

Friday classes and the culture of IU Bloomington
Recommendations presented to the BFC
Draft – October 25, 2011

Chairs of three standing committees of the BFC – the Educational Policies Committee, the Faculty Affairs Committee, and the Budgetary Affairs Committee – met on Monday, 24 October 2011, to discuss the request by the Provost and the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs to consider possible ways to enhance student participation in classes on Fridays on the IU Bloomington campus. We had before us data compiled by the Registrar, as well as a report on a meeting of the EPC earlier that day.

Those present noted that while there is a general sense that students are absent from campus (and from academic life) on Fridays, the data do not show this. Briefly: data show that freshmen and sophomores take a substantial portion of their classes on Fridays, while juniors and seniors do not, and that 12.5% of classes are taught on Fridays. Considering the fewer teaching hours realistically available on Fridays (if Friday late afternoons and evenings are removed from the possible pool), the proportion for Fridays should probably not be higher than 14-15%. Further, the committee chairs agreed that the fact that the lowest proportion of Friday classes is among the professional schools likely stems from the wide variety of professional activities, ranging from student teaching to job interviews, scheduled on those days.

The committee chairs therefore believe that it is not appropriate to set targets or goals for the campus to reach. What is needed is a more precise approach, contained in the following three recommendations.

- A. The Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education should gather information from the schools about Friday activities. Is Friday in fact the day on which many students pursue professional non-classroom activities? Then let's celebrate and promote Professional Friday. Such information, collected and highlighted on websites and in promotional material, would not only help to explain the apparent imbalance in the instructional week; it would also enhance the sense that IUB is a busy, hard-working campus five days a week (at least), exerting a subtle effect on student culture as well.
- B. The VPUE (and VPFAA) should also work with the Associate Deans in the Campus Curriculum Committee, and with the Scheduling and Calendar Committee, to identify ways in which scheduling of classes might be better coordinated within and between schools to ensure more efficient and equitable use of classrooms.
- C. Alternative scheduling patterns that make use of Fridays, such as Wednesday-Friday, Monday-Friday, or (for language classes) Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday-Friday patterns, should be listed, promoted, and even given preference over some non-Friday patterns currently in the Registrar's scheduling system.

The committee chairs are aware that these steps will not transform the Bloomington campus culture. But a hard look at the data suggests that the campus culture is not as seriously flawed as thought. We therefore suggest steps that encourage better practices in instruction while also presenting to the larger community a truer picture of what happens on this campus on Fridays.