

## Course Optimization: *Executive Summary*

### Overview

Recent analysis of course scheduling, enrollment patterns, and instructional capacity indicates that Sacramento State is not facing a system-wide capacity shortage, but rather a *misalignment between course supply and student demand*.

Addressing this misalignment will require coordinated actions across Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management, supported by clearer financial data, and operational decision frameworks.

We are serving more students with fewer instructional resources, reflecting meaningful gains in productivity. At the same time, students continue to encounter friction in the form of waitlists, add petitions, and uneven access to required courses.

### Key Observations

- Demand is concentrated in a small number of high-demand courses, particularly upper division
- Access friction is increasing, as reflected in rising add-petition activity and inconsistent waitlist practices
- Available capacity is unevenly distributed across time, modality, and sections
- Transfer growth in key majors is creating predictable upper-division demand pressure
- Student behavior contributes to bottlenecks, with concentration in preferred sections and times
- High-demand courses often show elevated non-pass (DFW) rates, creating repeat enrollment demand

In practice, the university is often adding capacity in some areas while underutilizing it in others.

### Near-Term Focus

Efforts are focused on targeted, high-impact adjustments:

- Prioritize high-demand “first responder” courses
- Recover capacity through room, cap, and schedule alignment
- Expand targeted summer offerings (CCE)
- Standardize waitlist and add/drop practices
- Improve early, coordinated communication to students

### Important context:

Many of these levers—course scheduling, section caps, modality, and waitlist practices—are determined at the department and faculty level. As a result, progress will depend on coordinated engagement with colleges, departments, and faculty leadership, rather than centralized administrative action alone. Near-term gains are achievable, but will require alignment, transparency, and shared ownership across academic units.

## Work in Progress

A cross-functional structure has been established to advance this work, including subgroups focused on:

- Waitlist and add/drop processes
- Space utilization and scheduling patterns
- Summer and CCE offerings

These efforts are being led in partnership with deans, associate deans, and department chairs to support implementation within existing governance and decision-making structures.

We plan to have future subgroups that focus on:

- Communication and student engagement strategies to guide registration behavior, including advising, course selection, and effective use of waitlists
- Alignment of key academic and administrative dates (registration, orientation, transfer enrollment, bursar deadlines) to improve enrollment timing, reduce friction, and support student decision-making

## Institutional Capability Needed

A critical institutional gap is the absence of a sufficiently developed financial model to guide course and enrollment decisions. To move forward effectively, we need clearer answers to a few key questions:

- When does increasing section size actually lower instructional costs?
- At what point does adding sections increase costs without generating enough additional revenue?
- Where do cost savings level off under existing workload and compensation structures?
- How do different enrollment mix (resident FTES vs. non-resident students) impact overall financial performance?

Developing this capability will require coordinated leadership across Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Administrative and Business Affairs (ABA), and is essential to aligning academic planning with financial sustainability.

## Summary

- The challenge is alignment, not capacity
- Near-term gains are achievable, but depend on coordinated action across academic units—not administrative action alone
- Long-term success will require integrated academic, enrollment, and financial planning that is supported by more robust financial modeling, specific enrollment data, and shared decisions frameworks.