

AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE

FACULTY RED COMMITTEE REPORT

Faculty Red Committee, 2025-2026

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ABSTRACT

This report examines institutional practices for creating departmental schedules. The committee reviewed relevant university policies and interviewed and polled current department chairs on procedures. Findings show that course scheduling is impacted by a wide range of possible factors, with significant variation across departments. As these factors cause changes to a department's schedule, the resultant domino effects are difficult to predict. University and departmental enrollment is perhaps the most significant factor that impacts changes to the course schedules, and this will always result in a moving target when making and predicting course schedules. Nevertheless, it is apparent that schedules are created to support the needs of the students while working within institutional systems and constraints.

The committee recognizes that the responsibility for creating departmental schedules lies within the purview of the department chairs. The committee recommends that the Faculty Senate invite the Chair of Chairs, the head of the Chair Council, to a future faculty senate meeting to support transparency, communication, and understanding between the organizations and their members. In addition, the Fall 2025 implementation of the Coursedog scheduling software has resulted in recent and significant changes to the scheduling process. A future conversation will allow more time for the continued integration of this software, and for the conversation to best reflect the most current practices with this change in mind.

COMMITTEE CHARGE

The purpose of this committee is to examine and provide recommendations on institutional processes related to departmental course scheduling based on student need, faculty input, and university need.

CONSIDERATIONS

The policy most particularly relevant to this discussion is Policy 2:049 on Chairs and Directors. It stipulates that the administrative and instructional responsibilities of the chairs includes Personnel Management: coordinate faculty/staff workload; and Department Administration: prepare and manage course offerings and schedules, and coordinate these decisions with affected departments.

A significant consideration in the institutional process related to departmental course scheduling is the implementation of the Coursedog scheduling software in Fall 2025. Whereas previously chairs had more immediate autonomy over the scheduling process, Coursedog now rolls over a department's schedule from one year to the next. Chairs may then go into the system and make changes as necessary. As with any new systems and methods, there have been some inherent challenges. Chairs report that the rollout of Coursedog has not been smooth. While this committee and the department chairs might speak to previous processes relating to departmental course scheduling, it becomes a moot point until Coursedog is fully integrated and functioning as intended.

The committee recognizes that any discussion about course scheduling must take into consideration frequency of courses offered, numbers of sections, modality, location, time, and staffing. There are many factors that impact any of these elements. Such factors may include:

- Classroom Availability
 - The addition of the Health Professions Building and the resulting moves around campus will continue to create a shifting landscape in classroom availability.
 - Departments are regularly gaining and losing “priority scheduling” in certain classrooms. When a department loses priority access to a room that has been central to its scheduling, it may be forced to shift course times, move courses to less suitable spaces, or compete with other departments for limited alternatives.
 - Equipment availability in specific classrooms impacts scheduling of those spaces and the classes that rely on that equipment. For example, science labs, recording studios, computer labs, music classrooms, and art studios best accommodate courses designed for those environments. Similarly, courses that rely on those spaces cannot be moved elsewhere. If such a space is unavailable or double-booked, the affected courses have few or no alternatives.
- Variable Student Needs
 - DFWs mean that students end up off-sequence, and the need to move them through the program out of the regular sequence may result in a change to the schedule. Accommodating these students may require adding sections or offering courses out of their typical rotation.
 - Course modalities continue to change to suit the needs of the current student population. Shifts between in-person, hybrid, and online delivery create

downstream constraints for room assignments or faculty assignments. When a course's modality changes, room reservations may need to be renegotiated and faculty assignments revisited.

- Student Population Changes
 - An increase or decrease in student population within a particular cohort may create an imbalance of course offerings at various levels. Such a dip or bubble will have continued impacts until that cohort graduates.
 - An increase or decrease in the student population within a department may result in an increase or decrease to the number of sections offered in any course.
 - Changes in the general student population have resulted in persistent instability in the number of general education classes required to serve those students. While some general education courses can occur anywhere in a student's degree program, some are required in the early semesters. That may create a fall to spring imbalance in general education offerings within a department.
 - Face-to-face components of hybrid classes play a big role in determining and impacting a department's schedule. These components must be timed to align with room availability, faculty schedules, and student cohort patterns, limiting the flexibility otherwise afforded by hybrid delivery.
- Institutional Changes Impacting Frequency of Offerings and Course Rotations
 - The push to cancel low-enrolled courses results in immediate changes to a department's schedule, as well as future impacts as those courses may still be required for graduation.
 - Curricular changes in major(s) or concentration(s) may require a shift in course offerings. New programs, revised degree maps, and changes to required courses can increase or decrease demand for specific sections.
 - Changes to the enrollment in inter-disciplinary electives offered by a department have broad-reaching effects. When enrollment in these courses drops due to changes in other programs' requirements or degree maps, a department may be forced to reduce sections or eliminate offerings that also serve as part of its own curriculum.
 - The removal of required minors from degree tracks has impacted course enrollments. Courses that once had reliable enrollment because they fulfilled a requirement in a minor may now face lower demand, making them more vulnerable to cancellation. This has a disproportionate effect on smaller or more specialized departments that relied on cross-departmental enrollment to sustain their offerings.
 - Course Choice Counts discourages students from enrolling in courses outside of their requirements. This policy can result in reduced enrollment in elective or

exploratory courses, accelerating the cancellation of low-enrollment sections and narrowing the range of courses a department can feasibly schedule.

- Prerequisite sequencing plays a significant role in student needs and the timing of course offerings. When a required prerequisite course is not offered in a given semester, or when students fail to complete it on time, degree progress may be hindered and enrollment in upper-level sections may drop below viable thresholds. Chairs must therefore think several semesters ahead when constructing a schedule, ensuring that foundational courses appear with sufficient frequency and at times that allow students to progress in sequence.
- Faculty Considerations
 - Faculty qualifications and variations to a person's load may impact the scheduling of a course. Reassigned time, administrative duties, retirements, the addition of new faculty, and the availability of adjuncts may limit which faculty members are available to teach specific courses, particularly specialized offerings.
 - Faculty turnover has an immediate result in workload availability. New tenure-track faculty come to campus with a 3-credit release in their first year. Instructors are required to teach 15 WLC instead of 12 WLC. When those faculty are the only ones able to offer specialized classes, those offerings may be unavailable until the workload stabilizes.
 - Faculty may not be qualified to teach in certain modalities. As online delivery has expanded in certain areas, departments may find that some courses cannot be offered in a preferred modality because qualified faculty are unavailable, requiring either a modality change or a delay in scheduling.
 - Faculty may choose to not teach a low enrolled class for a pro-rated rate. When a course falls below the threshold for full compensation, a faculty member's decision to decline the reduced-rate assignment may require the course to be cancelled, reassigned, or staffed differently, with implications for both the schedule and student access to the course.
 - The availability and continuity of adjunct and contingent faculty affects a department's capacity to staff courses. Reliance on part-time instructors introduces additional scheduling uncertainty, as their availability may shift between semesters.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee offers the following recommendations.

1. The Chair Council should continue to provide new and seasoned chairs with formal and informal mentorship on the process of course scheduling.

2. Department chairs should continue to coordinate scheduling and curricular decisions with affected departments, as is indicated in policy 2:049, as the domino effect of course scheduling changes is significant. This inter-departmental communication is pivotal to student success.
3. Department chairs should continue to converse with faculty in regards to course scheduling as appropriate, and should communicate decisions and changes with an aim toward understanding and transparency.
4. Faculty Senate may choose to invite the Chair of Chairs, or other representative members of the Chair Council, to visit Faculty Senate for a conversation to discuss the inherent complexities of the process, and to better understand both the variables and the guidance that chairs share and receive to this end.
5. The Faculty Senate should be aware of the ongoing integration of Courserdog and revisit this topic in a future report once the software is more fully operational.

REFERENCES

Austin Peay State University. (2022, May) Policy 2:049: Chairs and Directors.

<https://apsu.navexone.com/content/dotNet/documents/?docid=111&app=pt&source=browse&public=true>