

OSU makes registration, progress toward graduation easier for students

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

CORVALLIS, Ore. “ Starting right away, changes in the way that classes are scheduled and that students register for them at Oregon State University are expected to make it easier for students to both get the courses they want and speed their progress toward graduation.

Most of the changes have to do with increased automation of the registration process, says University Registrar Kent Kuo. Beginning April 9-13, for instance, students will no longer use paper forms to add classes, as they previously have during the second week of each term.

Instead, each student will simply contact the department offering the class and request permission to be added; if approved, the department will input a code that allows the student to register for that course using the on-line registration system, eliminating time spent carrying forms from office to office and waiting in line for approvals.

“By focusing on the dual outcomes of improving access to course offerings and helping students graduate on time, we believe students will begin to see the value of these changes immediately,” said Kuo, who joined the university last fall after having served as registrar for the University of California-Merced.

That change is just the beginning. Summer registration begins April 15, and with it “electronic wait listing.” Prior to this, when courses have filled to capacity, students could ask to be placed on a departmental wait list “ typically kept by hand -- and check back regularly to determine if other students had dropped the course and thus created vacancies.

Now, students will be able to get on electronic wait lists for up to three courses; as slots become available, students will be registered automatically in priority order and notified via automated e-mails that they are successfully enrolled.

On May 18, a third innovation gets underway, this one in priority registration. Currently, registration priority is determined by the first letter of each student’s last name, with the alphabetical order rotated each term; Kuo describes that as a “complex process that doesn’t help students graduate on time.” The new system, which begins with the opening of registration for Fall 2007, will recognize how many credits a student has earned toward graduation, and assign higher priority to those closest to completion.

Students will notice a second major change for the Fall 2007 term “ a new class and classroom scheduling protocol designed to distribute class times more evenly throughout each school day.

Most classes now begin during the peak 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. period, increasing mid-day campus congestion, competition for classroom space and the number of courses scheduled at the same time. The new a

pproach creates a framework for academic departments that requires them to distribute their courses across the full class day.

Finally, beginning in the Spring 2008 term, that new framework will be supplemented with a computerized system that will assign classes to appropriate classrooms, taking into account class size, necessary classroom features, proximity to department offices and more. This will eliminate time-consuming manual scheduling for the bulk of OSU classes and allow staff to focus on more complex scheduling issues.

“We’ve been planning these changes for more than a year around a widely recognized need to improve our registration processes,” said Kuo. “The improvements will help OSU do a better job of fulfilling its mission as a public university, to provide access to a high-quality education for all of our students.”

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