Enforcement of Prerequisite Policies at Ohio Faculty Council Institutions

Executive Summary

During the months of March and April, 2016 representatives of the Ohio Faculty Council were asked: 1) if, how and when prerequisites were enforced and, 2) if students were able to register for courses whose meeting times conflict/overlap with each other. Responses were received from most of the OFC institutions. No on-line prerequisite or course conflict policies were found for OFC institutions.

"Prerequisite" is defined as a course that must be satisfactorily completed before enrollment in another course.

Prerequisite enforcement is strictly enforced by institutional registration systems at most of the public four-year universities in Ohio (Wright State University being a notable exception). Prerequisite enforcement software assumes that a student will successfully complete the classes in which they are currently registered. Once grades have been posted, prerequisites are re-evaluated in light of student performance in classes the previous semester and students who are found to not meet a course's prerequisite are dropped from the course. Institutional registration systems similarly disallow students from registering for classes with overlapping meeting times (again, with Wright State University being a notable exception). Waivers can be obtained on a case-by-case basis at the department level.

Prerequisites are established by departmental faculty and should be imposed only where there is substantial evidence that a specific course is essential for success in a given class. Departments should be selective and targeted in their decisions. Prerequisites for first and second year courses in particular can pose significant barriers to a student's ability to earn a degree in a timely fashion.

Institution-wide enforcement of prerequisite and course conflict policies constitute a pedagogical best practice that is motivated by academic rigor.

Summaries of institution-specific answers to questions about prerequisites and course conflicts:

Akron
The university's registration system precludes students from enrolling in courses for which they have not satisfied prerequisites. Exceptions can be made through manual overrides.

Bowling Green
The university's registration system precludes students from enrolling in courses for which they have not satisfied prerequisites. Exceptions can be made through manual overrides.

Central State
The university's registration system precludes students from enrolling in courses for which they have not satisfied prerequisites. Exceptions can be made through manual overrides. Students can re-register themselves for classes after the normal registration period has ended.

Cincinnati
Software prevents students from registering for classes if they have not met the prerequisites. Students can petition advisors and departments to have the prerequisite removed on a case-by-case basis.

Cleveland State
Prerequisites are enforced by the university's registration system. If a student has a special circumstance, then he or she can request a prerequisite waiver (which are considered on a case-by-case basis at the department level). The university's registration system disallows students from registering for classes whose meeting times overlap.

Kent State
Software prevents students from registering for classes if they have not met the prerequisites. Students can petition advisors and departments to have the prerequisite removed on a case-by-case basis.

Miami
Prerequisites are considered to be courses that must be taken to provide background for the course requiring the prerequisite. Sometimes permission of the instructor or another requirement (such as graduate standing) may be a prerequisite to a course. (Taken from the university's general bulletin, 2004-2006: http://www.miamioh.edu/documents_and_policies/bulletin06/courses/index.html)

Ohio State
The university's registration system is fully automated and enforced electronically by the Registrar. The system prevents class meeting time conflicts and the

exceeding of enrollment caps. Advisors are allowed to directly enroll a student over the class cap with instructor permission but the Registrar will dis-enroll such students if the class exceeds a room's capacity (e.g. for fire code reasons).

Ohio University

The university's registration system automatically enforces prerequisites, disallows conflicting class times, and enforces other constraints on enrollment (e.g. class size, no retaking/repeating of classes). All automatic enforcement can be overridden by the Registrar or authorized departmental personnel but any overrides pertaining to prerequisites require instructor permission.

Students must also sign their consent to be enrolled in any course that they do not register for themselves (e.g. a course that they were put in during such an override process).

Shawnee State

Prerequisites are established via our Faculty Senate's Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee and are enforced via the university's on-line registration system. At the request of the student, the instructor or Department chair can authorize a prerequisite waiver, but this is unusual. The registration system blocks students from registering for classes whose meeting times overlap, however, a student can obtain a special authorization to overlap class times if both instructors approve.

Toledo

The university's registration system precludes students from enrolling in courses for which they have not satisfied prerequisites. Exceptions can be made through manual overrides.

Wright State

The university's course bulletin lists many classes with prerequisite requirements but the enforcement option of the university's registration software (Banner) is not turned on. Students are able to register themselves for classes even if they have not met a course's prerequisite requirements or if the meeting time of one class conflicts with that of another.

Wright State's Faculty Senate requested in the spring of 2016 that the Registrar find a way to turn on prerequisites for those courses that the departments wanted to be institution-enforced, but to allow other courses to be enforced by departments individually. This was deemed important by the Faculty given the quantity of transfer and international transfer students that could potentially be blocked by the institution from enrolling in a course for which they had the prerequisite but the system was unable to recognize it.

The Registrar will be testing the system they had developed in summer or fall, preparatory to rolling it out in spring 2017.

<u>Youngstown State</u>
The university's software will not allow a student to be enrolled in a class if the prerequisite is not on their transcript as having been satisfactorily completed (or in progress). That can be over-ridden manually as needed.