

De Anza College

Time-Block Scheduling Task Force Report

Final Report – Spring 2026

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Executive Summary

The Time-Block Scheduling Task Force was convened in fall 2025 to explore whether a more consistent and predictable scheduling framework could improve students' ability to enroll in required courses, reduce scheduling conflicts, and support more effective use of instructional space.

Over the course of nine meetings, the task force engaged in an iterative and data-informed process that included review of institutional scheduling patterns; analysis of external models; development of guiding principles; and ongoing consultation with faculty, classified professionals, and students. As the work progressed into the model development phase, students also participated directly on the task force, providing real-time input on how proposed scheduling structures would affect the student experience.

The task force developed and refined multiple scheduling models, testing each against real course combinations and program pathways across disciplines. Particular attention was given to preserving instructional capacity in high-demand areas, including chemistry and mathematics, and to ensuring that students can complete required course sequences without unintended scheduling barriers.

Through this process, the task force identified that variations in course start and end times create avoidable scheduling conflicts that limit students' ability to enroll in needed combinations of courses and contribute to inefficient use of classrooms and laboratories. Establishing a consistent scheduling framework was therefore identified as a key strategy for improving both student access and operational coherence.

The task force recommends adoption of Version 4 of the time-block scheduling model.

Version 4 represents a refinement of the earlier Version 3A framework. A key factor in selecting Version 3A as the foundation for Version 4, rather than Version 3B, was the inclusion of a consistent 30-minute mid-day break across instructional blocks, excluding laboratory courses. In practice, this break can be expanded to approximately 50 minutes of usable shared time if courses finish up before the end of their prescribed block. The break would serve to support student engagement, informal interaction, access to services, office hours, and department meetings and coordination.

While this structure requires a slightly earlier start to the instructional day, the task force determined that the student value of predictable shared mid-day time was significant, while avoiding the rigidity or scheduling constraints associated with a fixed one-hour block.

At the same time, the model maintains flexibility for programs with specialized needs. Laboratory capacity is preserved through the continuation of four lab blocks per day, and departments retain the ability to structure courses within defined block parameters. Purposeful and coordinated exceptions remain possible where required.

If approved through shared governance, implementation of Version 4 would occur no earlier than the 2027–28 academic year and would be supported by planning, communication, and ongoing evaluation.

Charge and Purpose

The Time-Block Scheduling Task Force was charged with exploring whether a more coordinated scheduling structure could improve student access to required courses, reduce scheduling conflicts, and support more effective use of instructional space.

The work was grounded in a recognition that variations in course start and end times, while individually small, collectively create barriers that can limit students' ability to follow program pathways and contribute to delays in completion.

The task force was also asked to consider how scheduling practices intersect with broader institutional priorities related to student success, equity, and completion. This includes efforts to reduce excess unit accumulation among students completing Associate Degrees for Transfer and to improve students' ability to progress through clearly defined academic pathways.

Within this context, the task force focused on whether a consistent framework for scheduling in-person courses and the synchronous portions of hybrid and online courses could:

- Improve students' ability to enroll in required courses without conflict
- Support clearer multi-term academic planning
- Reduce structural barriers that contribute to extended time to completion
- Improve the use of classrooms, laboratories, and other instructional spaces
- Maintain necessary flexibility for disciplines with specialized instructional needs

The task force clarified that this work is distinct from K–12 block scheduling models and does not involve changes to curriculum, Course Outline of Record requirements, or program structure. The scope of the work was limited to the organization of instructional time within the existing academic framework.

Process and Development of the Work

The Time-Block Scheduling Task Force began its work by establishing a shared understanding of the scope and purpose of time-block scheduling. The group defined time blocks as a coordinated system for organizing instructional time across the college for in-person courses and the synchronous portions of hybrid and online courses.

The task force reviewed scheduling models from peer institutions, including Foothill College, Gavilan College, and College of the Canyons. These models provided useful reference points for understanding different approaches to structured scheduling, but also highlighted the need to develop a model tailored to De Anza's size, instructional diversity, and program requirements.

In December 2025, the task force developed a set of guiding principles to inform the work. These principles emphasized:

- Student-centered flexibility
- Equity and inclusion
- Operational coherence

- Transparency and predictability
- Adaptability
- A balanced student experience across the day

These principles served as the foundation for all subsequent design decisions.

Following the development of guiding principles, the task force transitioned from conceptual discussion to applied design. Rather than attempting to construct a complete model immediately, the group began testing targeted scheduling scenarios using real course combinations and enrollment patterns. Particular attention was given to how students combine five-unit English and mathematics courses with four-unit general education courses and laboratory-based science courses.

Multiple sources of information informed this phase of the work, including enrollment patterns, waitlist activity, scheduler and coordinator input, and student-informed perspectives. The task force also engaged in ongoing consultation with Academic Senate, Classified Senate, counseling faculty, and students. As the work progressed, students joined the task force and contributed to discussions related to emerging models.

Discipline-specific feedback played a significant role in shaping the model. Input from the Biology, Social Sciences and Humanities, Chemistry, and Mathematics programs highlighted the importance of maintaining laboratory capacity, preserving access to five-unit courses, and ensuring that scheduling structures support program sequencing requirements. In response to this feedback, the task force revised earlier models to maintain four laboratory blocks per day and to avoid unintended reductions in instructional capacity in high-demand areas.

The task force developed and refined multiple iterations of scheduling models over the course of the winter quarter. These iterations incorporated feedback from constituent groups and were tested against operational constraints and student scheduling patterns.

By early March 2026, the task force had developed Version 3 of the model. Feedback from divisions was generally positive, with no new major concerns identified. The task force then refined this model further, selecting Version 3A as the foundation for the final model based on its ability to support shared mid-day time while maintaining instructional capacity and scheduling flexibility.

Version 4 represents the outcome of this iterative development process and reflects the cumulative input of faculty, staff, and students across the college.

Student Input and Considerations

Student perspectives were incorporated into the development of the time-block scheduling model through multiple avenues, including direct student participation in the

task force, consultations with counseling faculty and student services professionals, review of enrollment patterns, and targeted survey input.

As the task force transitioned into active model development during the winter quarter, students were invited to join the group and participated directly in discussions. Their participation provided real-time feedback on proposed scheduling structures and helped ground the work in the lived student experience.

Across these sources, several consistent themes emerged. Students benefit from predictable scheduling patterns and often seek to limit the number of days they travel to campus. Work obligations represent a significant constraint, with caregiving responsibilities also affecting scheduling flexibility for some student populations. At the same time, access to in-person instruction remains important for major courses and for mathematics, where in-person and hybrid formats continue to be strongly utilized.

Student-informed input also reflected a preference for structured and efficient weekly schedules, including paired-day formats such as Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday. Morning and afternoon time periods were generally preferred, while evening and weekend options remain important for specific student populations, particularly working students.

A fall 2025 student survey was conducted as one component of this broader input process. The survey results generally reinforced themes observed through other sources, including the importance of predictable scheduling, variation in modality preferences by course type, and the impact of work and caregiving responsibilities on students' ability to attend in-person classes. Given its response rate and demographic variation, the survey was used to validate and contextualize findings rather than independently drive the design of the model.

Student participation in the task force also provided an opportunity to test emerging models against lived student experience, particularly in relation to daily scheduling patterns and the balance between flexibility and predictability.

Taken together, student input informed key considerations in the development of the time-block model while being balanced with operational, pedagogical, and program-specific needs.

Key Design Considerations and Findings

Through the development and testing of multiple scheduling models, the task force identified several key considerations that informed the final Version 4 framework.

One of the most significant considerations was the need to protect access to high-demand courses. Early draft models that reduced the number of available laboratory blocks raised concerns from chemistry, biology, and related disciplines. Reductions in laboratory

capacity would directly limit students' ability to enroll in required courses and delay progress through program pathways. In response, the task force revised the model to preserve existing laboratory instructional capacity.

A related consideration was the need to support program pathways that require students to take multiple courses concurrently. This was particularly important in STEM disciplines, where students often enroll in combinations of lecture and laboratory courses across multiple subjects within the same term. The task force tested draft models against sample pathways in biology, chemistry, mathematics, business, and psychology to ensure that students could build complete schedules without unintended conflicts.

The task force also identified the importance of balancing structure with flexibility. While a consistent scheduling framework improves predictability and reduces conflicts, the college offers a wide range of instructional formats that cannot be fully standardized. Programs with laboratory, clinical, or cohort-based structures require the ability to adapt within the broader framework. Version 4 reflects this balance by establishing clear scheduling parameters while preserving departmental flexibility.

Classroom and facility utilization was another key consideration. Under current scheduling practices, small variations in course start and end times create gaps that make classrooms difficult to schedule efficiently. A more consistent block structure reduces these gaps and supports more effective use of instructional space. This is particularly important as the college prepares for multi-year construction projects that will place additional pressure on available classrooms and laboratories.

The task force also examined the distribution of courses across the day. When required courses are concentrated in limited time windows, students may be unable to build complete schedules even when sufficient sections are offered. Version 4 distributes course options more consistently across the day, supporting a wider range of student scheduling needs.

Finally, the task force considered the role of shared time within the daily schedule. Feedback from students, faculty, and staff indicated that access to time during the day for tutoring, office hours, student engagement, informal interaction, and department coordination is valuable but difficult to achieve under highly fragmented schedules. The inclusion of a structured mid-day break emerged as a key feature of the model.

How the Model Works (Version 4)

Version 4 organizes instructional time into standardized blocks distributed across the instructional day for in-person courses and the synchronous portions of hybrid and online courses.

The framework includes distinct scheduling structures for lecture-based and laboratory courses. Lecture courses are organized within standard instructional blocks aligned with

contact-hour requirements for common course formats, including four-unit and five-unit courses. The model supports established paired-day scheduling patterns, such as Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday formats.

Laboratory courses operate within dedicated lab blocks that preserve the equivalent of current laboratory scheduling capacity while supporting setup, staffing, and sequencing needs in laboratory-based disciplines.

A 30-minute mid-day break is incorporated across non-laboratory instructional blocks. Because courses may end before the latest allowable time within a block, this structure can create approximately 50 minutes of shared mid-day time for student support activities, office hours, informal interaction, and departmental coordination.

The model establishes consistent scheduling parameters while allowing departments flexibility to structure courses within defined block boundaries. Coordinated exceptions may also be accommodated for programs with specialized instructional or operational requirements.

Rules That Accompany Version 4

Version 4 establishes a consistent scheduling framework while allowing limited flexibility to support diverse instructional needs. The following rules define how the model is to be applied.

1. Courses are scheduled within defined time blocks

All in-person courses and the synchronous portions of hybrid and online courses are scheduled within the established Version 4 time blocks.

Courses should not cross block boundaries. Maintaining this structure is necessary to preserve schedule predictability, reduce conflicts, and support effective use of instructional space.

2. Limited edge-of-day flexibility is permitted

To support instructional and programmatic needs, limited flexibility is permitted at the beginning and end of the instructional day.

Courses may start earlier within the first block of the day or end later within the final block of the day. This flexibility is intended to accommodate specific instructional formats and operational needs.

This provision is particularly relevant for areas such as athletics, adaptive physical education, and certain career education programs.

These adjustments must remain within the first or last instructional blocks and should not be used to create inconsistencies during the middle of the day.

3. Laboratory courses operate within dedicated lab blocks

Laboratory courses are scheduled within four designated lab blocks per day — consistent with current practice in laboratory-based disciplines — preserving instructional capacity and supporting setup, staffing, and sequencing requirements.

4. A mid-day break is preserved across non-laboratory blocks

A consistent 30-minute mid-day break is built into the schedule across instructional blocks, excluding laboratory courses.

This break must remain intact to preserve shared mid-day time for student support and coordination activities.

5. Departments may structure courses within block parameters

Departments retain flexibility to structure courses within the established block framework.

This includes the ability to end courses earlier within a block, coordinate schedules across programs, and create time for department meetings or other activities.

All such adjustments must remain within block boundaries.

6. Exceptions must be purposeful and coordinated

Certain instructional areas may require exceptions to the standard block structure, including clinical programs, off-site instruction, cohort-based models, and other specialized formats.

Programs such as Nursing and Adaptive Physical Education represent examples of areas where exceptions may be appropriate based on instructional and operational requirements.

Exceptions should be limited, intentional, and coordinated to avoid introducing new scheduling conflicts. They should not undermine the overall structure of the model.

Implementation Considerations

If adopted, implementation of Version 4 would occur no earlier than the 2027–28 academic year.

Implementation will require coordination across departments to align course offerings within the time-block framework while maintaining program integrity and student access.

Departments will need to review current scheduling practices and make adjustments to fit within the established block structure.

Cross-disciplinary coordination will be important to ensure that required courses within program pathways continue to be offered in combinations that allow students to progress without delay. This is particularly relevant for programs that rely on coordinated sequencing across multiple disciplines.

In response to concerns raised by transfer discipline faculty regarding enrollment management and the potential for class cancellation in earlier time blocks, the administration has committed to run any class of 15 students or more that has an in-person component and starts at or before 9 a.m. for at least the first two years of implementation. This approach is intended to support schedule stability while the model is being assessed and to ensure that early time blocks remain viable for students, faculty, and programs.

Clear communication and training will be necessary to support faculty, staff, and schedulers in understanding how to apply the model. This includes guidance on block structure, allowable flexibility, and the process for requesting and coordinating exceptions.

The model is intended to remain adaptable over time. Ongoing evaluation will be necessary following implementation to assess impacts on student access, enrollment patterns, and instructional operations. Adjustments may be made going forward based on experience and continued feedback.

Next Steps

This report and the Version 4 time-block scheduling model will be advanced through shared governance for review and consideration.

Governance bodies will have the opportunity to:

- Review the proposed model and supporting analysis
- Provide feedback and request clarification or refinement
- Determine whether to adopt the model, request revisions, or pursue an alternative approach

If approved, implementation would occur no earlier than the 2027–28 academic year.

If governance were to adopt the model, additional implementation planning would occur in coordination with academic divisions, scheduling staff, and institutional leadership. This work would focus on aligning course offerings within the block structure, supporting

departments through the transition, and ensuring that students can effectively plan their schedules under the new model.

Ongoing evaluation would be an important component of implementation. The college would continue to assess impacts on enrollment patterns, course access, instructional capacity, and overall scheduling efficiency following implementation, and make adjustments based on data and feedback.

Appendices

Appendix A — Guiding Principles

Appendix B — Timeline and Development of Time Blocks

Appendix C — Task Force Membership

Appendix D — Sample Student Pathways

Appendix E — Version 4 Time-Block Model

Appendix F — Analytical Support and Transparency