

## The Mystery Behind the Waitlist Process at TWU

One of the last things students want to see when they begin to enroll in a class is that the class is full and all they can do is get on the waitlist; an unfortunate regular occurrence. The purpose of this document is to educate the reader on what causes a waitlist to be created, how the waitlist process works, what happens when the waitlist is closed, and the financial impact to students who are waitlisted.

### What Causes a Waitlist to be Created?

Each physical classroom has a maximum number of seats assigned based on fire code regulations. This maximum number is called a “cap”, or capacity. Online courses have capacities set based on the work load of the instructor of record according to approved departmental and university standards. Whether the class is face-to-face or online, once the cap is reached, an electronic waitlist is automatically created to receive students who still want to enroll and are hoping for a seat to become available.

### How the Waitlist Process Works.

Once a student has elected to be added to a waitlist, and a seat becomes available, an e-mail is automatically sent to the first student on the list with an invitation to register for the class. A seat can become available if an enrolled student drops the course and section or the cap is raised for that course and section. Keep in mind that waitlists are course and section specific. This is important to note when a student is added to a waitlist, mainly because if another section is added to a course, the waitlist the student is on will not be affected. For example, if a student gets on the waitlist for FS-1001, section 01, and then another section is added (section 02), the student must find out that section 02 now exists and attempt to enroll in it since the section 01 waitlist is unaffected. Academic departments have the sole discretionary responsibility of informing students that a new section has opened.

Invitation e-mails are only sent to TWU e-mail boxes. Students may have their TWU e-mail forwarded to another e-mail provider, but it should be noted that forwarded e-mail could take as much as two days to arrive in the alternate e-mail box, and since this is a time-sensitive process, the student could miss their opportunity to enroll. Once an invitation is sent, the student has 24 hours to respond. If a response has not been received after this 24 hour period, the invitation is withdrawn, the student is removed from the waitlist, and an invitation e-mail is sent to the next student on the list. If a student learns that they received an invitation after the deadline, they must add themselves to the waitlist again if they still want an opportunity to enroll in that course and section.

### What Happens when the Waitlist is Closed?

A waitlist is typically closed about 2 business days prior to the start of a given semester. Any students remaining on the waitlist will automatically be sent an e-mail indicating that they did not receive an opportunity to enroll and then deleted from the waitlist. Students can still be enrolled in a class after the waitlist is closed if the department and instructor of record permit, there is available seating subject

to fire code regulations, and all other limitations are considered. Student requests to enroll after a waitlist is closed are typically handled on a case-by-case basis within the department offering the course.

### **Financial Impact to Students who are Waitlisted.**

It should be noted that being waitlisted does NOT mean that a student is registered for the course. Additionally, if a student has indicated to the Financial Aid office that they plan to enroll in 12 hours for example, and they enrolled in six hours but are waitlisted for the remaining six hours, their financial aid will still be awarded based on their anticipated hours taken of 12. However, if by the census date (the 12<sup>th</sup> class day in fall and spring or the 4<sup>th</sup> class day in summer) the remaining six hours have not been converted to actual registered hours, the student's financial aid award will be adjusted down resulting in probable financial consequence.

### **Final Notes.**

If a student finds that they need to add themselves to a waitlist, it is encouraged that they do so. Without waitlists, academic departments cannot know if there is a need to add more sections, raise caps, or take other actions necessary to assist students who need those classes. Being added to a waitlist may not result in being enrolled in a class, but NOT being added to a waitlist ensures it.

Related to this, a common question asked is "If there are so many students on a waitlist, why is there no money to open up another section?" The university community as a whole doesn't realize how courses are funded, and it's a complicated answer to a seemingly simple question. Simply paying \$500 in tuition from 15 undergraduate students (that's \$7,500) is not enough to fund a section alone. At TWU and other State-supported institutions, professors and instructors are not paid from tuition funds, but are paid by the State, and a budget is set each year for those salaries. Departments can't usually exceed their salary budgets any more than we can exceed our own personal budgets. Tuition funds pay for other costs such as utilities, support staff, supplies, building use fees, insurance, and more.

The current waitlist system was developed effective fall 2007 to help students enroll in classes that are full, and to help departments offer courses that are needed, timely, and fiscally responsible for the university. Using the waitlist system can be a win-win solution, but the behind-the-scenes events surrounding the process must at the same time be observed with equal understanding.