the WCC evening schedule meets their needs; 34% feel that WCC should offer a few more evening classes; and 49% suggest that WCC should offer a lot more evening classes.

TWO-THIRDS DON'T TAKE WEEKEND CLASSES - THOSE WHO DO, WANT MORE WEEKEND CHOICES

17% of respondents who do (or want to) take weekend classes, report that the weekend schedule meets their needs; 40% want some more WCC weekend classes; and 44% want a lot more WCC weekend classes.

FUTURE CLASSES - MAJORITY PREFER THE MONDAY- WEDNESDAY FORMAT

The largest slice of the pie chart below (43%) represents the most popular student scheduling choice – Strongly Prefer MW classes. An additional 18% of respondents prefer MW classes. Only 21% of respondents prefer or strongly prefer the MWF schedule.

(SP = Strongly Prefer;  P = Prefer;  No P = No preference)
IF WINDWARD CC SHIFTS MANY MWF CLASSES TO A MW SCHEDULE, HALF REPORT THAT THEY WOULD CONSIDER SHIFTING TO LATER START TIMES

One of the concerns about shifting MWF classes to a MW schedule is that fewer classes could then be offered in “prime time.” About half of respondents suggest that they would definitely take or probably take later start time MW classes.

WILLING TO TAKE 12:30 - 1:45 MW CLASSES?
RESPONDENTS PREFER THE MW SCHEDULE FOR ALL DISCIPLINES - MOST FOR ENGLISH CLASSES - LEAST FOR MATHEMATICS CLASSES

The graphic below displays the rank ordered (by mean value) WCC student preferences for the MW schedule. While all values are on the MW preference side, students are least likely to prefer the MW schedule for Math classes.

![Image of student preferences graph]

THE MAJORITY OF WCC STUDENTS ARE FEMALE - FEMALES ARE MORE LIKELY TO STRONGLY PREFER THE MW SCHEDULE THAN ARE MALES

As seen below, 46% of female respondents strongly prefer the MW format - as compared to 34% of male respondents.

![Image of table showing preferences by sex]

http://windward.hawaii.edu/facstaff/ikagawa-t/Survey%20Sp%202006/WCCMWFREPORT.htm
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REASONS FOR MW OR MWF SCHEDULING PREFERENCE

In the comment sections of the survey, a significant percentage of respondents explained the reasons for their scheduling preferences.

Reflecting their overall preference for the MW scheduling, respondents wrote 6,074 words explaining the reasons why they preferred the MW schedule and only 2,550 words about their reasons for preferring the MWF schedule.

Content analysis of their preference explanations reveals that the MW schedule fits their Work (68), Study (17), Homework (15) and Learning (15) schedules better.

Similar explanations (albeit fewer of them) were provided by respondents who preferred the MWF schedule: Time (20), Work (19), Shorter classes (6), Study (6), Attention (5), Homework (4) Bored in long classes (2).

MONDAY/WEDNESDAY PREFERENCE - SAMPLE COMMENTS

Having classes twice a week works much better for me leaving me with time for work and homework from class. ... It doesn't require going to school as many times, allowing me to study longer and more in-depth, as well as take mental breaks more frequently. ... Because I would rather come to school for the two days instead of the three days, and just stay a little longer each day. MW/TTh format is easier for me to arrange my work hours around ... I am a non traditional student, therefore I need to get as much out of the time that I am here. I also have a work schedule, so I prefer only two days a week with several courses on those two days. ... you have more time on the weekend to finish the homework, but you have an earlier time starting the homework before the weekend.... I find that the Tuesday/Thursday schedule allows me to have enough time to study my work hours around school. I would greatly appreciate if there were more classes offered at a Monday/Wednesday schedule, since it is much easier to work around two days of school a week than it is to work around three. ... More down time for studying on the off days. More concentrated study time in class to ask questions and learn the concepts ... I believe that these classes can be taught and learned sufficiently with having class twice a week (rather than 3 times a week). the twice a week schedule gives me more time to be able to work... don't like having to come in for just a few hours a day, but would prefer knocking out multiple courses per day, i.e. Monday and Wednesday classes. Friday's usually seems a waist for this reason. ... I try to fit my school schedule with my work schedule. So coming to school 2X week is preferred and more manageable for me. It is easier on scheduling school and work for me to be able to get classes on as few days as possible ... I enjoy MW classes because we meet only twice a week. I have an extra day to work, study, and not pay for childcare. Meeting for 75 minutes allows the instructor to cover more than we would in a 50 minute class period. ...Going to school 2 times a week instead of three; would give me more time to study for classes. It seems not that many people attend class regularly on Fridays. Less travel time commuting to the college and still be able to learn the material needed with more time. I love the college campus but the drive for me is long. Currently live in Wahiawa so I travel on all 3 highways to get to the campus. ... I would rather spend 2 -75 minutes per week at the campus for actual class lecture time and have the T,TR,FR to be able to do my homework or be able to have more work hours at my place of employment

MONDAY/WEDNESDAY/FRIDAY PREFERENCE SAMPLE COMMENTS

The comments below are representative of the reasons that some respondents prefer the MWF format:

It fits a whole lot better with my work schedule, kids, and study time...The reason the MWF format works so well is that the material for the designated class is spread out over the week rather evenly and it is not such a burden on the students. I find it that I generally perform better in the MWF as opposed to the TTh classes. Usually the really important classes are easier spread out over the week. The reason is I like the classes not being so long. But at the same time it would be nice to only go to school for 2 days a week. better to have more contact with the instructor more frequently and with less time in between classes to forget lessons... It makes it easier for me to keep my concentration...I prefer the MWF classes because my attention span is just about 50 minutes. Some subjects after an hour I tend to lose my train of thought and I retain less. ... The classes are not too long nor not too short. I tend to stay more focused during the 50 minute classes than the 75 minute because during the 75 minute classes, it feels like you are in the class for a long time. Sitting in my seat for a long time makes me tired and bored. I begin to focus on other things than the lecture. Also, I prefer going to school MW rather than just MW because the break from Wednesday to Monday is too long. I will not remember what I learned. Seems to be working out together with my work schedule. But I am willing to try something new if it coincides with work... Classes are shorter so paying attention for the whole time is generally easier. I know there's only a 25 minute difference, but that can be an eternity when you're tired, bored or have trouble paying attention. ... I prefer to take the MWF schedule for the math classes.
because it is somewhat less information all at one time and easier to absorb. ... It is much easier to sit through that length of time

ADDITIONAL DATA ANALYSIS IS AVAILABLE

While this report focuses on some of the key findings of the study, the statistical report generated by Survey Pro contains an array of additional cross tabulations that demonstrate the impact of a variety of variables on respondent preferences.

The Survey Pro statistical report will be provided to the campus. Should anyone desire further analysis (not already provided in the statistical report), simply e-mail the researcher at:

davidec@hcc.hawaii.edu with the table/graphic request(s).

CONCLUSION

These findings suggest that a fairly high percentage of WCC students prefer a MW schedule; however, there are significant numbers of students (particularly in some disciplines) who continue to prefer the MWF format.

At Honolulu Community College, most former MWF classes are now offered on a MW basis; however, at HCC scheduling remains a faculty choice and, consequently, there are still a number of MWF (50 minute) classes in the schedule.

Deciding what schedule will work best for Windward CC will require reviewing an array of factors beyond student preferences. Ultimately, the decision should, of course, be made on the basis of what schedule maximizes student learning outcomes (literature suggests that learning outcomes are similar), the most effective operation of the campus, and yields the highest satisfaction to faculty and students in WCC classes.