Help for large class instructors

By Pat Hagen
Lantern staff writer

Although many students have mixed feelings about taking a class with more than 100 people, many of the instructors teaching large classes have indicated the university can help them become better teachers.

The Center for Teaching Excellence will present a symposium today to instructors and students at the Fawcett Center for Tomorrow from 3 to 5 p.m. to discuss the issues facing large enrollment course instructors at Ohio State.

"Some large class instructors don't feel rewarded for their efforts... the reception is one small way to let them know their efforts are noticed and appreciated," said Nancy Chism, senior associate at the Center for Teaching Excellence.

The symposium will report the results of a campus-wide survey of professors" concerns and possible solutions to problems with large classes, Chism said.

There are approximately 660 instructors teaching 630 large-enrollment courses on campus. A large enrollment class is has more than 100 students, said Eggle Sells, director of Instructional Development and Evaluation.

The symposium will discuss organizational issues dealing with large classes. Sells said physical facilities and equipment must be supportive of large classes.

"We'd like to see a set of exemplary classrooms equipped with advanced instructional technology. The potential for satellite communication is here," he said.

Sells said teachers of large classes have difficulties.

"One of the real challenges to the lecturer is how do you keep students awake and interested enough to want to come," Sells said.

"Nothing replaces the ability of the lecturer in a large group setting," he said. "They have to have something interesting to say. It's a performance in part."

During the symposium, it will be recommended that a permanent advisory board be created to deal with the problems of large enrollment classes, Chism said.

"We want to make the concerns and issues of large classes more prominent for the administration and hopefully, they'll be more responsive," Chism said.

The majority of instructors want to find better ways to make the instruction process more personal and initiate discussion in large classes, Chism said.

The instructors indicated on the survey they are interested in learning how to stimulate critical thinking in their students and finding ways to lecture more effectively, she said.

Many instructors are also concerned that large enrollment courses bring in a lot of money for the university but the finances don't go back to the classes, Chism said.

"The instructors claim the amount of money reaped from LECs (large enrollment classes) are used by the departments for other purposes," Chism said.

However, faculty members of large classes don't complain as much about salary as about time, Chism said.

"Faculty members would love to have release time to prepare for large courses. They hardly ever get any more planning time than they do for their other courses," she said.

Most instructors would also like to have better audio-visual equipment and facilities for their large classes, as well as more teaching assistants, Chism said.

Bill Sharkey, a graduate teaching associate in the Department of Communications, said he does not find it difficult to teach Interpersonal Communication to more than 100 students twice a week.

Sharkey said large classes work when there is the right interaction between teacher and students.

"If the students are bored and if they don't want to be there, they're not going to interact and you have a bad class," Sharkey said.

Large classes are an easy way to get information to a large group of people, Sharkey said.
Ohio State classes not always big

By Tom Spring

From the one-on-one interaction with faculty in an individual studies class to classical mythology with more than 500 students, Ohio State students can find themselves in classes ranging from a small conference room to a large lecture hall.

The larger classes tend to be introductory or basic requirement courses. Some of these may combine a lecture that meets one to three times a week with discussion and recitation or laboratory classes.

"Not all classes will be large in size because the discussion and the labs will be small," notes Bill Strauss.

Strauss should know. As assistant director of Campus Planning and Space Utilization, he keeps tabs on class sizes.

For instance, in the basic chemistry course, students have three lectures, one three-hour laboratory, and one recitation each week. In recitation meetings, students from large lecture classes break up into small groups for an organized discussion of the week's material. The autumn 1989 lecture sections of that course ranged in size from 172 students to 245. The laboratory and recitation sections ranged in size from 14 to 24.

In contrast, all class meetings for freshmen composition are relatively small. This course meets five times a week for an hour each day. Last fall, the size of this course ranged from 21 to 25 students per class. Some special sections of the course had even fewer students.

In fact, the size of all English courses from introductory to graduate level averaged fewer than 23 students.

Generally, the higher the course number, the smaller the class size. In mathematics, for example, lectures averaged more than 100 students in classes up to Math 299, 33 students in the 300 to 699 level, and 20 students in the 700 to 999 range.

Math discussion-recitations averaged 26 students in the low-level series, 22 in the mid-range, and eight students in the upper level.

Math courses at the 400 to 799 level and above are generally open to both undergraduate and graduate students, while courses 800 and higher are exclusively graduate courses.

Strauss also noted that the large lecture classes are generally taught by professors, which allows more students to learn from the most experienced instructors.

In the College of Business, for example, one very popular course, Marketing 650, meets four hours a week in a lecture hall and is taught by a nationally known marketing expert. Finance 724, which deals with the stock market, was limited to 24 students winter quarter. Those in that class study companies and actually manage a small portion of the University's endowment in conjunction with the University treasurer. The course is team taught by two professors, so students receive more individual attention.

All together, classes are taught in more than 450 classrooms and more than 750 laboratories on the Columbus campus.
More early classes offered

By Sayuri Inoue
Lantern staff writer

It is still dark, and the moon is shining in the western sky.

But while commuter students with 8 a.m. classes are still fighting over parking spaces, some OSU students have already been in class for 30 minutes or more.

Only the Department of Communication offers 7:30 a.m. classes, but you might have a chance to get the earliest class on campus during Spring Quarter 1993.

In the spring, the class day will start at 7:30 a.m., instead of 8 a.m. and end at 5:30 p.m., extended from 5 p.m., said Robert L. Arnold, associate provost for curriculum and instruction.

R. Eugene Schuster, university registrar, said some final exams will also be scheduled at 7:30 a.m.

Traci White, a senior from Reynoldsburg majoring in elementary education, said she is taking a 7:30 a.m. communication class this quarter because it was the only choice she had to fulfill her requirement.

"Traffic is awful," said White, who has to leave her home by 6:45 a.m. to get to class on time.

On the other hand, some students welcome early-bird classes.

"I like it, because I've got to be here at 7 o'clock anyhow to get a parking space," said Susan Filipow, a graduating senior from Parma.

"If I'm here later, I'm not going to get a parking space," said Filipow, who got up at 5 a.m. last Thursday. "I'm a morning person."

The change will allow the university to create more sections and courses, and will increase available classrooms by 11 percent, Arnold said.

"Having the space to teach courses is only one of the problems in delivering more than 6,516 courses in 18,824 sections this quarter," President E. Gordon Gee said.

Gee said the change in class hours is one of the long-term solutions to "enhance the learning environment."

But some students won't take the earlier classes.

"Seven-thirty is too early," said Jason Eason, a senior from Michigan majoring in political science, when he was heading to his 8 a.m. class. He said he will welcome late classes because he works during the day.

Eason said 8 a.m. classes are early enough for him. "If it helps, overall I guess that would be a good idea. Just I won't be taking 7:30 classes."

Vicente Berdayes, a graduate student who teaches a communication class to 29 students, said he likes the early class because his job is done by 9 a.m., and he can do his own work afterward.

Arnold said emphasis on small writing classes and using computer facilities in the General Education Curriculum requires the university to provide sufficient classrooms. Building renovations has also limited space, he said.

The Department of Communication has offered classes at 7:30 a.m. since last year because of the high demand for classes and because of a shortage in classrooms, said Betty F. Moeller, administrative assistant.

The courses offered are introductory levels mostly taught by teaching assistants, Moeller said.

Seven communication courses are taught by seven instructors at 7:30 a.m. this quarter. But the number of 7:30 a.m. classes offered by the Department of Communication will increase along with university's class hour change in the spring, she said.

Not all campus departments and offices will be affected by the time changes.

Business hours in university offices will remain from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Arnold said.

Class hours at the agriculture campus will also remain from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. because of the distance from the central campus, Arnold said.
OSU to start classes half-hour

By Tim Doolin
Dispatch Higher Education Reporter

The bane of every college student's existence — the dreaded early morning class — will become more common starting spring quarter at Ohio State University.

To counter the problem of students being closed out of courses, the university plans to begin the school day at 7:30 a.m., a half-hour earlier than it starts now.

Most classes on campus will start on the half-hour, instead of the hour. The last class of the day will end at 5:30 p.m. instead of 5 p.m.

The change will allow the university to add more sections of high-demand courses, said Robert L. Arnold, associate provost of academic affairs.

"The big minus is people don't want to get up any earlier than they do," Arnold said. "But if the choice is between being closed out of a class and getting up early, I know what I would do. I would get up and go to class."

Earlier this year, OSU set aside $1.5 million to fund additional sections of courses, but that only deals with part of the problem.

earlier to meet course demand

Due largely to building renovation projects, the number of classrooms on campus has declined to 305 this quarter, from 332 fall quarter 1990. The new class schedule will free up 11 percent more classrooms, Arnold said.

"This gives us more places that we can put additional course sections. It certainly is a lot cheaper than building a lot of buildings."

OSU won't know until the middle of winter quarter how many additional courses it will fund for spring quarter, Arnold said.

About 81 percent of the students received all the courses they requested for fall quarter. That is up from 77.2 percent last fall and is the highest percentage since fall quarter 1989.

The university may not see a breakthrough in the classroom shortage on campus until fall quarter 1996. That's when a $20.4 million, 50-classroom building at Neil and 17th avenues is to be completed.

Administrative offices will continue to be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Classes on the agricultural campus — buildings west of the Olentangy River — will continue to be offered on the hour, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
'Up and at 'em' is earlier now for students, faculty

7:30 bell signals way to get more out of the day
By Steve Sterrett

Time changed with the beginning of spring quarter.

Most of the Columbus campus instituted a new schedule with daytime classes beginning at 7:30 a.m., changing on the half-hour, and concluding by 5:30 p.m.

The change makes 11 percent more classroom space available.

The new schedule only affects classes offered in buildings east of the Olentangy River. Classes west of the river remain on the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule.

President Gey mingled with students leaving their 7:30 a.m. classes in University Hall on the first day. He encountered no complaints about the early start.

"At least you can find a place to park," one young man said. A woman student said the change was "nice for working people."

The new schedule increases the number of class periods from nine to 10 per day and will give students more slots for courses, says R. Eugene Schuster, University registrar.

University officials had considered starting classes at 7 a.m. or adding classes from 5 to 6 p.m.

"Any little change you make causes fall-out somewhere," Schuster says. Extending classes until 6 p.m., for example, would create substantial additional expenses by requiring an extension of the dining hall hours.

At least you can find a place to park
Early student

University officials decided a half-hour change would cause the least disruption and more likely would be accepted by people, he says.

The half-hour difference between the start of classes east and west of the river allows more time for students to travel across campus.
Council to discuss scheduling concerns

The Council on Academic Affairs has begun preliminary discussions about the limited amount of freedom students have in scheduling classes.

Sharon West, associate professor of journalism and council member, said General Educational Curriculum requirements and major programs have become too broad, almost totally eliminating free electives for students. She said it is a trend that students get fewer choices in which classes they want to take.

"There is no room for flexibility as students make up their schedules," West said.

Professor Bernard Erven, a council member, said the problem was created years ago with the establishment of GEC classes.

"We ought to have some way of not allowing a faculty committee from years ago decide what students take today," Erven said.

The council will be looking into the issue as the year progresses and hopes to consult with the various academic departments throughout the university.

— Michael Zawisza