CLA LOW ENROLLMENT POLICY

In order to use teaching resources at UMD CLA to their fullest, this policy ensures courses offered have a minimum number of enrolled students. Such a policy allows students to engage with a sufficient number of other learners in the classroom and also efficiently uses faculty time, thus facilitating the research and service portions of faculty obligations.

In implementing low enrollment policies, departments and programs in CLA should ensure these policies do not hinder students' timely progression to graduation nor violate students' guarantee to full-time enrollment. Departments and programs should also ensure these policies do not threaten the reputation of UMD CLA as a desired work place for faculty, instructors/adjuncts, and teaching assistants. As a last resort, courses falling below a minimum enrollment number should be canceled.

Departments and programs have autonomy in setting their enrollment numbers and canceled course accommodation standards; departments also carry the burden of authorizing the cancellation of a course and informing the CLA Dean about the cancellation. The effective cancellation notification for Fall semester courses is no later than August 15th; notification for Spring semester courses is no later than January 3rd.

General information

Careful planning, informed by enrollment histories, national standards and the like, is necessary. Efforts in this regard include the following:

• Examine enrollment histories and anticipate courses likely to be affected. When the potential for low enrollment is identified, increase seats in acceptable alternative courses and hold enough seats to accommodate the students who might register for those potential low-enrollment courses. Take into consideration the times and days the alternative courses are offered, because many students arrange their work and/or internship schedules around the courses for which they registered, and so these students will have difficulty switching on short notice to alternative courses scheduled at very different times than the canceled course.
• Notify affected students and college/department academic advising staff as soon as the action is taken.
• Work with the affected students to ensure they find acceptable alternatives.
• If canceled courses are required for graduation and the affected students are nearing graduation but not in their last semester before graduation, ensure the students can be accommodated in the class the following semester.
• If canceled courses are required for graduation and the affected students are in their last semester before graduation, or the students are nearing graduation and cannot be accommodated in the class the following semester without disrupting their path to degree completion, accept alternative courses that fit the affected students' schedule.
• If canceled courses are prerequisites for other required courses, accept alternative courses as the prerequisite. If the courses are prerequisite to courses in other departments, notify the other departments as soon as the action is taken and work collaboratively with the other department to the extent possible to identify acceptable alternatives.
• All affected students should be accommodated, but colleges and departments must pay special attention to seniors preparing to graduate, international students, students on financial aid, students who need special accommodations for disabilities and might have chosen a class on this basis, and students who require full-time enrollment or who have specific minimum credit hour requirements (e.g., Homeland Security laws require international students to be enrolled full time).
Canceled course accommodations

Departments and programs should take into account the effect of low enrollment cancellations on faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants. Especially for new or specialized elective courses, or courses which have historically had low enrollment, departments should have back-up plans for changing assignments, and such plans should be made known in advance to instructors, faculty, and teaching assistants who might be affected.

For tenure-track and tenured faculty members, accommodations in cases of canceled courses may include strategies such as:

- Reassignment to a required course that is in high demand
- Opening another section of existing courses
- Expansion of enrollment in another course that the instructor is teaching
- A redistributed teaching load in a subsequent semester
- Assignment to administrative, research, or other duties that are normally compensated with course release in the unit

For adjuncts/instructors who are hired on a semester or yearly basis, accommodations in cases of canceled courses may include the same as those for faculty. In other cases, when the services of some instructors/adjuncts are not needed for any such alternatives, they must be made aware of the enrollment minimum policy and receive reasonable notice if any of their courses are to be canceled. Please contact the appropriate office for suggested language that can be used in the offer letters given to such individuals. Careful planning of courses is necessary to ensure that offer letters with such language are needed for only a small number of individuals.

For teaching assistants, accommodations in cases of canceled courses may include strategies such as:

- Scheduling more than one discussion section at the same time so that enrollment can be spread between them.
- Opening new discussion sections of popular courses.
- Expanding the size of a lecture class and using the TA as a grader.

There may be instances in which canceling a class because of insufficient enrollment is the most sensible course of action.

Exempted Courses

The following are exempted from the policy:

- capstone courses
- seminars
- independent studies
- internships
- practicums
- new courses

- Courses of first-year new faculty are exempted from this policy.
Waivers
Working with the CLA Dean’s office, departments may submit a waiver for particular courses. There are two types of waivers:

Temporary
Departments may seek a temporary waiver to this policy. Possible considerations for a waiver include, but are not limited to, courses recently introduced to the curriculum or courses required for timely progress to a degree. Requests for a waiver must include the name and number of the course and a brief justification for a temporary waiver. Waiver requests will be evaluated based on the nature of the course, its role in the curriculum and, where appropriate, the relationship of the course to faculty workload.

Permanent
Departments may seek a permanent waiver for specific courses based on pedagogical requirement. Such requests must include name and number of the course, a three-year enrollment history, a narrative describing the need to maintain a class size lower than the established minimum, and an alternative minimum course size to apply to the course. Once approved, departments will be required to monitor and evaluate the course based on the criteria approved in the waiver.

PROCESS

1. This policy has originated in and been discussed, vetted and revised by the CLA Academic Affairs.

2. The policy will proceed from AAC to CLA Assembly for discussion and vote. Policy APPROVED by CLA Assembly December 5, 2013.

3. Upon collegiate approval, the following decisions must be made by departments and submitted in writing to the CLA Dean's office by May, 25, 2014 for implementation beginning Fall Semester 2014.

   a. Departmental Low Enrollment Policy
      This policy must include numerical figures for all affected courses in the department. Departments might consider the following: required or elective courses, undergraduate or graduate courses, and within the undergraduate curriculum, differences between upper and lower division courses.

   b. Canceled Course Accommodations
      Departments must construct a prioritized list of accommodations in the case of a canceled course. Please see Canceled course accommodations section for possible accommodation suggestions.