

Registration: How to Handle Requests for Adding Seats to Courses

During the registration process and throughout the add/drop period, students will often approach faculty to ask if they would be willing to add a seat for them in a course or section they did not get into. Faculty are asked not to say yes directly to the student. The appropriate procedure is as follows:

1. Remind the student to add their name to the course/section waitlist. If any additional seats are added, these will generally go first to those on the waitlist.
2. Ask the student to discuss their course needs with their academic advisor and/or the advising office.
3. Academic advisors should work with their advisees to determine if the student truly *needs* the course during the given session or semester or just really *wants* the course. The following should be considered:
 - a. Discuss the students' academic interests and major or intended major
 - b. Consult the course planning documents located on the upper right hand corner of the [Advising website](#).
 - c. Considering pre-requisites and progress toward completing requirements, determine whether the student can take the course at a later date.
 - d. Did the student attempt to register for the course/section during the assigned registration block for their class year? If they did not get into the course, did they register for the waitlist? We will usually not add a seat to accommodate a student who failed to register on time. If any additional seats are added, they will generally be offered in the order of the waitlist. If students put themselves on the waitlist during their assigned registration window, those students with more seniority should be at the top of the list.
4. If the student truly *needs* to take the course to stay on track, the advisor should email the division chair, Registrar (Lingling Wang), and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Curricular and Academic Affairs (Bill Parsons) with a copy to the student requesting that a seat be added and providing an explanation of why it is necessary that the student take it at this time and an explanation of why they did not register for the course or the waitlist during their assigned registration window, if applicable.
5. The request will be reviewed and the instructor will be consulted before any final decision is made regarding adding seats. If it is determined that additional seats are needed, the course cap will be raised to admit students off the waitlist. Only in rare cases with extenuating circumstances will a specific student be added to the course.

Note on timeline for requests for adding seats: The student and academic advisor should raise the issue as soon as they have determined that the student has a **need** to get into the course. If the division chair, Registrar, and Associate Dean concur, we make a note that it appears seats should be added to the course/section. However, because there are generally several months between registration and the start of a session, during which many students make registration changes, we will monitor the situation but may delay taking action to increase seats until closer to the start of the session.

It is important to follow processes that are fair to all students. In many cases, for every student who requests an additional seat, there are other students who also want to get into the course. We need to control numbers for several reasons:

1. In many cases, the course will be offered again in later sessions. We do not want to end up having a course oversubscribed in one session and undersubscribed in another.
2. Class size has an impact on the student experience. Discussion, group projects, and many active pedagogy strategies work best with smaller classes.
3. Class size also affects the faculty experience. With a larger class, the faculty member has more grading to do and more students competing for the same amount of faculty time during office hours.
4. Faculty find it hard to say no when asked, even if they really do not want to increase the class size. This process means that they do not have to be the gatekeepers.
5. If we establish a precedent of always adding seats to accommodate student wants (rather than needs), we will ultimately create more problems than we solve. We would like to limit this to when it is truly necessary.
6. There are often multiple pathways to complete the majors, and our teaching schedule and staffing plan is based on this.

That said, we recognize that there have been disruptions to student course planning due to COVID and changes to the course offering schedules. There may be some cases in which, despite our planning, the course sequences do not work out as intended. We also recognize that there will be students who change their major or do not decide on one until a bit later in their undergraduate career. We want to be flexible, so limiting adding seats to those cases in which it is truly necessary will allow us to serve all students better.