

# Aligning Distinct Course Offerings with Enrollment Trends

## Background

While institutions seek to offer comprehensive and relevant curriculums to attract students and provide high-quality programs, they must also ensure that resources are not stretched too thin. Proliferation of elective courses can strain faculty resources and lead to students accumulating unnecessary credits. One way institutions can address this challenge is by comparing changes in course offerings to trends in student demand.

## Key Metric Definition

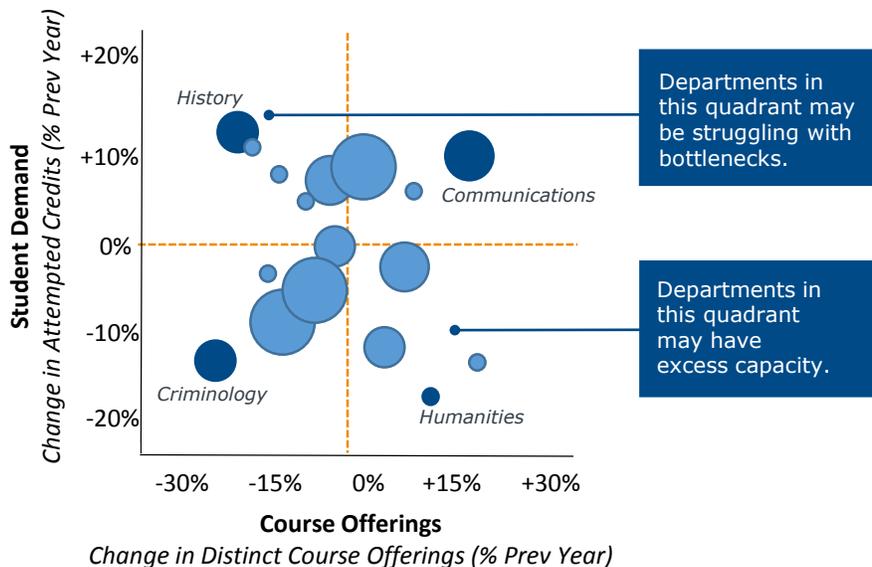
*Distinct Course:* A unique course with one or more sections offered during an academic term.

## Demand-Offering Mismatches

Comparing the rate of change in course offerings to trends in student demand at the department level can reveal potential misalignment of resources. For example, the bottom right quadrant in the graphic below depicts departments at a high-research comprehensive institution where the number of courses is increasing while student demand is declining. These departments may have underutilized course capacity, as there are fewer students to fill an increasing number of courses. However, the top left quadrant highlights departments with increasing student demand but less growth in course offerings, potentially resulting in bottlenecks within the department.

### Mismatches Between Student Demand and Course Offerings by Department<sup>1</sup>

High Research Comprehensive Institution, AY 2016



This guide supports identification of mismatches between changes in course offerings and student enrollment trends to highlight areas in need of potential resource allocation realignment. However, keep in mind that mismatches can often be intentional, such as offering more specialized courses while in the midst of launching a new program.

## Inside this Resource

Learn how APS supports your goals to align course offerings with student enrollment

- Page 2-3: How to Match Course Offerings to Enrollment Trends
- Page 4: Best Practice Resources

<sup>1</sup>) Analysis of percent change in attempted credit hours and percent change in distinct courses offerings from the previous year at a high-research comprehensive in the 2016 academic year.

# How to: Match Course Offerings to Enrollment Trends

Use the steps below to dig into course-level data within your APS Platform to identify departmental mismatches between distinct course offerings and enrollment trends.

## 1 Getting Started: Set Your Filters

In the **APS Dashboard**, click on the **Courses Tab** and use the filters at the top of the page to refine your analysis.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016	CAMPUS NAME All	DEPARTMENT NAME All	COURSE DIVISION All
TERM All	COLLEGE NAME All	COURSE PREFIX All	COURSE TYPE All

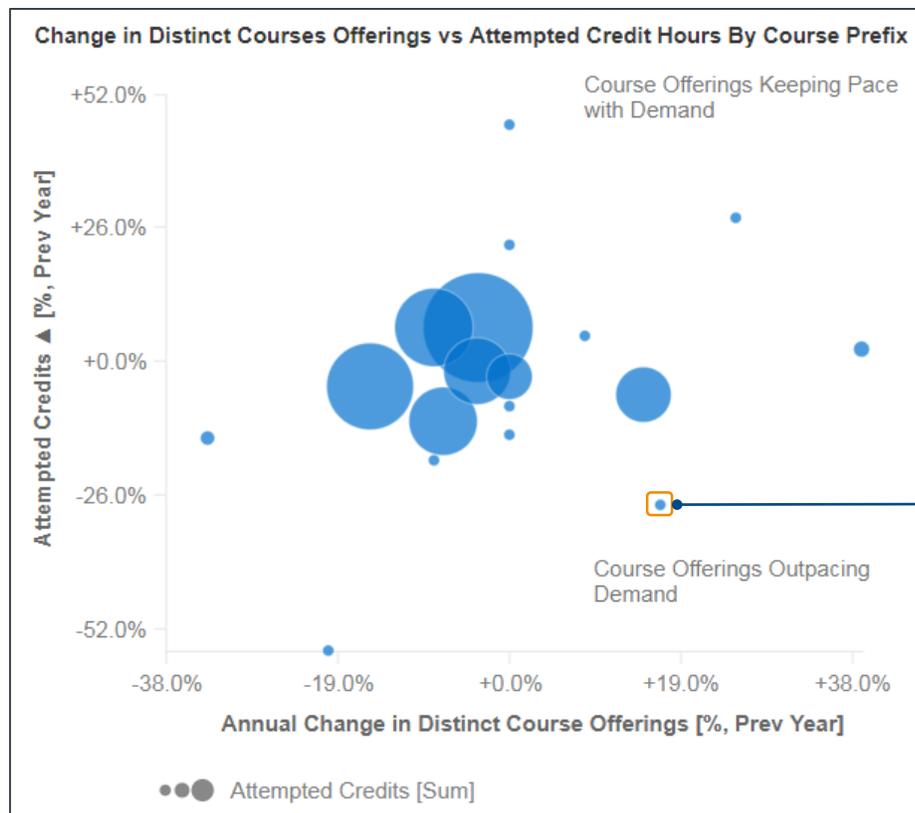
*Recommended filters: College Name, Course Type, and Course Division.*

## Helpful Hints

- Use the **College Name** filter to best view departments and associated course prefixes.
- Remove any course types, such as *Online*, that you want to analyze separately.
- Filter for *Upper Division* if there is concern about the proliferation of small, specialized courses.

## 2 View the Change in Distinct Course Offerings vs. Attempted Credit Hours By Course Prefix Chart

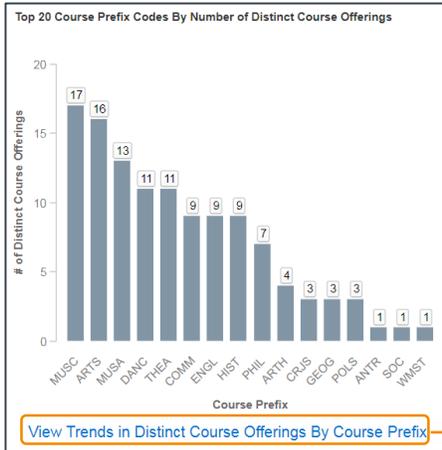
Scroll to the *Aligning Course Offerings With Enrollments* section of the page to compare annual percent changes in course offerings to the annual percent changes in student enrollment.



Each bubble on the graph represents a course prefix. Hover over the point to see the course prefix, the annual percent change in distinct course offerings and attempted credits, and total attempted credits.

### 3 Click on View Trends in Distinct Course Offerings By Course Prefix

Drill into a course prefix-level view of the data to see annual counts of course offerings by department.



Trends in Course Offerings By... » # of Distinct Course Offerings

Department Name	Course Prefix	Academic Year	2015 Annual Percent Change	2016 # of Distinct Course Offerings	Annual Percent Change
Arts and Letters	MIDE			1	
Communication/Theatre Arts	COMM		-5.2%	63	+14.5%
	DANC		-11.1%	31	-3.1%
	THEA		+5.0%	43	+2.4%
English	ENGL		+1.5%	62	-8.8%
History	HIST		+2.0%	47	-7.8%
Interdisciplinary Studies	IDS		+0.0%	3	-25.0%
Music	MUSA		+0.0%	24	-4.0%
	MUSC		+17.7%	73	+0.0%
Philosophy/Religious Study	PHIL		+18.2%	24	-7.7%
	REL		-14.3%	7	+16.7%
Political Science/Geog	GEOG		+0.0%	30	+20.0%
	POLS		+6.8%	39	-17.0%
Sociology/Criminal Justice	ANTR		+0.0%	2	+0.0%
	CRJS		-5.7%	37	+12.1%
	SOC		+7.1%	28	-6.7%

Look for course prefixes with a large increase or decrease in annual percent change of course offerings.

Click on a course prefix to view a complete list of courses and which year(s) each was offered.

### Putting Data into Action

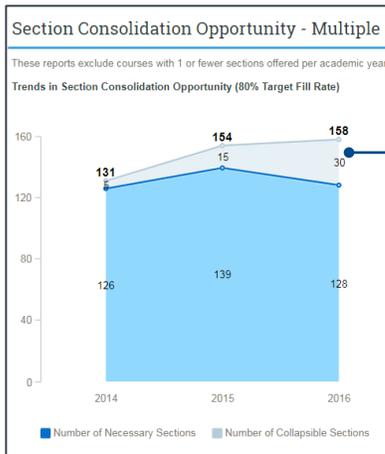
Now that you've examined trends in distinct course offerings, what did you find?

- a) *Enrollment growth is outpacing course growth:* Consider increasing the number of course and section offerings within a department in order to avoid bottlenecks and continue to attract new students.
- b) *Course growth is outpacing enrollment growth:* Consider offering fewer electives within a department. Use additional analysis below to evaluate if the courses are full or if the course growth has resulted in a low fill rate, indicating opportunity to adjust resource allocation by collapsing sections.

**Helpful Hint:** Filter at the top of the page for the course prefix or department you want to further investigate.

### 4 View Fill Rate Analyses Reports Section Consolidation Opportunity-Multiple Section Courses and Opportunities For Expansion Or Consolidation-Single Sections Courses

Scroll up to view current student demand in multi section courses and single section courses within the course prefix or department to identify courses with bottlenecks and courses with excess capacity.



Examine the number of collapsible sections over the past several years to determine if there has been an increase due to proliferation of courses.

Low fill rates may be attributed to proliferation of distinct courses outpacing demand.

#### Opportunities For Expansion Or Consolidation - Single Section Courses

Single Section Course Fill Rates  
This report includes courses with 1 or fewer sections offered per term

Course Code	Course Name	Total Capacity	Total Enrollment	Fill Rate [%]	#
COMM300	Masked	16	11	68.8%	
COMM304	Masked	20	20	100.0%	
COMM308	Masked	82	71	86.6%	
COMM314	Masked	321	188	58.6%	
COMM315W	Masked	326	127	39.0%	
	Masked	326	127	39.0%	
COMM323	Masked	35	35	100.0%	
COMM325	Masked	211	122	57.8%	
COMM326	Masked	207	101	48.8%	
COMM330	Masked	115	68	59.1%	
	Masked	115	68	59.1%	
<b>Rollup</b>		<b>8,828</b>	<b>4,475</b>	<b>50.7%</b>	

**Low Fill Rate Courses**  
Percent of Single Section Course Offerings with Fill Rate at or below 60% offered more than once per year.  
**31.3%**  
[View Detailed Report Here](#)

**High Fill Rate Courses**  
Percent of Single Section Courses with Fill Rates at or above 95% offered once or more per year.  
**10.4%**  
[View Detailed Report Here](#)

Source: Academic Performance Solutions.

# Best Practice Support for Matching Course Offerings to Student Demand

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Resources Available on EAB.com

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## Research Brief: Breaking the Trade-Off Between Cost and Quality



- Academic Affairs Forum research focusing on greatest opportunities to realign academic resources while enhancing instructional quality and student success, including targeting small courses with low demand
- [Download](#) at EAB.com

## Toolkit: The Instructional Capacity Playbook



- Academic Affairs Forum research detailing best practice tactics to align instructional capacity with student demand, including reallocating underutilized capacity and reducing curricular bottlenecks
- [Download](#) and watch the [webconference](#) at EAB.com

Source: Academic Performance Solutions; EAB Research.