Wait List Information for Faculty
Created 1/23/09 by the ad-hoc Wait List Task Force
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Overview: The waitlist system was designed primarily toward, and works best for, helping students gain access to classes that are full in a fair and orderly manner during the time that registration is open. Before this system, when a student dropped a class that was full, whatever student happened to be the next one to attempt to register got that seat. This was frustrating to students and advisors, seemed arbitrary and unfair, and did not give priority to students with more credits. With the wait list system, students sign onto the wait list and when space opens up, normal registration is not permitted, but students are automatically moved from the wait list and into the class. During open registration, faculty have little interaction with the system.

Faculty have more interaction with the system and are more likely to run into issues just prior to the start of the quarter and during the first days of each quarter. Just before the start of the quarter (typically the Friday before the first day), wait list activity is “frozen”. Automatic movement of students from the wait list into the class is stopped, registration activity for the class is stopped and students can no longer get onto the wait list. It is expected that instructors will take their roster and their wait list with them to the first class session and consider the wait list in deciding whether they can sign additional students into their class. Students are advised to attend class on the first day if they want to try and get in.

Below are step-by-step details on this process in Q&A format. Topics are listed in timeline order, so issues that arise during registration appear first and issues that arise on the first day of the quarter are nearer the bottom:

Which classes have wait lists?

All transfer courses and developmental education classes are set up with wait lists. Each prof-tech program decides on their own which of their classes have wait lists. ABE classes do not have wait lists. Unfortunately the system does not allow for wait lists on linked classes, clustered classes, learning communities or cross listed classes. Generally you and students will not see the wait list until the class fills and students begin to get onto it.

How long is the wait list?

This is determined by your department or division. Lengths vary depending on many issues. See NOTE below for one important issue related to waitlist length. Generally the size of the waitlist is not necessarily an accurate reflection of how many students still want to take the course.

How does a student get on a wait list?

When a student attempts to register for a class that is full using web registration, they are invited to get on the wait list if the class has one. The student must meet the pre-requisite checking system to get on the wait list.

NOTE: The system uses one of the following factors to determine wait list priority:

1. Chronological order of date and time that student was put on the wait list.
2. Total credits earned.
3. Total units completed in the last 14 days (which may include units earned at another college).

This priority system is used for all the wait lists within a department or division.
Does the student get notified with information when they first get on the wait list?

No. Because TCC does not control either the registration software or the wait list software, we cannot change it so that students get a "pop-up" of information or an email sent to them at this time.

What happens when the wait list gets full?

A department chair or dean may be willing to expand the length of the list. This is a departmental/division decision. However, there are valid reasons for limiting the length of the wait list, so if it is not expanded, students are turned away. They can check online periodically and try to get onto the wait list if space opens up.

How does a student move from the wait list into the class?

This does not happen as soon as a student drops the class to create a space. Instead, several times a day the computer system runs a job to move students from the wait list into the class if space has opened up since the last time this job was run. As a result, you may occasionally see “space” in your class if a student has dropped. Other students cannot register for this seat if there is a wait list.

Does a student get notified when they move from the wait list into the class?

No. The system does not allow for this and trying to track and notify every student is too time consuming. General information for students tells them that they are responsible for monitoring their own wait list status.

How does a student get off a wait list or check their wait list status?

This is done through the student portal under the Student Services tab by clicking “Manage Waitlists”.

NOTE: Since it is easy to get onto a wait list and takes pro-active work by the student to get off, many students on wait lists are no longer interested in taking that course. Sometimes they move into the class when they didn’t want to. Then they will have to go online and drop the course, or they may be dropped for non-payment.

How do I see what’s happening with wait lists for my classes?

Your wait lists appear in your Instructor Briefcase along with your class roster.

So what happens at the end of registration and start of the quarter?

On the last business day before the start of the quarter (typically Friday if classes start on Monday), wait list activity is “frozen” if the class has a wait list at that time. Students can no longer register or get onto the wait list. Movement of students from the wait list into the class stops, even if space opens up in the class due to withdrawals over the weekend.

So what should I then do on the first day?

Take both your roster and your wait list to class. Check both lists against who shows up. (You are required to track who attended your class on the first day for grading and financial aid purposes regardless of waitlist issues anyway). It is suggested that if you have space in your class or if you are willing to take students on an overload
basis, you take the waitlist into consideration. However, there may be valid reasons for signing a student into your class who was not on the wait list. Students who do not attend on the first day and do not contact you can be considered to have lost any priority they may have had by being on the wait list.

How many students should I let in?

You are obligated to sign students into your class if they want in, are there on the first day and your enrollment is below the official class capacity. Whether you are willing to take “overloads” (students beyond your official class capacity) is up to you, and in some cases there are departmental guidelines on this topic. Check with your department chair for more details.

So how exactly do I sign a student in?

You must sign a “drop/add” form to allow the student to register, and they must register in person at Enrollment Services in building 7. There is no online registration for courses that start the quarter with wait lists. (For classes without wait lists or that did not fill, online registration continues for the first 3 days of the quarter.)

What about pre-requisites?

A student must have met the course pre-requisites to get onto the wait list. If you are signing in a student who is not on the wait list, if you check the “overload only” box, you are asking Enrollment Services to check the pre-requisites when they register the student. Checking the “permission” box says that you are giving the student permission to take the class regardless of pre-requisites, but not necessarily as an overload. Check both boxes if you want to allow both the overload and the pre-requisite permission.

What about online courses?

Procedures for online or hybrid online courses may be different. Check with your department chair or the director of eLearning for more information.

How do a get more information?

Your department chair or dean can likely answer additional questions about wait lists. Enrollment Services can also assist with technical issues, such as if your wait list appears to be malfunctioning in some way during the registration period.

Additional information aimed at students is on p. 14 of the College Catalog and can be found on the college web site at these locations:

http://www.tacomacc.edu/currentstudents/webregistration/waitlistinformation.aspx
http://www.tacomacc.edu/resourcesforstudents/counselingandadvisingcenter/advising/faq.aspx
http://www.tacomacc.edu/currentstudents/newstudentorientation/whateyouneedtodonext/registerforclasses.aspx