TO: Dr. Elsa A. Murano 
President

THROUGH: Dr. Jerry R. Strawser 
Interim Executive Vice President and Provost

FROM: Dr. Luis Cifuentes 
Interim Vice Provost

DATE: June 30, 2008

Subject: Classroom Scheduling Task Force Recommendations

At its December 5, 2007 meeting, the Council of Deans directed that a task force be convened to develop a recommendation on the scheduling and use of the University’s classrooms. The task force was convened (membership list attached) and met biweekly throughout the spring 2008 semester. Draft recommendations were shared with the Council of Deans at its June 11, 2008 meeting, with comments on the recommendations due to me by June 25. The response at the Deans’ meeting was favorable and no negative comments were received.

Attached for your review and approval are the recommendations from the task force. If you would like to review the documents referenced in the recommendations, please let me know.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Attachments
Classroom Scheduling Task Force
Membership by College

Convener
• Dr. Luis Cifuentes                Interim Vice Provost

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
• Dr. Ann Kenimer                 Associate Dean

College of Architecture
• Mr. Tom Regan                   Dean
• Mr. Leslie Feigenbaum           Assistant Dean

Mays Business School
• Dr. Marty Louder                Associate Dean
• Mr. Edward Segura               Facilities Coordinator

College of Education and Human Development
• Dr. Becky Carr                  Assistant Dean

Look College of Engineering
• Lori Cardenas                   Engineering Data Analysis & Communications Specialist

College of Geosciences
• Dr. Vatche Tchakerian           Associate Dean
• Roxanna Russell                 Senior Academic Advisor I

College of Liberal Arts
• Dr. Pam Matthews                Associate Dean
• Nikki Trott                     Academic Advisor I

College of Science
• Dr. Tim Scott                   Associate Dean
• Holly Sterling                  Administrative Assistant

College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
• Dr. Evelyn Tiffany-Castiglioni  Associate Dean
• Mr. Leslie Fiechtner            Director

Resource Members

Office of Facilities Coordination:
  Mr. James Massey
  Mr. David Morrison
  Mr. Sean Cantrell

Office of the Registrar:
  Mr. Don Carter
  Ms. Donna Chester
  Mr. Andy Armstrong

6/30/08
Classroom Scheduling Task Force

History:

The use of classrooms at Texas A&M University has been studied and discussed for a number of years. Most deliberations have centered on availability of classrooms, quality of rooms and proximity to individual departments. Use of classrooms relative to state standards has also been considered from a regulatory perspective. More recent inquiries continue to emphasize classroom needs in the context of the faculty’s ability to schedule a room of sufficient size, location and quality in which to teach. This is epitomized by the assertion by the College of Liberal Arts ...

“...At a recent meeting with my executive committee, the heads became quite animated about the availability of classrooms for scheduling classes. Many indicated that it seemed classrooms were occasionally not available at any time. Evidently, there is still a sense that the process is uneven and proves quite frustrating for departments with few or no classrooms that they can assign themselves. The issues range from availability of classrooms even at off times to the availability of large classes for efficient instruction of basic courses...I think the classroom matter still constrains how we deliver instruction on campus.”

Dean Johnson
College of Liberal Arts

In response to this inquiry and other similar claims, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost tasked the Office of Facilities Coordination to conduct a comprehensive study that accurately assessed availability of classrooms and could be used as the basis for a set of management actions that addressed campus classroom needs. The study results were provided to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the College of Liberal Arts and, subsequently, to the Council of Deans in the fall of 2007. The study found that while the present system works for much of the campus, there still are a number of faculty and students whose needs are not met. The study suggested that unmet needs were significant enough to lead to imbalances in the quality of instruction received across the campus. Following presentation of these results to the Council of Deans, they asked for the formation of a Classroom Scheduling Task Force and charged it with developing specific recommendations on how to improve scheduling and the general use of classrooms.

Task Force Participants:

The Classroom Scheduling Task Force had broad-based University representation with representatives from the colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Architecture, Mays Business School, Education and Human Development, Engineering, Geosciences, Liberal Arts, Science, and Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, with resource individuals from the Office of Admissions and Records and the Office of Facilities Coordination.

Goals:

The goals of the Classroom Scheduling Task Force were to determine if the current process is indeed “uneven” or “inefficient” and if it “constrains the delivery of instruction,” and to develop a set of recommendations that will lead to a more equitable, more efficient and better system for scheduling classrooms and delivering quality instruction to students.

References: Page numbers listed in the recommendations reference presentations, studies, and surveys conducted by the Office of Facilities Coordination for use by the Classroom Scheduling Task Force in its deliberations and are available at http://cor.tamu.edu/utilization/F06-07ClassroomUtilizationPresentationsAndReports.pdf

June 30, 2008
Objectives:

Evaluate the current classroom scheduling system, discuss alternatives and draw conclusions on optimal methods to provide a classroom inventory which will be:

1) Scheduled as efficiently and fairly as possible
2) Appropriately sized
3) Properly designated
4) Technologically outfitted
5) Well maintained

Recommendations:

The Classroom Scheduling Task Force recommends a comprehensive classroom scheduling solution that addresses the foundational, operational, and planning needs of the University as it strives to enhance the undergraduate and graduate experience as indicated in Vision 2020.

1) Foundational Recommendations:
   a. The Office of Admissions and Records should provide centralized scheduling of all classrooms on campus in order to allow the faculty and students the maximum utility (129-132, 168-171, 198-200) of teaching resources. College and departmentally controlled classrooms and meeting rooms should be reevaluated by the Office of Admissions and Records and the Office of Facilities Coordination to verify their utility as classrooms or as other spaces. Rooms which should be used primarily for instruction should be classified as classrooms and should be centrally scheduled by the Office of Admissions and Records utilizing a priority-based system (202-206). Rooms which should be used primarily for non-instructional purposes should be classified as meeting rooms and should remain under the direct control of their respective colleges and departments (213).
   b. The priority of classrooms should be more equitably distributed (202-204) based upon the teaching needs of the departments and colleges as the University changes and grows over the years. The distribution of priorities should be more flexible and should be reevaluated periodically (i.e., every two to five years) with the following factors in mind:
      i. Prime time teaching hours (129-132)
      ii. Quality of instructors (teaching awards)
      iii. Geography of classrooms (24-27, 134-135)
      iv. Technology of classrooms (President’s study)
      v. Size of classrooms (28-29, 136-137, 207-212)
   c. The classroom scheduling system should be upgraded from the current paper scheduling system to a computer-based scheduling system which can support the growing needs of the University. (129-132, 207-212)
   d. To ease the transition to the centralized scheduling of all rooms and the implementation of a computer-based system, each college and its departments will be provided direct contact with the Office of Admissions and Records and other units involved in the process to discuss the transition and the expected benefits. The Office of Admissions and Records should provide training to University personnel on the modified priority system and the process for scheduling

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June 30, 2008
rooms with a target date of September 2009 (FY 2010) for the purchase of the computer-based scheduling system. This will allow the proper budget reviews and provide sufficient time to plan and implement the new computer-based scheduling system.

2) Operational Recommendations:
   a. In order to further improve the availability of classrooms, a re-evaluation of the University's class scheduling patterns should be conducted prior to the full implementation of the computer-based scheduling upgrade and should consider the following:
      i. Possible differentiation between undergraduate and graduate patterns (168-170, 198-201)
      ii. Current usage patterns (129-132, 198-201)
      iii. Desired usage patterns (survey of Departments/Colleges)
      iv. Passing period duration reductions (state standard)
      v. Staggered start times (Allen Building)
      vi. After eight o'clock start times (OAR recommendation)
      vii. Possible service days (survey of Departments/Colleges)
   b. In order to provide the greatest amount of available class time for each classroom and to ensure ease of transition between classes for faculty and students, the class scheduling time patterns should be strictly applied in all rooms unless individually justified by the departments to the Office of Admissions and Records and reported to the Office of Facilities Coordination. (168-170, 198-201)

3) Planning Recommendations:
   a. The current classroom inventory should be reevaluated periodically (i.e., every two to five years) and future construction should be planned to be consistent with the goals of Vision 2020 and with the following considerations:
      i. Right size for our needs and stated objectives (28-29, 136-137, 207-212)
      ii. Properly equipped with technology (President's study)
      iii. Properly designed to provide an enhanced student experience (Vision 2020)
      iv. Support college objectives such as accreditation (survey of Departments/Colleges)
   b. Final decisions related to the quantity and general characteristics of classrooms proposed in new construction or major renovation projects should be the result of the analysis and recommendation of the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost to the Council on the Built Environment.

Conclusion:

In order to meet the Vision 2020 goals of providing an enhanced undergraduate and graduate experience, it is necessary for Texas A&M University to schedule classrooms using a state-of-the-art computer-based scheduling system that is managed with a team perspective under the lead of the Office of Admissions and Records. By providing the proper foundational changes along with well-considered operational and planning support, the University can ensure that faculty and students receive the most benefit possible from its classroom resources.

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June 30, 2008