

Proposed Process for Establishing Class Sizes (AP 6.04.1)

Preamble

Since its inception, the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD) has provided San Mateo County students with high quality higher educational offerings, including vocational and transfer programs. More recently, in light of ongoing educational inequities, SMCCCD has adopted a “Students First” mission and strategic plan, which is mirrored in the local colleges’ educational master plans and student equity and achievement plans. In other words, SMCCCD has understood its role as an institution that primarily serves traditionally marginalized and underserved communities. As noted in the SMCCCD Strategic Plan, SMCCCD will “provide clear and distinct pathways for all students, particularly those from underserved populations, to accelerate program completion and successful transitions to work or transfer.” Undoubtedly, such a strategic goal is only attainable as long as the District and colleges continue to invest in innovative and high quality teaching and learning practices, including justice-centered pedagogies and ongoing professional development. However, such practices are only possible when the teaching and learning environment promotes and sustains such pedagogies, of which class sizes have a profound impact. Said another way, our Students First mission is jeopardized when course enrollments exceed the responsible limits for implementing innovative and justice-centered teaching and learning.

Smaller class sizes make sense, especially when members of the faculty are using the aforementioned innovative, student-centered activities and assessments, like metacognitive and project-based learning, essays and other written assessments, and presentations. Moreover, smaller class sizes allow instructors to provide more substantive feedback on homework and assessments, and provide the time and space for more intimate, one-on-one instruction, which is especially important for “hands-on” instruction in courses like automotive, communications, STEM labs, and dance/yoga. And across all the disciplines, more sustainable class sizes allow our professors to build stronger academic communities within their classrooms, which has been proven to improve retention and persistence.

These types of one-on-one interactions and community building has become increasingly important since the passages of AB705 and AB1705, which have essentially eliminated pre-transfer coursework in mathematics and English. However, students who enroll in accelerated math and English do not only enroll in math and English courses; they enroll in courses across the campuses, which means that “basic skills” become the responsibility of the entire college. In other words, AB705/1705 does not impact only English, math, and ESL, as English, math, and ESL students are the colleges’ students. The impacts of AB705/1705 reverberate throughout the institutions, making writing and math instruction necessary in most disciplines. Furthermore, because pre-transfer coursework has been eliminated, there is a larger need for “just-in-time” instruction, which takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Even though pre-transfer courses have been eliminated, the skills and concepts covered in these courses have not; instead, these skills and concepts have been integrated into the curricula of transfer-level courses, making one-on-one interactions with students and “just-in-time” instruction absolutely necessary to student success.

AB705 makes certain “colorblind” assumptions about our incoming students. It assumes that all students come to our colleges with writing and mathematical knowledge that we know is not equally provided in the K-12 system. Equity is about meeting our students where they are, not dictating that they must have certain prerequisite skills in order to succeed in transfer-level coursework. Sound pedagogical strategies that are enshrined in the course outlines should receive the benefit of smaller class sizes. Creating a transparent, consistent process for establishing class sizes provides equity across campuses, as it is inequitable for students at one college to have larger class sizes in a course than another student in the same course at one of our sister colleges.

Our goal is to improve teaching and learning across the District, especially as it relates to class sizes. The current system for establishing class sizes is ineffective and convoluted, and it promotes favoritism and “back room” dealing. The proposed process would provide more transparency in how class sizes are established and more consistency in class sizes across the District. Our students come from all walks of life and backgrounds, and smaller class sizes allow our faculty to more effectively educate our students.

1. Administrative Procedure for Establishing Class Sizes (6.04.1)
 - a. Standard Class Size for All Courses (In-person, asynchronous, hybrid): 30/35; standard for labs = 20-24 (with the exception of English composition, which is set at 26 students per the collective bargaining contract)
 - ~~b. District Class Size Committee (DCSC) is a sub-committee of District Curriculum Committee, and it processes requests for changes to COR class size. Changes can only be made to courses, not individual sections.~~
 - c. Decisions on class sizes shall be made by each college’s curriculum committee as part of the local COR review process.
 - d. ~~Cross-district~~ Campus Discipline Faculty shall initiate a review of their COR by submitting their revised COR ~~first~~ to their local curriculum committees. The proposed class size must be supported by the course’s activities and assessments (see Guidelines for Determining Class Sizes). ~~and then to the DCSC. Before submitting COR for a change to class size, representatives from each campus must come to a consensus on the changes to the COR and the recommended class size. The discipline faculty should make all efforts to come to a consensus, but if they are unable to come to consensus, they should present their rationale to the DCSC for an exemption.~~
 - e. Once a COR has been approved and a class size is assigned by the local curriculum committee, all faculty in that discipline must adhere to the new COR requirements and outcomes and deans must adhere to the new class size maximum.
 - ~~f. DCSC shall be composed of the following members:~~
 - ~~i. Three (3) faculty members from different disciplines and divisions~~
 - ~~ii. The Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Planning~~
 - ~~iii. Local Curriculum Chair~~
 - ~~iv. A Dean from an academic division~~
 - ~~v. A Vice President of Instruction~~

- g. ~~DCSG~~ Local curriculum committee responsibilities and powers with respect to class sizes include:
 - i. Review ~~approved~~ CORs in consultation with the discipline faculty initiating the review;
 - ii. Determine course class sizes based on the prescribed assessments and class activities; and
 - iii. ~~Revise class size guidelines and review process; and,~~
 - iv. Create timelines and deadlines for submitting class size changes.
- h. The District Participatory Governance Council, in consultation with its constituent groups, has the sole responsibility for revising this administrative procedure.
- i. Guidelines for determining class sizes
 - 1. Course Outline of Record
 - a. Disciplines requesting reduced class sizes should include a variety of required qualitative assessments and kinesthetic activities for instructors to choose from.
 - b. Methods of Instruction
 - i. Courses that utilize group work/discussions, hands-on learning, field work/experimentation, presentations, in-class writing assignments, and other kinesthetic pedagogical techniques or courses with content that require a great deal of scaffolding and tutorials should be considered for lower class sizes. These methods of instruction should be noted in the COR.
 - c. Representative Activities
 - i. Setting up/breaking down lab equipment
 - ii. Using new software
 - iii. Data analysis
 - iv. In-class writing assignments
 - v. Frequent group work/discussions
 - vi. Data collection (laboratory and field)
 - vii. Ungraded presentations
 - viii. Project-based learning activities
 - ix. Service learning activities
 - x. One-on-one in-class feedback
 - 1. Movement-based activities (e.g. dance, yoga, etc.)
 - 2. In-class performances
 - 3. Artistic constructive critique
 - xi. Peer review activities
 - xii. And other appropriate kinesthetic activities
 - d. Methods of Evaluation
 - i. Courses that emphasize qualitative assessments, such as substantive writing assignments, group

projects, research projects, portfolio reviews, substantive oral presentations, or frequent in-class performances, should be considered for smaller class sizes. These assessments should be noted as required in the “Methods of Evaluation” section.

- ii. Courses that emphasize rote assessments, such as Scantrons, multiple choice/short answer exams, or third-party assessments, should not be considered for smaller class sizes.

e. Representative Assessments

- i. Lab reports
- ii. One-on-one assessments
 - 1. Movement-based assessments
 - 2. Musical/drama performances
- iii. Projects (group and individual)
- iv. Essays
- v. Graded in-class presentations
- vi. Peer evaluations
- vii. Portfolios
- viii. Frequent graded in-class writing
- ix. Other discipline-appropriate qualitative assessments

2. Frequency of assessment

- a. The ~~DCSC~~ curriculum committee should consider the frequency of qualitative assessments and kinesthetic activities. These assessments and activities should be regularly utilized throughout the semester and be noted in the COR. For example, a single essay over the course of the semester would not qualify for a smaller class size.

3. Recommendations from Professional Organizations or Peer Reviewed Scholarship

- a. The ~~DCSC~~ curriculum committee should consider relevant scholarship and professional recommendations, if available, as provided by the discipline faculty when assigning a class cap.

4. District Precedent

- a. The curriculum committee can also consider the class sizes for similar courses within the District.

j. Appeal Process

- i. If the ~~DCSC~~ curriculum committee rejects a proposed class size, they should provide a rationale to the discipline faculty.
- ii. Discipline faculty can either adjust their proposed class size or appeal the decision according to their local curriculum committee and academic senate by-laws. ~~of the DCSC to the District Curriculum Committee. The~~

~~DGC will convene an appeals ad hoc committee composed of two (2) faculty and one (1) administrator who are not members of the DGSC. The decision of the ad hoc appeals committee is final.~~