



Students on Campus at the University of Kentucky

The University of Kentucky had to develop a plan in short order for handling a bigger than expected Freshman class. Strategies and scheduling intelligence from Ad Astra helped refine academic schedules to accommodate new students, sections, and classroom assignments.

Large Freshman Class Drives New Schedule Design

“We found the space and capacity we needed for our Fall 2014 students thanks to the analyses provided by Ad Astra. What we learned about our scheduling, as well as the capabilities of the Astra tools, was very helpful for the future as we deal with more growth. Ad Astra showed us how we can grow enrollment, and make better use of the resources we have.”

David Timoney
Associate Registrar
for Communications



In the Spring of 2014, as the semester was drawing to a close, faculty and students at the University of Kentucky were on the home stretch, headed towards finals, and looking forward to the summer break.

In the Registrar’s office, however, concern was growing, and emails were starting to circulate about plans for accommodating an unusually large Freshman class in the Fall of 2014.

It was the best kind of challenge to have. Enrollment was up nicely across the entire UK campus of nearly 30,000 students, but the Freshman class had grown nearly 15 percent over the past two years.

Associate Registrar for Communications David Timoney was part of in the initial discussions.

“Our University leaders in finance, operations, and enrollment management were asking the right questions,” said Timoney. “They wanted to know about our capacity in terms of seats and classrooms, as well as overall section-fill ratios, and primetime versus off-grid options for meeting student needs. Everyone wanted to get out in front of this quickly so we were ready in the Fall.”

Once Timoney was asked to assist with the planning efforts, his first call was to the client service team at Ad Astra. He was looking for data and reporting that could be culled from Astra Schedule, and a recent Strategic Scheduling Checkup conducted by the Ad Astra consulting team.

The Ad Astra team provided Timoney with the advice and reports that became the foundation for UK’s action plan.

Three-Pronged Strategy Lays Foundation for Schedule Review and Revisions

Scheduling at UK is centralized for the most part, with Timoney's office responsible for about 240 classrooms campus-wide. Individual departments and schedulers still control certain rooms for events and select course scheduling. The Fall UK schedule has over 6,000 sections available to students.

Within just a few days of the initial inquiry from the Provost's office, Timoney and his colleagues in the Registrar's office proposed three strategies.

1. Identify available timeslots outside of primetime hours (Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) that colleges and departments could use for new or expanded sections.
2. Identify small sections assigned to large classrooms.
3. Identify low-demand sections that could possibly be eliminated in order to free up classrooms for other high-demand sections.

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David Timoney



“To support our preliminary plan, we also shared Astra room utilization and capacity reports with the Provost's Leadership Group,” said Timoney. “The numbers provided everyone with clarity and transparency, and helped us prioritize changes.”

Timoney provided report highlights to all included in the planning and discussions. For instance, he found a series of bottlenecks with 100+ seat classrooms.

The Astra Schedule low enrollment ratio report also showed sections where the number of students enrolled was low and could potentially be moved to other classrooms, thereby opening up the larger rooms. Timoney also shared a comprehensive low enrollment course analysis for all sections.

New Growth? No Problem

1. Leaders at the University of Kentucky needed fast answers and ideas for accommodating a large Freshman class.
2. Ad Astra client consultants provided guidance and support and the right mix of reports to identify inefficiencies and new classroom capacity.
3. Schedules and sections were successfully adjusted and student needs were met. UK developed scheduling best practices that will be used for ongoing schedule refinement.

“We left no stones unturned,” said Timoney. “We were looking for space and efficiency wherever we could find it.”

In support of Timoney's initial plan, Provost Christine Riordan formed the Capacity Audit Committee to meet regularly on the Fall 2014 schedule capacity issue.

“We found the space and capacity we needed for our Fall 2014 students thanks to the analyses provided by Ad Astra,” said Timoney. “What we learned about our scheduling, as well as the capabilities of the Astra tools, was very helpful for the future as we deal with more growth. Ad Astra showed us how we can grow enrollment, and make better use of the resources we have.”

The Capacity Audit Committee has since become the Growth Operations Committee and will meet regularly to discuss ongoing growth and scheduling issues.

Timoney and his colleagues in the Registrar's office plan to take advantage of other Astra tools going forward. Automated final exam scheduling through Astra Schedule has the potential to save days and weeks of manual scheduling. Timoney's team is also looking at Astra to assist with prescribed schedules for the UK School of Medicine.

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To learn more about a Strategic Scheduling Checkup, Astra Schedule, or Platinum Analytics for your institution, please visit us online at AAIS.com or call 888.343.1092.