

# GER Online Course Planning

## Recommendations Submitted February 25, 2022

### Introduction

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In Fall Semester 2021, Provost Runge created and charged the GER Course Sharing committee<sup>1</sup> with developing a model that encourages collaboration and cooperation in setting course schedules and rotations for GER synchronous and asynchronous online courses. The charge does not include coordination of face-to-face courses or dual enrollment courses.

The committee recognizes that some departments, such as Anthropology and English in the College of Arts and Sciences, have course sharing and/or planning models in place. The committee also recognizes that the ways in which departments and colleges communicate and work across campuses varies widely. Our model and recommendations are not designed to replace collaborative structures that are in place and working effectively. The intent of the work is to improve course fill rates, more effectively utilize the wealth of faculty expertise across UAA campuses, ensure that we are meeting campus agreements, and above all, the needs of students across the institution.

### Objectives

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1. Ensuring scheduling practices that promote student equity and success<sup>2</sup> by
  - a. Considering student needs at each campus,
  - b. Offering a range of student options,
  - c. Reviewing appropriate course size, including considerations for [Regular and Substantive Interaction or RSI](#),
  - d. Leveraging faculty strengths across campuses in content area expertise, mode of course delivery, and pedagogical practices.
2. Efficient use of institutional resources that help
  - a. Fill full-time faculty workloads at all campuses,
  - b. Increase overall fill rates of courses at each campus, and
  - c. Decrease number of courses/sections with insufficient enrollment.
3. Improved communication between and among units
  - a. Increase collegial and collaborative decision-making among faculty across all the campuses,
  - b. Increase collegial and collaborative decision-making among department chairs and directors, and
  - c. Increase collegial and collaborative decision-making among deans and community campus directors.

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<sup>1</sup> See [Committee Charge](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UAA 2025](#) Aspiration - We Put Students First

4. Timely and responsive coordination
  - a. Ensure community agreements and obligations are met at each campus<sup>3</sup>,
  - b. Engage in flexible, collegial, collaborative decision-making when developing course plans and when identifying necessary changes to schedules, adding/dropping sections, etc.,
  - c. Increase an overall sense of stability between and among stakeholders(students, staff, faculty, community partners) connected with programs and disciplines because of connected, multi-year planning,<sup>4</sup> and
  - d. Ensure more timely offers of adjunct faculty contracts and, therefore, earlier access to the LMS, instructional support personnel, and other instruction-related resources.

## Development of Course Plan

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1. Timeline
  - a. Provost, deans, and campus directors review the academic calendar and date requirements related to schedule management, identifying dates for possible meetings/discussions and due dates for plans that are aligned with institutional scheduling needs. Develop a process of efficiently adjusting the schedule as the plan moves forward from semester to semester.
  - b. Based on deadlines established above, full-time faculty (or relevant designee) will meet two to three times a year for discussions and course planning. Meetings in early fall semester, early spring semester, and late spring semester are recommended. These meetings should include all full-time teaching faculty in a given discipline/division, as well as designees where needed.
  - c. In addition, we encourage departments to include all faculty teaching in a discipline in meetings, regular department and discipline communication, and curriculum planning.
  
2. Course Plan
  - a. Full-time faculty in the department/discipline/division across campuses will develop and propose a 3+ year course plan. In cases where no full-time faculty are present, a program coordinator, schedule coordinator, or other designee may participate in the discussion.
    - i. Data to be shared and considered might include, but is not limited to

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<sup>3</sup> [UAA 2025](#) Aspiration - We Are a Respected and Trusted Community Partner

<sup>4</sup> Connected, multi-year planning benefits stakeholders in a range of ways. It should help faculty in more “standalone” or “a department of one” situations develop an improved sense of connection to their disciplinary community across all campuses. It helps students with planning and program completion. It provides stability to our community partners.

1. Historical schedules of GER online classes compiled for all campuses,
  2. Number of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty teaching GER online courses within the discipline across campuses, including faculty expertise, mode of course delivery, and pedagogical practices,
  3. Number of seats needed for each GER online courses across campuses,
  4. Course capacities across all campuses and Department of Education considerations for [Regular and Substantive Interaction \(RSI\)](#),<sup>5</sup>
  5. In subsequent discussions and course planning conversations, changes in faculty availability, patterns in enrollments, and additions/cancellations should be taken into consideration.
- b. Proposed course plan will be reviewed by the respective dean, campus directors, or designees to ensure campus agreements and objectives have been met for each campus and college.<sup>6</sup> After being approved at this level, the plan is advanced to the provost.
  - c. The provost reviews the proposed plans. Once approved by the provost, deans and campus directors are responsible for sharing the plan with their departments. The provost shares it with relevant institutional entities.

### 3. Changes to Course Plan and Course/Section Offering

- a. The course plan should be considered an evolving and changing document. For instance, in subsequent discussions and course planning conversations, changes in faculty availability, patterns in enrollments, and additions/cancellations should be taken into consideration.
- b. We encourage the development of a more uniform process of efficiently adjusting schedules within a given semester. At a minimum, when courses need to be added (or if cancellation of a section is under consideration), academic advisors, chairs/directors, and others involved in course support should be encouraged to check for availability of seats on other campuses.

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<sup>5</sup> Discussions around reasonable course caps should be based on the new July 2021 guidelines on Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI). This [YouTube video reviewing the new rules for RSI](#) and the [SUNY rubric incorporating new rules](#) may be useful.

<sup>6</sup> There may need to be an examination and streamlining of the terminology for the people serving key roles and responsibilities. Our exploration of this topic suggests that varying titles are in use across the institution and may further complicate the interface.

- c. Adding Sections
  - i. If addition of a section seems warranted, consultation should take place between the relevant discipline/division, dean, and campus director. Decisions should be based on workload agreements and availability of full- and/or part-time faculty at other location(s).
  - ii. In instances where students are waitlisted, students should be routed to existing sections at any location across the institution before new sections are added.
  
- b. Canceling Sections
  - i. If cancellation of a section seems warranted due to insufficient enrollment, faculty and academic advisors should check for available seats in other sections across the institution, routing students to available spaces regardless of location.
  - ii. If cancellation of a section seems warranted due to unforeseen circumstances (faculty illness, etc.), the relevant campus should attempt to meet student needs by reaching out to administrators and faculty in the discipline across the institution. It may be helpful to identify ways that faculty information concerning contract type, degrees, and qualifications can be shared to make more informed decisions about possible faculty who may be available to teach those courses.

## Supporting the Process

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1. Institutional Research will be a valuable resource. As course plans are advanced and enrollment patterns continue to change, continued interface with IR is recommended.
2. Faculty development programming may be leveraged to support this process, as well as collaborative efforts to engage faculty in conversations around best practices (meeting RSI standards), pedagogies, and so on.
3. Resources related to the work of the Vice Provost of Student Support may be leveraged to assist with building connections between and among students in diverse locations.