

## **Proposed Standard Times**

**The Senate Student and Faculty Policy Committee recommends that the proposed Standard Times for scheduling classes be moved forward for discussion in the Full Senate. The proposed times seem to be a reasonable alternative to the current schedule and appear to address the administration's concerns regarding classroom utilization.**

New standard times are being proposed because ASU's current standard times do not accommodate the classrooms needed for current and expanding enrollment and building new classrooms is not an option. Four attendant points accompany that overall goal. First, faculty and students want more 2-day per week options. Second, the existing times do not make good use of Fridays. Third, more and more courses are being taught as hybrids, and the current time do not accommodate hybrids (except to leave a good room empty once a week). And fourth, the new schedule of standard times will include 7.5 week sessions. The 7.5 week sessions can be used for traditional courses, but they most immediately benefit our online courses by making them competitive compared with offerings from other institutions as well as providing for additional entry points into our online programs.

The Student Faculty Policy Committee met with Vice Provost Frederick Corey, who to us was the face of the proposed standard times, and we found him to be receptive to our suggestions and open to finding answers our questions. We have included summary of our meeting with Fred Corey in an appendix to this document.

The proposed times have gone through multiple revisions since our committee discussion began. The initial proposal we received (not shown in this report, to avoid confusion) had MWF course offerings, arranged very similarly to the MWF we are using this semester. The committee had two serious concerns with that proposal: (1) MWF courses conflicted with both MTh and TF offerings, which would have caused students or classrooms using MWF courses to be blocked out of all MTh and TF offerings during that time; and (2) several of the MWF courses were not synchronized with the 90 minute blocks for MTh and TF courses, leading to many more scheduling bottlenecks. Our first concern prompted an earlier idea of MWTh courses (which are compatible with TF courses) to get serious attention, and this MWTh idea was eventually adopted in the new proposal. Based on the concerns and recommendations of our committee, Vice Provost Corey created the new proposal, Fig. 3, which also removed two MWTh slots to create a simpler and more flexible schedule with uniform 90-minute blocks.

We anticipate that suggestions from all departments will receive serious consideration during the senate discussion, and we strongly encourage your input.

### **Brief Overview of the proposed Standard Times**

Compared to our current schedule (Fig. 2), the proposed standard time schedule (Fig. 3) switches Thursday and Friday, and bases the class change schedule on 75 minute courses with a 15 minute break, for regular 90 minute intervals. The proposed change in times is strongly motivated by the under usage of classrooms on MWF, especially on Friday.

### **Committee's Assessment of the Pros and Cons of the proposed Standard Times**

#### **MTh, TF, MWTh, W+**

The unusual start times that were created several years ago when we switched to 15 minute breaks are now back to "on the hour" and "on the half hour". (So simple: 7:30, 9:00, 10:30, 12:00, 1:30, 3:00, 4:30; plus evening times: 6:00, 7:30, 9:00.) Everyone should appreciate this.

Classrooms should get used a lot more on Fridays (currently underutilized), due to the TF schedule.

Some departments can use MTh and TF much like they now use MW and TTh, only now the lectures have a two day break for reading and homework assignments.

Other departments can use MWTh and TF much like they now use MWF and TTh. This is slightly less optimal than the status quo, but worthwhile because of the other gains.

The MWTh schedule has two less periods in it than MWF currently has. Since MWF is currently underused, we may still have a net gain in classroom usage. The biggest downside is that MWTh classrooms get left empty for an extra 25 minutes after each class, but that may work very nicely for instructors who like to talk to students immediately after class.

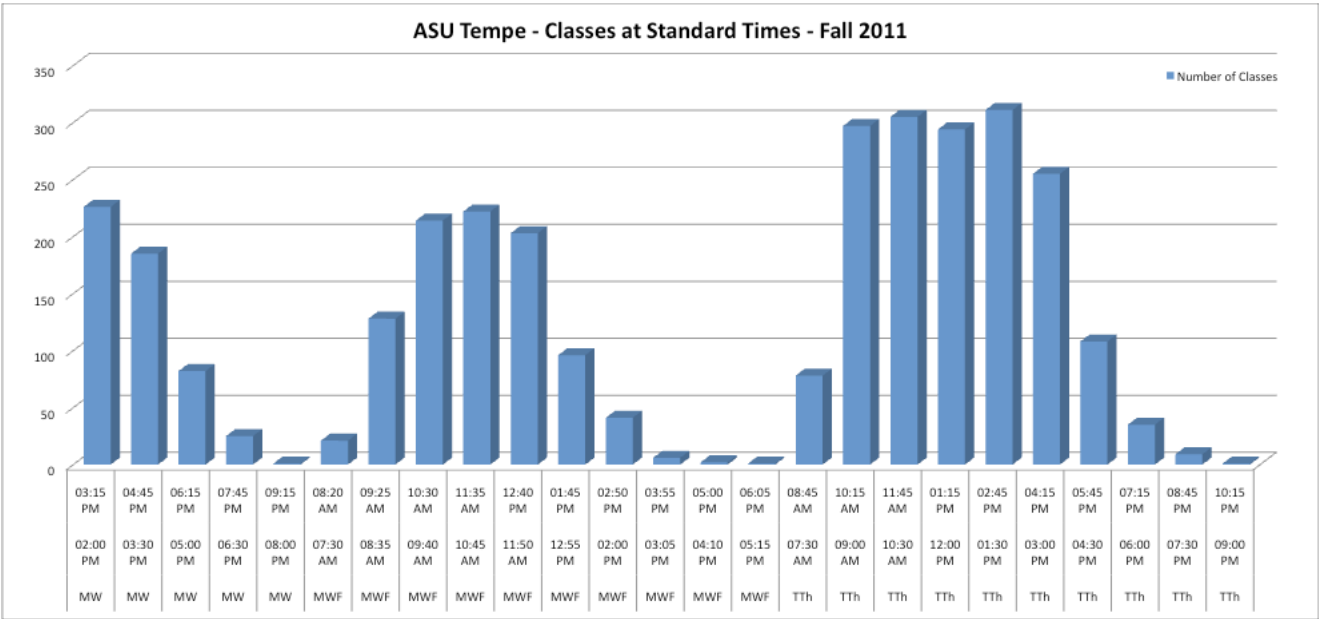
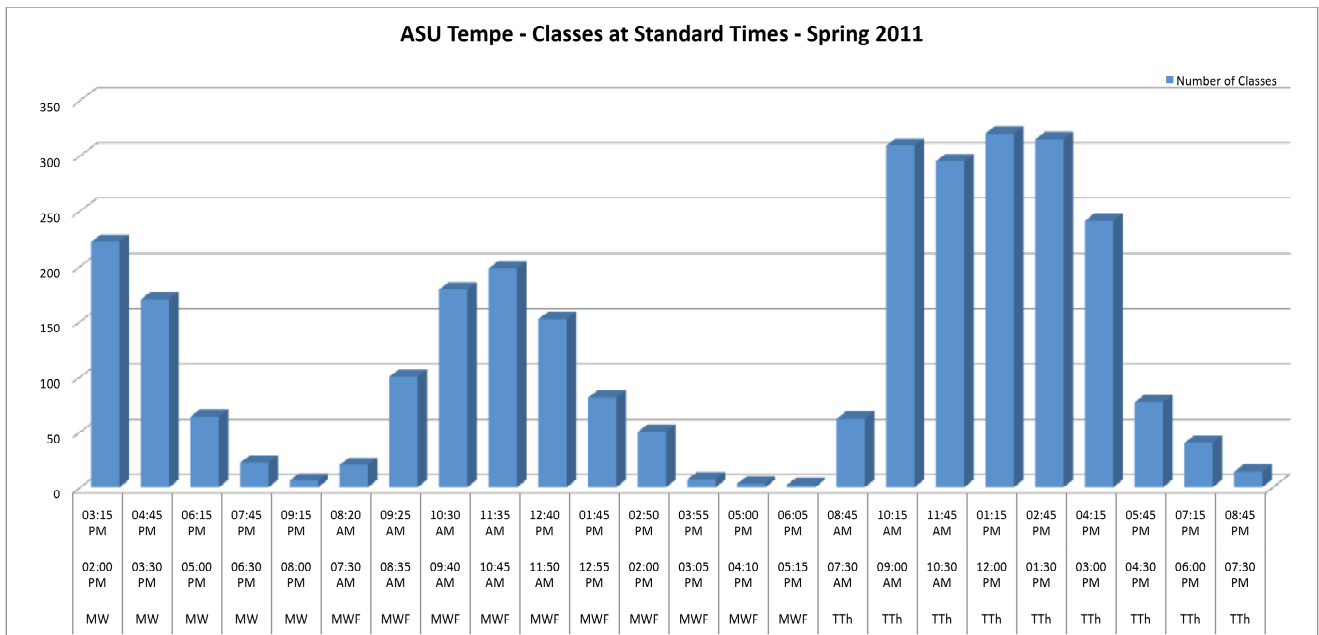
The leftover day for twice-a-week scheduling is now Wednesday instead of Friday, which should be much more attractive for hybrid courses or other uses.

### **Suggested Questions to Consider in the Senate Debate**

**Will this proposal work with your department's courses?** This is a crucial for each department to check carefully. While we cannot anticipate every problem that may arise, this is the time to voice practical concerns. Remember to compare against the status quo; there are, of course, special cases that will always lie outside a general course schedule. If your department depends heavily on MWF courses, you should carefully consider the impact of MWTh. If your department often requires 75 minute or 165 minute courses, you may find the new schedule much more accommodating. Also, consider how your department might utilize W+ or other hybrid formats.

**Should we push to retain the status quo?** While the committee is recommending the proposed New Schedule be discussed in the Senate, we realize there is a danger of creating more problems when changes are pushed forward too quickly on such a large scale. This proposal will inevitably generate extra work to reschedule courses, seminars, and other meetings. If, after reading our analysis and carefully considering the proposed changes, you are still opposed, this is the time to voice your opinion. Careful objections citing specific concerns are more constructive, and any estimate of the cost of implementing this new proposal should be brought up now.

**Are there additional improvements or tweaks that would help?** There have already been some suggestions to allow different class periods, such as MW, WF, or TTh. The committee does not think these would be a good idea, unless we want to maintain the under-usage of Friday in the status quo. But, we are open to new arguments and new ideas. The proposed standard timeframes schedule has benefited from discussions in our committee and are much improved over the initial proposal. We anticipate there are more good ideas out there among other senate members and the broader faculty.



**Figure 1.** These histograms show the usage of classrooms across ASU’s Tempe campus, for fall and spring 2011. Students and professors prefer TTh course. Note the much lower utilization of classrooms on MWF, and the extreme under-usage of classrooms after 2:00 pm on Fridays.

15 Weeks	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	#
	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	Timeframes
M/W/F	7:30 - 8:20	8:35 - 9:25	9:40 - 10:30	10:45 - 11:35	11:50 - 12:40	12:55 - 1:45	2:00 - 2:50	3:05 - 3:55	4:10 - 5:00	5:15 - 6:05	6:20 - 7:10	7:25 - 8:15	8:30 - 9:20	9:35 - 10:25			14
MW							2:00 - 3:15	3:30 - 4:45	5:00 - 6:15	6:30 - 7:45	8:00 - 9:15						5
T/TH	7:30 - 8:45	9:00 - 10:15	10:30 - 11:45	12:00 - 1:15	1:30 - 2:45	3:00 - 4:15	4:30 - 5:45	6:00 - 7:15	7:30 - 8:45	9:00 - 10:15							10
One (x) wk											4:40 - 7:30, 5:40 - 8:30, 6:05 - 8:55, 6:40 - 9:30, 7:05 - 9:55, 7:40 - 10:30						2
	These are the current approved 15 week standard timeframes.																31
7 1/2 weeks	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	#
	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	Timeframes
M/W/F	7:30 - 9:10	9:40 - 11:20	11:50 - 1:30	2:00 - 3:40	4:10 - 5:50	6:20 - 8:00	8:30 - 10:10										7
MW							2:00 - 4:50	5:00 - 7:50	8:00 - 10:50								3
T/TH	7:30 - 10:20	10:30 - 1:20	1:30 - 4:20	4:30 - 7:20	7:30 - 10:20												5
One (x) wk											4:40 - 10:30						1
	These are the proposed 7 1/2 wk standard times. Because M/W and T/TH times are 150 minutes long a 20 minute break is included for each meeting, the total number of meeting patterns remains the same with or without the break. The break between classes changes to 10 minutes.																16

**Figure 2.** This is the current schedule (status quo), including proposed 7 ½ week course times. Notice that the MW course times conflict with MWF times; for example, 3:05-3:55 MWF conflicts with both 2:00-3:15 MW and 3:30-4:45 MW. Currently, MWF rooms are underused (almost 50% vacancy at the Tempe campus at noon), and after 2:00 the usage is almost exclusively MW. The current and projected shortages of classroom space are forcing ASU to examine better ways of utilizing space.

15 Weeks	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	#				
	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30		Timeframes			
M/W/TH	7:30 - 8:20		9:00 - 9:50		10:30 - 11:20		12:00 - 12:50		1:30 - 2:20		3:00 - 3:50		4:30 - 5:20		6:00 - 6:50		7:30 - 8:20		9:00 - 9:50	10	
M/TH	7:30 - 8:45		9:00 - 10:15		10:30 - 11:45		12:00 - 1:15		1:30 - 2:45		3:00 - 4:15		4:30 - 5:45		6:00 - 7:15		7:30 - 8:45		9:00 - 10:15	10	
T/F	7:30 - 8:45		9:00 - 10:15		10:30 - 11:45		12:00 - 1:15		1:30 - 2:45		3:00 - 4:15		4:30 - 5:45		6:00 - 7:15		7:30 - 8:45		9:00 - 10:15	10	
W+	7:30 - 8:45		9:00 - 10:15		10:30 - 11:45		12:00 - 1:15		1:30 - 2:45		3:00 - 4:15		4:30 - 5:45		6:00 - 7:15		7:30 - 8:45		9:00 - 10:15	10	
One (x) wk													4:30-7:15		6:00-8:45		7:30-10:15			2	
																					42
	These are proposed M/W/TH, M/TH, T/F, W+ times. Any of these days could be used as hybrid days but we designed the W+ as a hybrid with an in-class meeting on Wednesday plus an online component.																				
7 1/2 weeks	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	#				
	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	Timeframes				
M/W/TH	7:30 - 9:10				10:30 - 12:10				1:30 - 3:10				4:30 - 6:10				7:30 - 9:10			5	
M/TH	7:30 - 10:15				10:30 - 1:15				1:30 - 4:15				4:30 - 7:15				7:30 - 10:15			5	
T/F	7:30 - 10:15				10:30 - 1:15				1:30 - 4:15				4:30 - 7:15				7:30 - 10:15			5	
W+	7:30 - 10:15				10:30 - 1:15				1:30 - 4:15				4:30 - 7:15				7:30 - 10:15			5	
One (x) wk																	4:30 - 10:00			1	
																					21
	These are the proposed 7 1/2 wk standard times. Because M/TH, T/F and W+ times are 150 minutes long a 15 minute break is included for each meeting.																				

**Figure 3.** This is the proposed standard times schedule. Courses are set to begin at standard times (7:30, 9:00, 10:30, noon, 1:30, and 3:00) and use two twice-a-week formats: MTh and TF. It is envisioned that Wednesday will get used for special purposes, including W+ hybrid courses. Three-times-a-week classes are offered on MWTh so that the rooms can also be used on TF.

## **Appendix: Summary of the Committee's Discussion with Fred Corey on February 9<sup>th</sup>**

This section includes questions asked of the proposal when we first began our discussions along with the responses supplied by Frederick Cory. These are included as background concerning potential implementation issues.

**Question:** "Should some sort of simulation be run before changing over to see how the new schedule might play out in reality?"

**Reply:** We will run queries and prepare sample schedules between now and the implementation of the new timeframes. One good aspect of academic scheduling is that we can review the actual schedule carefully before it goes live.

**Question:** "How will students be notified ahead of time about these changes so they are not surprised when they take effect?"

**Reply:** If the changes are approved, the Provost Communication Group will implement a plan for notifying students, faculty, and staff of the changes.

**Question:** "Should our partner, the community colleges, be made aware of our new scheduling?"

**Reply:** The community colleges are aware of the proposal. We do not anticipate any problems for our students because none of our transfer partnership programs are structured so that students would be co-enrolled at the community college and the university. Further, we are encouraging all transfer students to complete the Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Business, or Associate in Applied Science before transferring to ASU. At minimum, we want transfer students from the community colleges to complete the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) so that when they are at ASU they can focus on their ASU courses and stay on track to graduation.

**Comment:** "There will need to be accommodations for courses with non-standard times, 4 hour courses, and so forth."

**Reply:** This will be no different under the new standard timeframes. Courses in areas such as American Sign Language have unique needs, as do 1-credit hour courses that don't fit into the normal schedule. We need to develop a system where we communicate our unique needs in an organized fashion so that, for example, two 1-credit hour classes can be aligned with the 4-credit hour class in order to maximize our use of space.

**Comment:** "The new schedule will take adjustment on the part of faculty and students. Faculty teaching schedules will change. Students will need to be made aware of limits on the number of courses they might optimally take in one semester. (This is complicated by the 7.5 week courses.)"

**Reply:** We cannot underestimate how the changes might impact some members of the ASU community, and we need to be prepared to help people adjust. Change can be difficult. But the new timeframes provide faculty and students with tremendous flexibility. Once the new schedules are in place, we believe that students will be able to create more options for school, work and family. We should review the guidelines on which students can take overloads with the new schedule and timeframes. Current guidelines help the academic success specialists determine appropriate academic loads for individual students. Faculty will be able to work with their unit heads to create schedules that are far more flexible than they are under the current system.

**Question:** "Why are the changes taking place in Spring 2012? Fall might be a more reasonable start date."

**Reply:** The new calendar takes effect January 2012, and rather than creating incremental change and disrupting people's sense of what is normal twice in one year, it would be better to implement the change to the calendar and the standard timeframes simultaneously.

**Question:** "Who will decide which courses can be taught in 7.5 weeks and which cannot?"

**Reply:** Faculty members actively participate now with their chairs and directors in determining the

schedule and this consultation process will continue with the new schedule. There will be a variety of considerations as to what can be accommodated on a 7.5 week schedule since different courses have different learning outcomes that may necessitate a longer time frame and others are often linked through pre-requisites, co-requisites and other sequencing considerations, depending on the major.