

New Data Reveals Link Between College Course Schedules and Student Success

Ad Astra's Higher Education Scheduling Index highlights impact of course schedule on student retention, time-to-completion, and graduation rates

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UNDER EMBARGO

Overland Park, Kansas -- Ad Astra, today released *Bending the Curve*, the newest report featuring the Higher Education Scheduling Index (HESI), which examines over 50 scheduling variables across more than 200 U.S. colleges and universities.

"This year's report indicates that more effectively managing the course schedule can improve student retention and ultimately, graduation rates," said Dr. John Barshaw, Associate Vice President for Research and Statistics at Ad Astra, author of the report, and former Director of Research and Public Policy at the American Association of University Professors. "The advent of scheduling analytics demonstrates that the course schedule can be an effective student retention tool that can help graduate more students faster. By ensuring that students are able to get the courses they need, when they need them, institutions can transform the course schedule from an inhibitor to a catalyst for graduation."

The report found that the majority of courses offered by institutions are either overloaded or underutilized leading to scheduling inefficiency and waste, which were closely correlated with lower retention and graduation rates among the institutions studied. Nearly one quarter of course sections were classified as "overloaded," reflecting the existence of bottleneck courses. Institutions, however, continue to maintain excess capacity, according to the HESI, with about 45 percent of course sections studied now classified as "underutilized," with enrollment ratios less than 70 percent.

Bending the Curve also highlights the benefits of a balanced course schedule. Although only less than one-third (32 percent) of courses were "balanced," with enrollment ratios between 70 and 95 percent, effectively managing the course schedule positively affected retention and graduation rates.

This year's report also includes profiles of institutions that have utilized schedule analytics to improve outcomes and increased tuition revenue. Ohio's Stark State College saved \$2 million in instructional costs while also increasing their tuition yield by \$1.3 million, by enabling students to increase their credit hour load. Faced with a \$2.7 million budget shortfall, Stephen F. Austin State University utilized scheduling analytics to identify demand for an additional 58 sections, which generated a \$1,400,000 increase in net revenue.

About Ad Astra

Ad Astra, the industry leader in higher education scheduling software services, has partnered with more than 1,000 higher education campuses and systems worldwide. Based in Overland Park, Kansas, Ad Astra offers data-informed software solutions and professional services that help institutions effectively allocate space and faculty resources, forecast student demand, and accelerate student completions. The Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) company currently holds a U.S. patent for its innovative method of determining student demand for academic courses. Academic institutions that partner with Ad Astra experience improved stewardship of instructional resources, streamlined student access to courses, and accelerated student completions.