



## ***Position of Student Government on Proposed Course Scheduling and the Implementation of a Common Hour***

Authored by : Jaden Bollinger | Presented on: October 22, 2024 at 4:30 PM in NI 1027

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- When looking for debate points found only debate clubs that meet during common hour
- Dickinson College
  - Small liberal arts college in Carlisle, PA founded in 1773
  - Found articles from the 1972 New York Law College and 1989 Dickinson College
  - December 1989 Article
    - Faculty voted in favor to be implemented in 1991
    - Set to be 2:30 to 4:00 on Wednesdays
    - Arguments for included that it would “enhance the academic experience and provide such benefits as cross disciplinary topics for discussion”
    - Arguments against included that it “eroded academics” and that it de-prioritized academic program
  - February 1990
    - Approved for 90-91 academic year on February 5th
    - Ended up being 12:40 to 1:50 pm on Wednesday afternoons following
    - Students complained of scheduling complexity (no internet)
    - Faculty concerned over loss of teaching time
    - All wednesday classes at that time were moved back an hour so 1 pm classes met at 2 pm and 12 pms were rescheduled all together
    - Included an all college luncheon from 11:30 to 12:40 before the common hour
    - A committee set up by the General Education Committee arranged all common hour events
  - February 1992
    - Common hour celebrates Black History Month
  - March 1993
    - Common hour speaker “Mesmerises” with Poetry
  - Common hour panelists
  - Today
    - Classes from 8:30-4:30 pm with classes outside this time requiring special approval
    - Common hour moved to Tuesdays and Thursdays at Noon
    - “So that members of the Dickinson community can gather to discuss topics of interest and enjoy programs that enrich our intellectual and cultural lives. Each week, a varied schedule of events is available such as student presentation of research, concerts, discussion of topics of immediate importance locally and internationally. These programs also provide opportunity for informal conversation among students, faculty, and administrators.”

## Campus Culture Committee

<b>Common Hour Schedule</b>			
Fall Semester, 2024      12:30 PM – 1:45 PM			
<b>Tuesday</b>		<b>Thursday</b>	
August 27	<i>Welcome back!</i>	August 29	
September 3	Department Meetings	September 5	APSCUF Membership
September 10		September 12	College Meetings/Prof Dev
September 17		September 19	Fall Assembly/Town Hall (President)
September 24	Provost/Dept Chair Forum	September 26	University Forum
October 1		October 3	Department Meeting
October 8	Fall Break	October 10	APSCUF Membership
October 15		October 17	College Meeting/Prof Dev
October 22		October 24	University Forum
October 29		October 31	
November 5	Department Meetings	November 7	APSCUF Membership
November 12	Provost/Dept Chair Forum	November 14	Fall Assembly/Town Hall (President)
November 19	University Forum	November 21	College Meeting/Prof Dev
November 26		November 28	Thanksgiving Break
December 3	Department Meetings	December 5	University Forum
December 10		December 12	

- Slippery Rock University
  - Public University in Slippery Rock PA
  - Original inspiration for this endeavor at COSGA
  - 59% of students live off campus as commuters (U.S. World and News Report)
  - 8,394 enrollment in Fall 2024
  - The purpose of the Common-Hour Schedule is to identify planned university-wide meetings (such as APSCUF membership meetings) to avoid scheduling conflicts. Common Hour is 75 minutes in duration and extends from 12:30 p.m. until 1:45 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday. Faculty office hours cannot be held during that time.
  - Balancing Sleep and Class Schedules key to success at SRU (2018)
    - Most classes start after 11 am
    - 15% of classes at 10 am
    - 8 am is the second least scheduled hour before 5 pm
      - Would be first if not for common hour
    - Common hour was 60 minutes as opposed to the modern 75
- Neumann University
  - Small Liberal Arts College in Aston PA
  - The Common Hour: One hour, two perspectives (2023)
    - Newly implemented every day of the week
    - Pros
      - More time for interaction outside of classes
      - "A common hour communicates 'community.' It sends a message that the university is for everyone, and we value the intentional time to meet, connect, and engage together in capacities beyond the walls of the classroom," said professor of educational psychology Dr. Marisa Rauscher.
      - "I think the common hour has been beneficial for faculty, as it provides dedicated time to schedule meetings and casual get-togethers and provides us time to have lunch together and with our students. The time slots are definitely filling up but having the

shared block has made scheduling easier and has allowed our community to gather in ways we haven't been doing in a long time and the campus feels electric!" said Professor Keller.

- Cons
  - Cramped and congested Dining hall
    - Introduced increased seating
- Other Colleges with Common Hours
  - Penn State (at certain campuses), Kenyon, University of Baltimore, St. Thomas University, Utah State, Cleveland State University, Muhlenberg, and others
    - Most common two days a week (usually Tuesdays and Thursdays)
      - Favor to slippery rocks due to similar demographic data
    - UBaltimore's list of what to do
      - Read for class
      - Study in the library
      - Meet with an academic coach
      - Attend an on-campus event
      - Lunch with a faculty member
      - Brainstorm a paper at the Writing Center
      - Meet with a tutor at the library
      - Check with Financial Aid or the Bursar
      - Take a break with friends at the Student Center
      - Go to a library workshop
      - Meet with a career coach
      - Group study with friends at the library
      - Meet with your advisor
      - Pray or meditate in the InterFaith Room
      - Have a reading group with classmates
      - Do your homework
      - ...And anything else you need to do!
- Penn State Altoona
  - 3000 student commonwealth campus of Penn State
  - Commuters make up 75% of all students
  - In 2018 Student Government recommended the implementation of a MTWRF common hour
    - Was Tuesday and Thursday from 12:05 to 1:20
    - Curious if these views were shared by all students the faculty senate conducted
  - 293 students were polled from all majors with more students from the largest majors
  - 65% reported common hour conflicts seldom or never happened with 23% reporting sometimes and 11% reporting often
  - Five day a week policy proposal (more 8 am classes)
    - 19% favored changing the common hour
    - 29% neutral
    - 52% wanted it unchanged
  - Three times a week with hours being 15 minutes shorter policy proposal (small effect on 8 am classes)
    - 30% favored changing the common hour

## Campus Culture Committee

- 32% neutral
- 38% wanted it unchanged
- Elimination of Common hours (Eliminates two 8 am classes over 4 years)
  - 12% in favor of elimination
  - 5% favor a change to the current system towards elimination
  - 20% neutral
  - 63% favored leaving it unchanged
- Final Report
  - The current common hour provides limited slots for activities, creating conflicts
  - The College has needed in recent years to extend the academic day into evening, which can tend to limit the time available for extra-curricular activities
  - There is no denying the College's persisting and limiting shortage of classroom facilities
  - Penn State Altoona's currently reduced student population
  - No other Penn State campus college has a MTWRF common hour
- Best course of action to either continue with current common hour policy or implement MWF
- "The average student favors having common hours two days per week instead of having common hours five days per week. The average student strongly favors having some common hours and opposes the idea of eliminating common hours."

Common Hours at Abington, Altoona, Behrend, Berks, Great Valley, Harrisburg 2022/2023					
Campus	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Abington	12:20 - 1:10	8:00 – 9:15	12:20 - 1:10	8:00 – 9:15	12:20 - 1:10
Altoona		12:05 - 1:20		12:05 - 1:20	
Berks	12:15 - 1:15		12:15 - 1:15		12:15 - 1:15
Behrend (Erie)**					
Great Valley					
Harrisburg		11:30- 1:25		11:30- 1:25	11:15 – 1:15

\*\*Behrend (Erie) has no "Common Hours" as classes run every day starting at 8:00 AM and continue through the entire day.

- Utah State
  - 28,063 enrollment in Fall 2023
  - 2009
    - Initially proposed as a two day a week 12-1:15 pm common hour
  - 2012
    - Amended to be one hour a week 11:30 am to 12:45 pm and implemented in 2012
  - 2014
    - Faculty and administration sees issues with impacts on scheduling
    - Students still polling in favor

- 62% of students polled in 2014 favored the common hour initiative
- 2015
  - Common hour discontinued
  - “We found that we simply could not handle the student need for classes if we didn’t put that hour to use,” said Tim Vitale, director of public relations and marketing for USU, in a prepared statement. “The day just wasn’t long enough to get students into the classrooms they needed without taking advantage of that hour.”
  - Main issue was lack of facilities to house classes in outside of the common hour
  - 38% of 3,000 polled felt neutral about the common hour

## SAA President takes home Bill E. Robins Award

By STEVE KENT  
staff writer

The 2011 Robins Awards held Saturday night honored 19 individuals and organizations that exemplify outstanding achievement at Utah State University.

“What truly is an Aggie? Fortunately for us, the answer is here in this room,” said Craig Whyte, advisor for the Student Alumni Association (SAA) said to the audience in the TSC ballroom, Saturday. “We have the privilege of recognizing nearly 100 individuals who embody the spirit, passion and

enthusiasm of Utah State.”

USU President Stan Albrecht presented Jo Olson with the Bill E. Robins Memorial Award. Olson, a senior majoring in public relations and speech communication, is currently serving as president of the Student Alumni Association. Olson has also served as director of Aggies for Africa and as the student coordinator for the A-team. As the ASUSU Arts and Lectures Director for the 2009-10 school year, Olson was the student who initially proposed Common Hour, which will set aside an hour each week from 12-1:15 p.m. for lectures and other presentations that students might attend

without scheduling conflicts.

“There are so many different professors, advisers, friends here on campus. I’ve had the great opportunity to see how this university functions and it really is because of the amazing people that are a part of it,” Olson said in his acceptance speech.

Though tradition was a prominent theme in the night’s events, the entertainment selections at this year’s ceremony marked a change from recent years.

“What we wanted to do this year for entertainment was to keep it all in-house,” said Brady Mathews, Robins Committee entertainment

chair. “Instead of paying outside entertainment, we’re using all-student talent this year, and they’re incredible.”

Performers included vocalists McKenna Miller and Felicia Stehmeier; members of USU dance company Full Circle, the Caine Jazz Combo and violinist Nicole Tolson. All three finalists for the Talent of the Year Award were featured: Stehmeier, Jared Nicholson of the Caine Jazz Combo and artist Erik Olson. Olson’s paintings were displayed at the entrance to the TSC ballroom.

The Woman of the Year Award was presented to Lacey Nagao, a

graduate student working on a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling. As the 2010-11 director of public relations for ASUSU, Nagao publicized ASUSU events and directed the student government elections.

“This year has been full of ups and downs and crazy and busy, but it’s been such a rewarding year,” Nagao said.

Chris Martin, a senior majoring in economics and political science, received the Man of the Year Award. Martin is a research assistant at

■ See NOMINATE, page 3

## Re-evaluating Common Hour

*Students and faculty receive poll about their thoughts of the Wednesday Common Hour*

► By Manda Perkins  
asst. news editor

Utah State University students, faculty and staff now have the opportunity to voice their opinions concerning the future of Common Hour.

A survey was sent to out to the primary contact email addresses on the university’s server Thursday morning, containing questions about the attitudes surrounding the weekly one-hour break.

The survey will help the Calendar Committee capture the overall attitude surrounding Common Hour to eventually determine if maintaining the schedule, rescheduling or eliminating it altogether is the best course of action.

Scott Bates, associate vice president and associate dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies who serves on the Calendar Board, said, seeing as Common Hour has been around for about three years, it’s time to evaluate the university community’s atti-

tude towards it.

“Results of this will go back to the Calendar Committee and USUSA and so the results will be used to inform whatever happens going forward,” Bates said. “That’s the point of it.”

The complications surrounding Common Hour have been a point of discussion for the Calendar Committee and the Executive Council since last spring. Doug Fiefa, USUSA president, said a concern of some members of university faculty is the scheduling of classroom space. Having an hour in the middle of the week when classes cannot be scheduled creates complications.

“I think that’s the major concern that comes from faculty and staff,” Fiefa said. “But, I also see some of the students’ side and seeing the benefits that come from it; the ability to listen to lectures and go to Common Hour speakers that USUSA brings. Also to have group meetings

where everyone is able to meet at and work on group projects. And a little break from class, knowing that every week on Wednesday you have that break where you can go get lunch, you can study...So I think from a student’s perspective, those are the benefits.”

But Assistant Provost Andi McCabe said it’s difficult to assume the position of the entire university community, which is why a survey was implemented.

“That’s what we’re doing now,” she said. “We don’t really know what the climate is and what they’re feeling. You hear different things.”

The survey was created by Bates and Fiefa for simplicity and a maximum response rate. Bates, who studies survey data in his department,

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Annie Hall photo

STAN ALBRECHT, UTAH STATE PRESIDENT, speaks to students in a Common Hour presentation earlier this semester.

## **Intro**

Hello, as mentioned my name is Jaden Bollinger. I am here today as the Campus Culture Committee Chair representing the University of Toledo Student Government. As you all know, it is our duty as an organization to advocate for the wants and needs of the student body of Utoledo to the benefit of all who attend this great institution. And so I am here today not only to oppose this new course scheduling policy as set out by the provost, but also to advocate for a potential alternative: a common hour. However, before I can address why we SHOULD adopt the common hour I first need to emphasize why we SHOULDN'T adopt this new course scheduling policy legislation.

## **Arguments Against the Proposed Course Scheduling Policy**

Long talks with fellow students, members of student government, and faculty have truly brought to my attention the gravity of this proposed policy shift.

- This policy would seek to mandate that lower division undergraduate courses require a minimum of 24 students, upper division undergraduate courses require 15 students, master's level graduate courses require 8 students, and doctoral level graduate courses require 6 students, or else they be canceled and or merged. When we face stagnating enrollment and retention issues, why is it that we throw away one of the core strengths of our university, our small class sizes. This policy enforcing minimum enrollment requirements undermines the university's mission to provide a personalized learning experience by limiting access to smaller, and more intimate classroom environments where students can benefit from individualized attention and mentorship from faculty members.
- Furthermore, this policy would seek to mandate that at least 15% of all classes be given Friday sections. As faculty, you understand that these courses historically have always suffered from low enrollment and low attendance. It is

clear to see that more classes on this day is not in the students nor your University's best interest.

- Similar to why having mandatory classes on Fridays would be contrary to the progress of the University, forcing at least 5% of classes from 8-9 am puts unneeded constraints on faculty's ability to schedule their classes and forces students to take courses they don't wish to participate in.
- To continue with why students take issue with this proposed policy, this policy would seek to mandate that classes longer than one hour that occur once per week must finish before 10 am or start after 3 pm, or take place on Fridays. Classes during these times significantly interrupt accessibility to dining resources, employment opportunities, and general campus involvement.
- Because many students, notably commuters who often have more limitations to when they can be on campus, may have difficulty getting transportation to these inconveniently timed classes, and this policy, in its entirety, does not fit with Utoledo's mission statement for student centered learning and is contrary to our current aspirations to increase student enrollment and retention.
- This policy feels like a solution to a problem that has not been clearly explained and currently does not hold enough sway to merit this kind of over the top response.
- As a final note on this legislation, I would truly like to emphasize that decisions, like this, which have a very real impact on the students, must include the opinions of those same students. If we continue to pursue a new direction for the University by the facts, figures and numbers you leave those same students you hope to represent behind. You foster an environment that feels cold, uncaring, and robotic that is simply not conducive to University wide well being. We must bridge these gaps between administration, faculty, and students

that have surfaced in recent years and allow these conversations to happen. As soon as we stop being a student-oriented University we stop being UT.

- For these many reasons, in our last senate meeting UTSG unanimously voted in opposition against this prospective policy.

### **Arguments For the Common Hour**

To transition, I would like to propose something entirely separate, but something that is intricately tied to how we think about scheduling at UT while taking into consideration our student's quality of education, retention percentage, student-faculty interaction, and the future of this University.

- For those of you who are unaware, a Common Hour is a period of time on any day during the week where there are no classes scheduled.
  - During this hour there would be campus wide events, student organization meetings, meal breaks, study sessions, faculty student interactions, and an electrified campus feeling we have seldom seen since our enrollment peak of more than 23,000 students in 2010.
  - Ideally this would be implemented on a biweekly basis every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:15pm to 1:15 pm as is the norm for many campuses across the country with this policy in place.
- At UT it is no secret that our enrollment has been struggling. And while we could improve our recruitment, what we really need to improve is our retention.
  - Every year we lose countless students often because they do not feel that their time here is well spent and they lack support groups.
  - Oftentimes, these same students are simply going to class and immediately going home without taking the time to see what else our campus has to offer, only seeing the homework and clogged parking as the immediate results of their enrollment here.



- What the common hour does is it takes many of these students and gives them a section of time where they are on campus, but not in class. A time where every other student at the University is as well.
  - A time where there are speakers, events, life on campus, and, above all, opportunity to meet and interact with fellow students.
  - When students get to know others, get involved, and have the chance to make those support groups I believe that person is much more likely to stick around.
- Common hours have been at the center of many Universities scheduling policy since the 1970's and 80's, being especially common in Pennsylvania colleges as well as in Eastern Ohio and on the East Coast.
  - Notable examples are Kenyon, Slippery Rock, several Penn State Campuses, Dickinson, Baltimore, Neuman, St. Thomas, Cleveland State, Muhlenberg, and others.
- Most of these universities and colleges run on the same Tuesday-Thursday common hour set up that I am advocating for, however there are exceptions with some favoring a one day a week common hour on wednesdays, three day a week model on Monday-Wednesday-Friday, and some even with shorter periods of time five days a week. Regardless of the type of common hour or the University it is implemented at, this policy is one that sees consistently strong support from the students it affects.
- In 2018 Penn State Altoona Student Government proposed that they alter their current Tuesday-Thursday common hour which ran from 12:05-1:20 to a five day a week common hour at the same time. In order to validate that this was a change students wanted to see on campus, their faculty senate organized a survey which included all majors and student backgrounds.
  - When students were asked if the common hour resulted in any scheduling conflicts for them, 65% of students said conflicts seldom or

never happened with a further 23% reporting sometimes and 11% reporting often.

- When asked if they were in favor of the five day a week plan only 19% were in favor of this change with 52% wanting the common hour unchanged.
  - When asked for the three day a week plan 30% favored the change with 38% preferring to keep the current common hour system.
  - When asked if the common hour should be eliminated there was a resounding no. Only 12% of students were in favor of total elimination.
  - In their final report, the faculty senate concluded that despite common hours providing a limited slot for activities and sometimes extending classes into the evenings, the benefits seen by students still make it a viable policy that increases student engagement and enhances the student experience.
- As mentioned in their final report, there are flaws to the common hour policy.
- For one, the dining services might struggle to keep up with the amount of students choosing to eat at this time, resulting in possible issues with seating and meal preparation.
  - For another, this would result in classes being pushed to later or earlier meeting times which can be difficult for certain students to schedule work and other responsibilities around.
  - Lastly, having a high amount of classes directly before and directly after the common hour could lead to classes being compressed together, making scheduling conflicts more pronounced.
  - However, despite all of these challenges, every University and College I have researched while studying the common hour, with the exception of Utah State, has found ways around these challenges and maintains their common hour as being beneficial to students and staff alike.

- For dining, we work out adequate preparations for these rush hour events so that no student goes seatless.
  - For students dealing with these spread out schedules, there is now an hour for them to finish things they would have needed to do at home regardless, leading to less late or incomplete assignments for busy students.
  - For scheduling conflicts, most students polled from the previous survey did not have any major issues with this and we also have the facilities at UT to handle the influx of classes at certain times of day.
- And as for Utah State and why they dropped their Common Hour?
- They simply had the opposite problem that we do, they had too many students. They did have adequate facilities to schedule around these times.
  - Along with this they also had the one day a week common hour which uniquely disturbs scheduling classes in a Monday-Wednesday format even though it was originally proposed to be Tuesday-Thursday from 12-1:15 pm in 2009.
  - And even in 2014, a year before the common hour was eliminated by the administration, 62% of students polled in a campus wide survey still favored the common hour initiative.
  - This elimination was almost exclusively an administration led initiative.
- That being said, this proposed policy wouldn't just benefit students.
- As a professor at Neumann University said "A common hour communicates 'community.' It sends a message that the university is for everyone, and we value the intentional time to meet, connect, and engage together in capacities beyond the walls of the classroom," said professor of educational psychology Dr. Marisa Rauscher.

- Another professor at the same university had also said: “I think the common hour has been beneficial for faculty, as it provides dedicated time to schedule meetings and casual get-togethers and provides us time to have lunch together and with our students. The time slots are definitely filling up but having the shared block has made scheduling easier and has allowed our community to gather in ways we haven’t been doing in a long time and the campus feels electric!”
- I hope that these testimonials go to show just how excited many of these campuses are about implementing this change. As a campus I think we need that kind of energy here as well. This change is not only impactful and beneficial to students, but also one that comes at no real cost. As a university that has increasingly become focused on conserving the money we do have, we should truly take time to consider these kinds of policies that could completely change life for the better here on campus without any expense to the university. I truly hope that this proposed policy is one that you might consider pushing for in place of current suggested scheduling policies for the benefit of our student body and the future of our great institution.