

Statement of the Common Hour in Light of the New Scheduling Policy (from FS Committee on Student Affairs Committee and FS Committee on Academic Regulations)

Implementing a common hour at the University of Toledo alongside the new course scheduling policy may be challenging. The Faculty Senate minutes indicate that there is ongoing discussion between members of the Student Government and Faculty Senate about a potential separate policy for a 'common hour,' but it has not been implemented yet.

- The new course scheduling policy, set by the Provost's Office, appears to be focused on addressing low-enrolled courses and reallocating faculty workload.
- This policy is being implemented in response to broader trends affecting public institutions in Ohio, including potential pressure from the state legislature to cut programs.
- Given the current focus on efficiency and workload reallocation, introducing a common hour might face obstacles. The university is already dealing with:
 1. efforts to remove low-enrolled courses from faculty workloads;
 2. concerns about faculty teaching outside their areas of expertise; and
 3. pressure to implement changes quickly, as evidenced by the rapid implementation of the new scheduling policy.

While a common hour could potentially benefit students and faculty, it would need to be carefully balanced against these other priorities and constraints in the current academic environment at the University of Toledo.

Arguments for common hour:

1. Promotes community involvement by providing a dedicated time for club meetings, faculty meetings, and office hours.
2. Allows students to attend campus events without conflicts with classes.
3. Ensures students have time to eat between classes, addressing concerns about back-to-back schedules.
4. Facilitates multi-lecture courses by allowing common hour exams, which reduce the number of different exams and ensure consistent evaluation standards.
5. The common hour would have benefits in UT's community by improving student engagement, increasing faculty-student interactions, boosting retention rates, and would be an attraction to prospective students.

Arguments against common hour:

1. May cause overcrowding in dining areas during the designated time.
2. Can create scheduling conflicts between different events and meetings due to limited time.
3. Disrupts the flow of classes, potentially creating inconvenient gaps in students' schedules.

4. May require rescheduling of existing classes, potentially to less desirable time slots like early morning.
5. Benefits may not extend to all students, particularly those not involved in extracurricular activities.
6. Disruption of existing class schedules, potentially requiring extensive rearrangement of courses.
7. Difficulty in accommodating classes that span multiple time slots or require longer sessions.

Considerations for implementation:

1. Timing is crucial as some argue for afternoon slots rather than mid-morning to better accommodate student preferences and energy levels. If we establish a weekly (or twice weekly) common hour, it certainly will take out a scheduled class time slot in the middle of the day that is generally favored by students—let's say between 11-1 (or any portion of that).
 - Classes usually scheduled at these popular hours will need to be pushed to another time, and that may very well be at 8:00 a.m., later in the afternoon, or even the evening—time slots that students may object to because they interfere with their work schedules. It could even move those classes to Friday, which seems to be an unpopular option. So, the arguments against the revised class schedule and the common hour don't seem to coincide very well.
2. Frequency matters as daily common hours versus weekly or bi-weekly can impact effectiveness and scheduling challenges.
3. Duration and placement in the week can affect student and faculty participation.
4. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a common hour policy depends on careful consideration of the specific needs and constraints of the institution and its community.

Final Analysis:

While the Common Hour would be beneficial to students, faculty, and staff, the implementation of the Common Hour is not achievable for 2025-2026. After that academic year, implementing the Common Hour would require major changes to the recent scheduling policy. A 4 to 5 year plan for execution would be the best course of action to make the Common Hour a reality.

- The idea of a common hour could be studied for a year by a joint FS committee of faculty and student representatives. We need to know how it has worked at other universities and how it has impacted their course schedules. We also need to be sure to compare the demographics of these universities with UT which has a large commuter population as well as many (most?) students who hold down jobs while in school.