

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S. 304

## MEMORANDUM

To: Senate

From: L.M. Srivastava

Acting Vice-President, Academic

Subject: Pre-registration.

Date: November 21, 1969

- I. We have been in consultation with a local computing firm with expertise in pre-registration at two American Universities. We would like to adapt this system to our needs and institute computerized pre-registration beginning Summer 1970.

A brief description of the proposed system and an estimate of time necessary for pre-registration are included. It is also indicated what the system can do and what the conditions are that must be satisfied before the system becomes a reality. If senate and Departments cannot meet these minimal conditions we will drop the idea of pre-registration. We think the project has merit, it can be adapted to our system with minimal conditions, and over the long run (that is within 2-3 semesters) the system will have paid for itself and our registration costs per student will be considerably lower than at present. It has numerous advantages for students, faculty, and administration.

- II. The pre-registration system was first implemented at the University of Utah in the Winter quarter 1967 and since then has been used without fundamental change to its design. The University of Utah has approximately 18,000 students and about 800 different course offerings each quarter. It was instituted at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the Winter of 1968, without modification, and the system has been in use there ever since. The Utah pre-registration can be implemented at S.F.U. The designers of the Utah system are at present working with a computing firm in Vancouver. They are available for consultation with our Data Centre and Registrar's Office at a minimal cost.

- III. Operation of the pre-registration system:

- a. The system asks the students to provide two types of information on appropriate cards: courses that they want in the next semester and blocks of time they want to keep free from formal instruction. Naturally if a student blocks out, say, all afternoons as free time, his chances of getting proper course fit are lessened.

Before students fill out this information they are provided with a Course Guide which contains the following information:

- i. For the semester immediately following:
- a. all courses and only those courses that are to be given next semester,
  - b. names of faculty members in charge of these courses, and
  - c. timetable with courses, sections, time and place.
- ii. For two semesters after the one immediately following -

- a. all courses and only those courses that are to be given in each of the two semesters, and
  - b. names of faculty members in charge of the courses.
- b. The cards can be collected in or mailed to the Registrar's Office, or they can be dropped in assigned boxes.
  - c. This information is put on punch cards.
  - d. The computer then schedules the students taking into account their course preferences and requests for free time. It edits errors. It can be programmed to give preferences to, for example, seniors over juniors, or graduate over undergraduate students etc.
  - e. A printout is produced which indicates the students' course selections by course, section, time and place. The departments can then review the student demand, close unused sections or open additional sections. This is an administrative function and the student is not put to any trouble. A second run is produced from the revised data and course registrations are produced for mailing to the students.
  - f. Students whose requests have not been satisfied or who have failed a course and cannot take the one they asked for appear at a registration 'clean up day' one or two days prior to the start of the new semester.

IV. Estimated time for pre-registration:

1. Students would require at least two weeks for filling out their cards. Some may require more time. During this period they must get adequate counselling especially in regard to pre-requisites. Students can certainly start as early as they want.
2. The Registrar's Office must have the students' course preference and free time cards at least three weeks before the end of a semester.
3. Cards are keypunched, preliminary and final runs are made and registration notices are mailed to students all within two weeks. Student is informed of the registration about one week before the beginning of the semester.

V.

At the University of Utah and Virginia Polytechnic Institute the success experienced in satisfying student requests has been as follows:

- a. 65% of students have had all the requests, including free time requests, satisfied.
- b. 90% of students were able to register in all courses requested.
- c. 97% of total course requests were satisfied.

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VI. Minimal conditions necessary to make the system operative:

1. The success of the pre-registration assumes that a large majority of the students will participate. This must include new students as well as transferring students, and re-admitted students. Accordingly, it should be mandatory for all students to pre-register.
2. A firm adherence by students to time as far as collection of course preference and free time cards is concerned.
3. The participating students, in order to have valid schedules, must not have conditions arise between registration and the beginning of the semester that will cause their schedules to change. Accordingly there must be firm commitments by departments on courses offered and faculty assignments for a period of three semesters at a time.
4. To facilitate item 3 above, a ruling by Senate that courses approved by Senate shall not be offered for at least two complete semesters following such approval by Senate.
5. The magnitude of the 'clean-up' day must be minimized. If the cost of clean-up approaches the cost of manual registration then the system cannot be regarded as economic. Accordingly there must be a clear identification of pre-requisites by departments and faculties, and there must be an improved pre-registration counselling.

VII. Senate may further consider the possibility that a student pays a portion of his tuition fee at the time of pre-registration.

VIII. Advantages of pre-registration:

1. To the students:
  - a. an opportunity to plan his work schedule prior to the start of the semester,
  - b. an extension of his working period on off semesters, because he can register by mail,
  - c. a reduced risk of not being able to obtain the courses desired, and
  - d. provision for selection of courses in a less hectic environment than that presently existing at registration.
2. To the faculty and administration:
  - a. an opportunity to allocate teaching resources more effectively,
  - b. rapid and economical processing of students' course enrollments,
  - c. less course time losses, and an opportunity to begin tutorials in the first week, if desired, and
  - d. more useful information regarding course selection patterns and student demand

IX

If Senate agrees with the principle of pre-registration we will immediately undertake to prepare a system for our needs in consultation with the computing firm, our own Data Centre and Registrar's Office, and will plan to implement this system for Summer 1970.

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The Senate is requested to adopt two motions:

1. "Senate agrees with the principle of pre-registration".
2. "Courses approved by Senate shall not be offered for at least two complete semesters following such approval by Senate."

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L.M. Srivastava