

Common Hour Ad-Hoc Committee Proposal

The Common Hour Ad-Hoc committee was established in the Spring 2021. The committee was appointed with members from each school, a representative from the registrar's office and a student. Our charge was to determine the contours of a Common Hour at Cortland and its feasibility.

As we conceive of it, the Common Hour is a dedicated time in the schedule for campus-wide conversations related to common themes or timely issues. In order to achieve this goal, we are proposing blocking out a MWF non-instructional time slot between 1:30 and 3:00 for this activity to occur. The added benefit of organizing our Common Hour in this way, is that it will allow additional opportunities for campus members to engage in a variety of activities.

The Committee met throughout the Spring 2021 semester with department chairs who run programs that offer complicated scheduling. We met with leaders in the Foundation office and researched other SUNY and non-SUNY schools with Common Hour programs. We emailed with numerous offices over the summer. The initial feedback was overwhelmingly supportive.

This fall, we met with Provost Prus and the deans of Cortland's three schools. We examined the schedule and discussed different scheduling options, and took their questions and concerns to heart.

The following is a plan for a Common Hour at Cortland. If approved prior to January 2022, the schedule can be adjusted for a Fall 2022 start.

When reading the following proposal, we ask you keep the following in mind:

- One of the constraints that our committee worked under was our goal of causing as little disruption to the schedule as possible. Of the optimal times during the school day for the Common Hour, the MWF early afternoon time slot causes the least disruption to the schedule. There is classroom capacity to accommodate classes that would be displaced into other time slots.
- It is possible for the administration to require a readjustment to the 20-minute breaks between classes and other reconsiderations to our current schedule before the implementation of a Common Hour, but we understood a reimagined College schedule to be beyond the scope of the committee's charge, AND we felt that it would be possible to establish a Common Hour on campus without a larger reconfiguration. The assumption we proceeded with was that a Common Hour would cause a certain amount of disruption in terms of scheduling, but that those disruptions were worth the larger value to our academic community.
- We also understand that not all departments will be able to schedule their classes around the Common Hour and that a small number of classes across the College will have to continue to run at the proposed time (MWF, 1:30-3:00). Students will be able to take advantage of Common Hour programming in MOST semesters they are on campus, even if there are SOME that they are not able to. Overtime, we hope that the campus

culture (and perhaps the College calendar) will adjust in ways to support the Common Hour.

- The benefit of the MWF time slot allows our Common Hour to satisfy a number of issues. In addition to allowing one major, campus-wide event to occur each semester, it also creates enough space for student clubs, class study groups, academic departments, College-wide committees, etc. to meet AND free time for students to take care of College business they otherwise might not have time to address during the work day.
- This initiative is a faculty and student driven one and programming for the larger events and establishment of themes would reside in the Cultural and Intellectual Climate committee, with representation from the student body. The CIC committee supports and endorses the Common Hour and is willing to fold this initiative into their existing work. The CIC committee would be in touch with departments, offices, and students around campus to encourage and promote more area focused and thematic programming throughout the academic year.

The following is our working strategic plan that lays out our vision and how it aligns to the College's central goals:

Common Hour Mission Statement

Common Hour Strategic Goals:

GOAL #1

Academic Excellence

On Wednesdays during the semester, the Common Hour will support and enhance academic excellence by encouraging informed and engaged conversations between faculty and students on pressing local, state, national and global issues. On Mondays and Fridays, the Common Hour will enhance academic excellence by creating deliberate space in the schedule for students to access academic resources and support they need.

Objectives:

1. Hold monthly open sessions on topics of interest to the campus community.
2. Raise the level of campus knowledge and engagement with pressing local, national, and global issues.
3. Create increased opportunities during the week for students to meet together, with faculty and staff, or work on their own without class conflicts.

Strategy Tactics:

-Faculty and student committee will develop potential themes and vet them with students and faculty the year prior.

-Faculty and student committee will invite one nationally recognized expert to address topics (one in the fall and one in the spring).

-Faculty and student committee will coordinate academically engaged programming for the other monthly sessions of the semester.

-Faculty and staff will be encouraged to support students' time in the schedule to pursue knowledge and support outside of the classroom.

GOAL #2

Experiential Education

Provide opportunities for student growth through experiential education opportunities including Common Hour themes with applied learning, high-impact practices, international and study abroad programming, and internship possibilities. Provide opportunities for student professional growth through clubs, service-learning opportunities, and workshops.

Objectives:

-Connect Common Hour conversations with courses, internships, clubs, study abroad programs, and volunteer activities.

Strategy Tactics:

-Faculty and student committee will work with faculty, student government, the office of study abroad, and service learning to consider connections students may pursue depending on the particular topics and themes being discussed.

GOAL #3

Scholarship and Research

Support and enhance the College's efforts and commitment to undergraduate, graduate and faculty research including active scholarship, scholarly and public presentations, and funded activities.

Objectives:

-Highlight faculty excellence and expertise by encouraging interdisciplinary Common Hour Sessions

-Encourage faculty through their departments to promote student research and public engagement with Common Hour topics and themes

-Support faculty and student research and public presentations on Common Hour topics and themes.

Strategy Tactics:

CIC faculty and student committee will invite relevant faculty to participate in Common Hour programing.

-Department chairs will encourage student and faculty research and public engagement with Common Hour topics and themes.

-College Writing Committee will be invited to develop an award for best student example of writing or presentation on Common Hour topic or theme.

-CIC may consider providing small grants to promote research and presentations on Common Hour topics and themes.

GOAL #4

Wellbeing and Cultural Competence

Support and enhance the College's efforts to promote student and faculty wellbeing including a focus on being a culturally-competent environment committed to high ethical and academic standards and an advocate for diversity, equity and social justice.

Objectives:

1. **Monthly events focusing on pressing questions and their implications on diversity, equity and social justice.**
2. **Free time in the schedule to encourage students to address academic business and wellness.**

Strategy Tactics:

-Committee choosing topics and themes focused on shaping a culturally-competent campus
-opening time in the schedule during the workday to allow time for students to do what they need to do: reach out to a counselor, call financial aid, meet with a tutor, contact their advisor, study, reflect.

Common Hour Operating Principles

- a. The Common Hour is a time block reserved each week that allows our campus community to embrace some of our most prized values.
- b. One time a month the common hour committee of faculty and students will program an event focused on a pressing question facing our campus, community, nation, or world. It will provide a unifying opportunity for the entire campus community to get involved, learn, discuss and engage.
- c. Other times of the month, the time will create a more open opportunity for students to get done what needs to get done. Scheduled in the middle of the day, the time will create more opportunity for non-traditional students and commuters to participate in informal conversations, club events, and wellness activities. An unscheduled time block in our MWF schedule creates found time for students to

organize a group study, meet with an advisor, walk through the art gallery, study in the library, talk with their advisor, do homework, and take care of whatever College business needs their attention.

Respectfully Submitted,
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