Classes and Registration for Student Athletes
BL-ACA-H24

About This Policy

Effective Dates:
12-07-2004

Last Updated:
03-04-2008

Responsible University Office:
Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Scope

All student athletes on the Bloomington campus.

Policy Statement

Resolution for a Three-Year Interim Priority Registration System for Student Athletes
Be it resolved

1. that for registration for all terms beginning with the summer terms of 2005 and ending with the spring term of 2007-08, matriculated students who are certified by the Athletics Department to be athletes in its programs (including both those who are NCAA and Big Ten eligible and those who are working to become NCAA and Big Ten eligible) shall be given registration appointments in a time block immediately after that for graduate and professional students;

2. that the Registrar should collect data on the registration patterns of student athletes under this program so that any patterns with significant adverse consequences for students who are not athletes may be promptly addressed;

3. that during this three-year period the University should, as a top priority, design and implement enhancements to its new Student Information System that would include tools for the Registration module that would support a class reservation and raincheck system integrated with an improved waitlist system and tools for the Academic Advising module that would identify critically needed courses, i.e., courses the postponement of which would necessarily delay a student's graduation;

4. that, commensurate with the implementation of said tools, the Bloomington Faculty Council should replace the arrangement described in the first clause above with a priority reservation policy that both more narrowly targets the critical course and class needs of student athletes and expands the scope to include, over time, all matriculated undergraduates;

5. and that the arrangement described in the first clause above shall not continue beyond the specified ending date unless explicitly authorized by the Bloomington Faculty Council.

The fairest approach to meeting the registration needs of all matriculated students for courses and classes that are historically oversubscribed would be to determine, for each semester, which students would, be necessarily delayed in graduating if they were not enrolled that semester in particular courses and classes that are specifically required by their degree programs. The identification of such time-critically needed courses and classes should be a part an integrated academic advising/class registration system, because students and academic advisors must identify such courses and classes in order to plan future schedules of courses that permit students to graduate on schedule. (Some of this information was embedded in the "degree maps" that were developed as part of the GradPact program.) The PeopleSoft Academic Advising module does not include such tools.

In order to implement a course reservation system that could address both the issue of critically-needed course and classes and the issue of rainchecks for courses that are requested but not obtained in a given semester, a

registration system needs appropriate options (e.g., a "Reserved" registration status) and tools. The PeopleSoft Student Records and Registration modules do not include such tools.

To meet these and other needs of students, staff, and faculty, the University must undertake enhancements and modifications of the PeopleSoft Student Information System. A top priority in the design and implementation of these enhancements and modifications should be the development of tools for identifying critically needed courses and classes and reserving seats in them.

In the absence of such tools, the current practice for addressing class registrations problems consists informal requests from athletics advising staff and student athletes to school and departmental administrators for direct administrative intervention in the registration process to resolve the problems. Most academic units bend over backwards to respond to requests from the Athletics Department. Some, perhaps most, take pride in their history of solving class registration problems for both athletes and non-athletes alike. But these interventions exact a significant toll on the time and energy of staff in Athletics, the schools and departments, and the Office of the Registrar. For example, if a student athlete needs a particular class section for a course that has multiple class sections only some of which are compatible with practice schedules and which typically close, then the student's athletics advisor may contact the department offering the course and ask that for assistance in getting the student into a particular class section. To achieve this,

1. the department's scheduling officer would contact the Registrar's office and ask that the maximal enrollment limit be decreased by 1,

2. the Registrar's staff would process the request, but it would not take effect until the next day (because of the new PeopleSoft SIS and the Ad-Astra class scheduling software),

3. the scheduling officer would the next day enter into PeopleSoft a permission for the student to enroll in the class even if that would exceed the maximum enrollment limit,

4. the scheduling officer would track when the student registered,

5. the scheduling officer would, after the student had registered, remove the permission if the student had not used it, and

6. the scheduling officer would contact the Registrar's office and ask that the maximal enrollment limit be increased by 1 (back to it's original value), and

7. the Registrar's staff would process the request, which request would again not take effect until the next day.

Furthermore, between the time when the student athlete registered and the time when the reinstatement of the original enrollment took effect, if the class closed, then another student who requested the class before the reinstatement took effect would be denied access to the class even though there was, in fact, still space for that student.

(This absurd waste of staff time would be significantly lessened if it were possible to give a student a class reservation with an expiration time.)

Given the demands of such informal processes, it is remarkable that most class registration problems for student athletes that admits solutions are in fact solved.

The alternative to such informal processes, given the limitations of our current software systems, is to schedule student athletes for earlier registration times than would ordinarily be the case. All other Big Ten Universities presently use some such practice, except for Purdue, which uses a demand-based registration system that automatically handles such situations (in contrast to the supply-based systems used by us and all other Big Ten Universities. Except for Michigan, the other Big Ten Universities - Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan State, Northwestern, Ohio State, Penn State, Wisconsin - use either a "First-In-Line" system or, in the case of Wisconsin, a "non-seniors Second-In-Line" system. In a First-In-Line system for student athletes, student athletes are scheduled to register at the very beginning of undergraduate registration. (At most of these Universities, some groups other than student athletes also are scheduled to register First-In-Line. Here in Bloomington, undergraduate students with physical disabilities are permitted to register at any time during the registration process, including before undergraduate registration begins.)

Michigan uses a "Head-Of-Group" system, in which undergraduate students are divided into groups according to how many credit hours they have earned, e.g., 95-100, and then student athletes are permitted to register at the head of their respective groups.

According to information provided by the other Big Ten Athletics Departments, all of those that use a First-In-Line system are satisfied with the results. In contrast, Michigan reported that there are pitfalls with their Head-Of-Group system, because student athletes tend to take fewer credit hours per semester and so progressively fall into lower priority groups in comparison to non-athletes.

Last Spring Semester, the Athletics Committee proposed that we adopt an arrangement similar to that at Michigan, except that the groups would be the customary academic year classes - freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. Under this Head-Of-Class plan, athletes who were currently freshmen would register after all current sophomores but before all other current freshman; athletes who currently were sophomores would register after all current juniors but before all other current sophomores; and so forth.

But this alternative in this form is inconsistent with how registration appointments are assigned in the PeopleSoft SIS environment. A student's registration appointment is based on the student's projected degree credit hours at the end of the current term. The technical definition of this is somewhat complicated: a student's projected end of term degree credit hours equals the number of transfer credit hours plus the number of IU credit hours already earned plus the number of credit hours currently enrolled in minus any credit hours that cannot count toward a degree (e.g., M014) minus any credit hours for courses that cannot count toward a degree because they violate repetition and overlap rules (e.g., one cannot count both Calculus M119 and Calculus M211 toward a degree).

To be compatible with PeopleSoft, the recommendation from the Athletics Committee would have be restated as a Head-Of-Projected-Degree-Class system, i.e., a student athlete would register at the head of the student's projected degree class. So, for instance, a student athlete whose projected degree class was freshman would register immediately after all students whose projected degree class was sophomore but before any other students whose projected degree class was freshman.

The change from current class to projected end of term degree class vitiates a Head-Of-Group approach for solving registration problems for student athletes . Many athletes, including some who are excellent students, earn twelve hours per semester during the academic year and then six credit hours during the summer in order to stay on a normal four-year graduation plan. But this means that during every spring semester registration for the following fall semester, these students' projected end of term degree class is less than that of their peers. For example, suppose a freshman athlete earns 12 credit hours during the fall semester and enrolls in 15 credit hours for the spring semester but then drops 3 credit hours. Then, that student's projected end of term degree credit hours is 12 + 12 = 24. So that student's projected degree class is freshman, because sophomore status requires 25 or more credit hours. So under a Head-Of-Group approach, the student would register at the head of the projected freshmen but after all projected sophomores. But almost all freshmen in a spring semester have projected end of term degree credits of 25 or more, so almost all freshmen in a spring semester have a projected degree class of sophomore. So the student athlete, even with Head-Of-Group priority, would register for the next fall semester after almost all other freshmen. Consequently, the student athlete would almost certainly have difficulty getting needed courses and arranging a schedule that did not conflict with the student's practice schedule.

A comparable situation would occur for the student during every spring semester registration for the following fall semester.

After taking account of the credit hour cutoffs for class standings of sophomore, junior, and senior, one sees that a Head-Of-Group arrangement only solves registration problems during spring registrations for fall semesters for student athletes who have successfully taken a normal student course load of approximately 15 credit hours per semester. For student athletes who follow the common 12-12-6 (i.e., twelve credit hours during each academic year semester and six credit hours during the summer, a Head-Of-Group plan is of no benefit for spring registrations for fall semesters.

For student athletes who take five years to graduate, i.e., take only approximately 24 credit hours per calendar year, which is more or less the NCAA and Big Ten eligibility standard, a Head-Of-Group arrangement can also fail during fall semester registration periods for spring semesters. But one must bear in mind that, in almost all cases

in which the registration appointment scheduling process fails to make it possible for a student athlete to get the classes that are critical, i.e., essential, for that student to make satisfactory progress, departmental administrators will be asked to help, and will help, solve the problems administratively. In contrast, a First-In-Line approach will solve, without any special intervention on the part of departmental administrators, all registration problems that can be solved using the given Schedule of Classes. Moreover, because most problems concerning critically needed classes would be solved by administrative means under both our current system and a Head-Of-Class system, a First-In-Line approach would have little new impact on non-athletes.

The one area where a First-In-Line approach might have new impact on nonathletes would be in the availability of electives. However, according to information on the majors of all current sophomore, junior, and senior student athletes, it appears that most of them are in highly structured programs in which electives are limited and are most commonly taken towards the end of the student's undergraduate career, when the student would have junior or senior priority anyway. The exception to this are the student athletes in the Bachelor of General Studies program. But, according to the Athletics Department, there are only thirty-three such student athletes at this time. Consequently, a First-In-Line approach should not have a significant impact on the availability of elective courses.

The following table summarizes the benefits and costs of a First-In-Line (FIL) approach and Head-Of-Projected-Degree-Class (HOPDC) approach:

Benefit/Cost Comparison of FIL and HOPDC Approaches

APPROACH	BENEFITS	COSTS		
		New Impacts on Non-Athl	Acad. Adv.,Dept. Adm.	Reg. Staff
FIL	High: Solves all ordinary class scheduling problems	Low	0	Low
HOPDC	Moderate: Primarily only solves class scheduling problems for student athletes who maintain a normal 15 cr. hrs. per semester; solves spring semester class scheduling problems for student athletes who maintain a 12-12-6 cr. hrs. pattern. Little help for students who follow NCAA eligibility guideline of 20% of degree requirements per calendar year.	Low	Med. High	Medium

On the basis of these considerations, we recommend the above Resolution to the Bloomington Faculty Council for its adoption.

Addendum A: Types of Problems Encountered by Student Athletes

1. Conflicts between class schedules and practice schedules.

2. Conflicts between class schedules and travel schedules.

3. Difficulty getting classes needed to maintain eligibility after a change of major

4. Difficulty getting classes needed to meet the new, stricter NCAA eligibility rules.

5. Need to switch to a less structured major because of inability to get needed courses.

History

Approved: BFC 12/07/04; Renewed 03/04/08

Note: Name changed from "Student Athletes" when policy was moved into the database in 2016.