

Columbia College

Guidelines for Minimum Section Enrollment

2025-2027

Purpose

Effective enrollment management requires a balance between the breadth of course offerings required to meet student needs and the cost of offering those courses. When managed well, enrollments in the majority of courses are strong enough to support a limited number of necessarily-small offerings. Contractually, the process requires attention to multiple articles in the YFA/YCCD Contract, including Class Size Balancing (4.8), Class Capacity (4.10), Extra Student Stipends, Large Class Accommodations (4.11), and at times Annualized Load (4.6), Underload (4.7), and Banking (Article 10).

The purpose of this document is to establish guidelines for the threshold of viability for an individual course. That is, the numbers below should not be viewed as across-the-board targets, but rather they should represent occasional exceptions. Deans shall schedule course offering to minimize the number of low-enrolled classes and shall adjust offerings during registration as necessary to improve efficiencies. For example, two identical lecture classes with 18 students each may be combined into one with 36 even though each one technically meets the “Standard” criterion below.

These guidelines are to be reviewed every two years to ensure efficiency in scheduling, manage budgets, and above all, provide students with the choices they need to succeed.

Timeline (Aligned with expectations of YFA/YCCD Contract Article 7.2(b))

First Decision – A decision to *keep*, *conditionally keep*, or *cancel* each section shall be made at least ten days prior to the start of the term based on the enrollment guidelines below.

- For full-term Fall classes, this decision shall be made by Friday at 5 pm (ten days prior to the start date).
- For full-term Spring classes, this decision shall be made on the first workday in January or Friday ten days prior to the start of the term, whichever is later.
- Special consideration will be given to course sections with a documented slow fill history. Per Article 7.2(b) of the YFA/YCCD contract, a part-time faculty member shall be paid for one class meeting up to a maximum of three hours at his/her hourly rate for any course kept beyond this date.

Second Decision – Courses conditionally kept will meet for the first-class session. If enrollment has risen to satisfy the conditions below, then the class will continue. If not, the class will be cancelled. The dean shall have discretion to conditionally extend the enrollment period to the end of the first week if additional enrollment can be reasonably expected. A part-time faculty member in such a class will be paid for the additional class sessions met during the first week. A **final decision** for each section shall be reached by the first-class session of the second week of the semester at the latest.

About bumping – When the above decisions result in bumping a part-time faculty member from a class, the date of the bumping shall determine the payment per Article 7.2(b).

Minimum Size and Criteria – Each individual section shall meet one of these criteria.

Stacked and cross-listed sections (same times, but with shared load) shall utilize their combined enrollment to meet these standards.

- 1. Standard (Single Section Offered) = 18 students.** General college courses with no enforced prerequisite and/or introductory courses required for a major.
- 2. Multiple sections offered = 75% of Capacity.** When multiple sections of a course are offered, the goal is for each section to serve at least 75% of the agreed-upon course capacity. The Dean may combine sections as needed in support of this goal. To minimize disruption, during registration the Dean may hold some sections in pending status, hidden from student view, and open additional sections as demand warrants.
- 3. Sequential = 15 students.** Courses with an enforced prerequisite and/or intermediate or advanced courses required for a major.
- 4. Special Consideration** will be given to courses or sections on a case-by-case basis and may result in enrollment of less than 15 students, with approval of the Vice President of Instruction. Such consideration shall be categorized as either a *condition* or an *exception*. Deans shall provide a *description of any condition* and an *action plan to restore enrollments for any exception*.

Special Considerations

A. Conditions

- First offering of a new course
- Sequential courses required for students to complete their majors*
- Specified outreach courses, e.g., “Classes at the Calaveras Outreach Site shall have at least 12 students.”
- Courses limited by equipment, space, or safety considerations
- Courses whose class size maximums are mandated by program standards
- Courses whose course outlines reflect approval for a class size less than 15

B. Common Exceptions (Enrollment Restoration Plan is expected after second occurrence)

- a. Courses offered at specific time periods in an attempt to provide course offerings to specific populations of students. (For example, the only section offered in the evening).
- b. The section is required to maintain a full-time instructor's load obligation indicated in the YFA/YCCD Contract and no other options are available.
- c. The section is required to support student progression toward completion of their major. The course is required for a major, is the only section of the course being offered, and...
 - i. Last course in the sequence or the final component of the major
 - ii. Only section of the course offered in the academic year
 - iii. A unique program important to local industries

*Capstone or advanced courses with prerequisites experiencing low enrollments may or may not indicate a concern, to be determined by the Dean and VPI in consultation with department faculty. Single-digit enrollments in such offerings, however, provide strong evidence that the college may not be able to continue the program of study as currently designed and an Enrollment Restoration Plan will definitely be required. Somewhere between the 18-student standard and single digits lies the inflection point indicating the need for an Enrollment Restoration Plan.

This document was last updated by the YFA and Columbia College administration in Fall, 2025 in accordance with Article 4.9.1 of the YCCD/YFA Contract.