EAB

APS COVID-19 Cost Optimization Playbook

Cost Optimization Strategies in Light of COVID-19

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Disclaimer: Content within this document is proprietary and confidential. For additional details, please see page 2.

Introduction

Tiered Scenario Planning Framework Guides Difficult Cost Optimization Strategies

The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has struck institutions of every type and the likelihood of ongoing financial pressure from declining fall enrollments, fundraising declines, and/or state funding reductions has pressured institutional leaders to evaluate cost saving opportunities where possible. This pandemic has pushed several resource-strapped institutions to investigate necessary but painful reductions in academic affairs. Unfortunately, many institutions will pursue imprecise across-the-board cuts. But leaders who leverage accurate academic cost data to inform decisions can better support instructional staff and students, as well as institutional goals and mission in response to COVID-19.

Tiered Approach to Cost Optimization

The scenario planning framework that has guided our efforts takes a tiered approach to cost optimization. Many leaders are modeling scenarios to plan for a range of budget cuts that will necessarily impact academic affairs. This framework allows leaders to take not only a tiered approach, but also a data-informed approach, by leveraging Academic Performance Solutions (APS) data to inform cost containment scenarios driven by resource utilization data.

- **Tier 1**: Assess Optional and Non-Essential Academic Expenditures
- **Tier 2**: Reduce Program Offerings
- **Tier 3**: Consider Reducing Instructional Staff Headcount
- **Tier 4**: Eliminate or Consolidate Academic Departments

Strategies Outlined in the Playbook

The tiered approach was used to develop ten strategies to identify areas for potential cost optimization.

Rightsize Course and Section Offerings

- Strategy 1: Cancel Non-Critical Low-Enrollment Sections
- Strategy 2: Cancel or Reduce the Frequency of Section Offerings
- Strategy 3: Consolidate Unnecessary Sections

Revitalize and Rightsize the Program Portfolio

- Strategy 1: Identify Programs with Growing and Shrinking Demand
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- Strategy 1: Compare Actual Teaching Loads with Expected Loads
- Strategy 2: Size Your Need for Contingent Instructors for Fall 2020

Surface Non-Instructional and Instructional Staff Cost Inefficiencies

- Strategy 1: View Department's Cost Data Relative to the College's Similar Departments
- Strategy 2: Assess Changes in the Department's Costs Over Time
- Strategy 3: Contextualize Department's Cost Data with Peers' Using APS Benchmarks

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Access Additional EAB Resources Today

Resources to Inform Your COVID-19 Scenario Planning and Response

EAB has developed a comprehensive library of resources to support leaders as they navigate cost efficiency, student progress, and other top priorities in the wake of COVID-19. In addition to this playbook, use the resources highlighted on this page to inform your institution's scenario planning and response.

Please note: Several resources on eab.com may require you to be logged into your eab.com account, which is different from your APS platform login. Learn how to create an account and maximize your experience.

APS COVID-19 Resource Center

Additional resources from the APS team

Resources

- On-demand webinar series
- Sample Opportunity Assessment
- And more!

Visit the Resource Center

Higher Ed COVID-19 Resource Center

Curated resources from across higher ed and EAB by topic

Topics

- Enrollment
- Success
- Instruction
- Advancement
- Administration
- And more!

Visit the Resource Center

COVID-19 Administrative Cost Containment Playbook

Opportunities for non-instructional staff cost savings

Potential Areas

- Freeze out-of-state travel
- Limit professional development spending
- And more!

Download the Playbook

Academic Affair Cost Containment Interactive Online Resource

Opportunities for instructional staff cost savings

Potential Areas

- Freeze out-of-state travel
- Limit professional development spending
- And more!

Visit the Online Resource

Rightsizing the Program Portfolio Study

Imperatives for balancing revitalization and discontinuance of programs

Imperatives

- Assemble the right data for conversations
- Provide watch-list programs with structured guidance and a set period of time to improve
- And more!

Download the Study

Multidisciplinary Reorganization Toolkit

Guidance for transitioning from siloed departments to an academic governance model

Resources

- Milestones for the three phases of reorganization
- Examples from higher ed institutions
- And more!

Download the Toolkit

Rightsize Course and Section Offerings

AREA 1

- **Strategy 1**: Cancel Non-Critical Low-Enrollment sections
- **Strategy 2**: Cancel or Reduce Frequency of Section Offerings
- **Strategy 3**: Consolidate Unnecessary Sections

Rightsize Course and Section Offerings

Enhancing Course Efficiencies According to Enrollment Scenarios

An overabundance of small and under-filled sections that are not critical to students' degree paths consumes an inordinate amount of instructional resources. These resources could potentially be reallocated to higher demand or priority areas to better serve students and instructional staff. The strategies outlined in this portion of the playbook walk you through APS analyses to uncover course section inefficiencies to plan for fall 2020 and beyond.

Download the Course Planning Excel Workbook to input your institution's data according to the steps outlined in each strategy.

Prework

Do Your Max Caps Paint an Accurate Picture of Course Capacity?

When analyzing data on past course and section offerings, conducting fill rate analyses[1] helps surface mismatches between instructional resource use and student demand. Fill rate analyses depend on two elements: an accurate count of the number of students enrolled in a course or section and the maximum possible enrollment capacity (max cap). At many institutions, though, max caps are unreliable indicators of true capacity.

Typical Root Causes of Inaccurate Max Caps

Lack of, or poorly enforced, policy to set caps	→	Example: Caps set to size of desired room
Use of max caps as an instructor's enrollment management tool	→	Example: Caps changed to zero to close courses and stop enrollment

Consider Your Max Cap Guidelines for Fall 2020

Before digging into your institution's course and section data, consider the state of your institution's max caps. Do you have a policy in place to ensure caps are set consistently and fill rate analyses are accurate?

- ❑ Yes
  - → Do minimum and maximum enrollment guidelines require adjustment to sufficiently support social distancing? Read our Expert Insight about space planning and reconfiguration (#2 in the featured checklist).
- ❑ No
  - → Read our Maximum Capacity Toolkit to learn how to create an effective policy.

1) Fill Rate: The percentage of seats that are filled in a course or section at the last posted enrollment date. Course Enrollment divided by Max Cap.

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Strategy 1: Cancel Non-Critical Low-Enrollment Sections

Single section and low-enrolled courses require instructional resources that could potentially be more efficiently used elsewhere. Full-time instructors can be reassigned to high-demand and necessary courses to support student progress priorities.

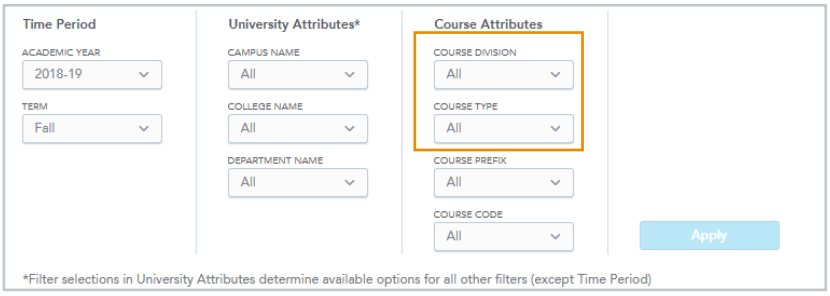
1 Using the **Course Type** and **Course Division filters** on the Courses tab in the APS Analytics dashboard, structure your analysis by using the following (or similar) groupings:

Low enrollment is expected:

- ✓ Graduate courses (particularly seminars)
- ✓ Individual instruction courses (including theses, research experiences, etc.) where enrollment is expected to be one or two students

Low enrollment is unexpected:

- × Undergraduate or lower-level lecture courses where low enrollment is likely not pedagogically justified. Alternatively, look at sections with high total capacities.



2 Review each small section offered in Fall 2019. Categorize each section based on its contribution to institutional mission and student path to degree. Cancel non-critical sections for Fall 2020.

Key report: # of Classes with Size <10

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Courses tab

Goal: Identify the number of sections with low enrollment in 2019-20 AY that can be canceled

Class Capacity Utilization

Median Class Size	Median Class Capacity	Median Class Fill Rate	% of Classes with Size <10
21	30	90%	23.2%

Academic Year	Term	Department Name	Course Code	Course Name	Course Ref No	Total Enrollment	Total Capacity
2018-19	Fall	French	FREN616	Masked FIN616	14130	9	102
		Computer Science	CS471	Masked CS471	21164	7	60
		Economics	ECON625	Masked ECON6	10734	7	55
		Leadership Education	LE360	Masked EET360	16889	3	50
			LE415	Masked EET415	16893	3	50
			LE365W	Masked EET365	16891	4	50
			LE350	Masked EET350	16888	5	50
		Computer Science	CS776	Masked CS776	18225	9	50
		French	FREN454	Masked FIN454	12599	8	45
			FREN450	Masked FIN450	11576	9	45

Questions for Consideration

Very small sections can be offered for a variety of compelling reasons. As always, a conversation with the department chair or instructor is warranted before assuming a section can be canceled. Ask:

1. Is this section critical to students' degree paths?
2. Will offering this section allow a student to graduate on time?
3. Is this section scheduled to serve a key demographic population, such as students with full-time jobs?
4. Do we have reason to expect demand for this section to increase this year (e.g., because a new program is getting off the ground)?

Strategy 2: Cancel or Reduce Frequency of Section Offerings

Single sections that are offered in multiple terms per year may not need to be offered as often or at all. However, keep in mind that several courses at your institution serve majors, first-, and second-year students who must complete courses as requirements or pre-requisites. Consider each course's impact on students' degree paths before deciding to reduce the number of offerings. Despite low demand, it may be necessary to offer the course often to adequately support degree progress. If any adjustment is possible, use degree audit information to determine during which term(s) the adjustment to section offerings can be made.

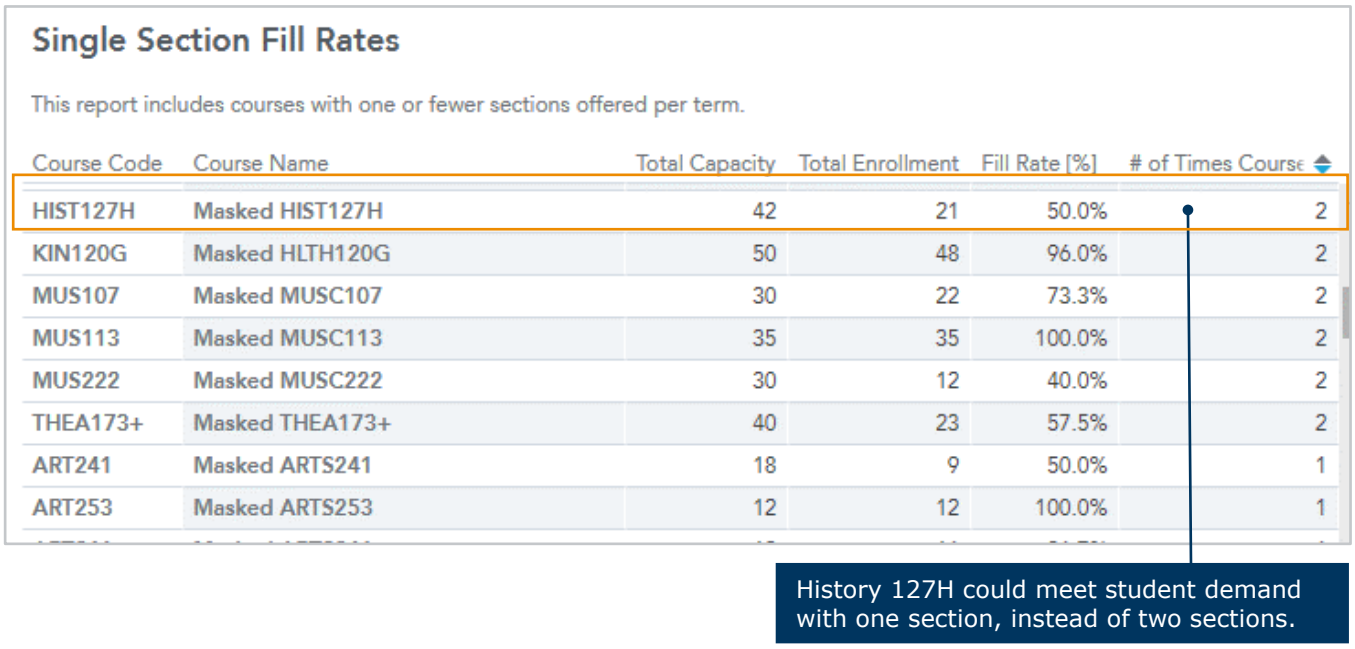
1 Review each course that is offered as a single section in multiple terms per year.[1] Assess if the course could be offered less frequently (e.g., in fewer terms or in alternating years).

Key report: Single Section Fill Rates

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Courses tab

Goal: Identify the number of single-section courses that can be offered less frequently

Sort the '# of Times Course Offered Per Academic Year' column by descending order.



Single Section Fill Rates

This report includes courses with one or fewer sections offered per term.

Course Code	Course Name	Total Capacity	Total Enrollment	Fill Rate [%]	# of Times Course
HIST127H	Masked HIST127H	42	21	50.0%	2
KIN120G	Masked HLTH120G	50	48	96.0%	2
MUS107	Masked MUSC107	30	22	73.3%	2
MUS113	Masked MUSC113	35	35	100.0%	2
MUS222	Masked MUSC222	30	12	40.0%	2
THEA173+	Masked THEA173+	40	23	57.5%	2
ART241	Masked ARTS241	18	9	50.0%	1
ART253	Masked ARTS253	12	12	100.0%	1

History 127H could meet student demand with one section, instead of two sections.

Guidance: Analyze enrollments and enrollment caps. Determine if demand could still be met by offering the course in fewer terms (e.g., if the enrollment in multiple terms is less than one term's enrollment cap).

For courses offered only once per year, deciding not to offer the course every year is a more aggressive option. Carefully consider the impact on student progress.

Questions for Consideration

1. Given the possibility of lower enrollment this year, how can you adjust course offerings while supporting student progress? (Note: Partners with Navigate's Academic Planning module can look up how many students have a course selected in their academic plan.)
2. Would slightly adjusting the enrollment cap allow you to meet student demand with fewer sections?
3. Is there an alternative course students can take that will still preserve their academic progress?
4. If you were to stop offering this course in one term, which term is going to affect the fewest students? Consider when other courses commonly taken by students in a given program are taken.
5. Is this the only course taught by a particular instructor?

[1] Multi-section courses are reviewed in Strategy 3.

Strategy 3: Consolidate Unnecessary Sections

One of the largest opportunities to reduce costs is minimizing unnecessary section offerings in multi-section courses. Using historical enrollment data and projections for upcoming terms, consolidate section offerings to match expected demand.

1 Calculate enrollment estimates. Start with a set of assumptions about enrollment changes for the next term. Consult with Enrollment Management or Registrar to obtain these estimates. There are two methods to consider:

1. **Enrollment projections by student classification** (i.e. Incoming class, First-Year, Second-Year)

   This will be the simplest method for anticipating needs for most multi-section courses by adjusting enrollments based on the overall change in each year's students by classification.

2. **Enrollment projections by student program** (i.e. B.S. Nursing)

   This method will add more nuance to the analysis for declines in enrollments for specific student programs (e.g., you're expecting 20% incoming Nursing students and want to identify the core requirement courses likely to be impacted like Biology and Chemistry).

This guide focuses on method 1, given it is the most generally applicable. If you're interested in method 2, contact your APS dedicated consultant for a guided demonstration of the analysis.

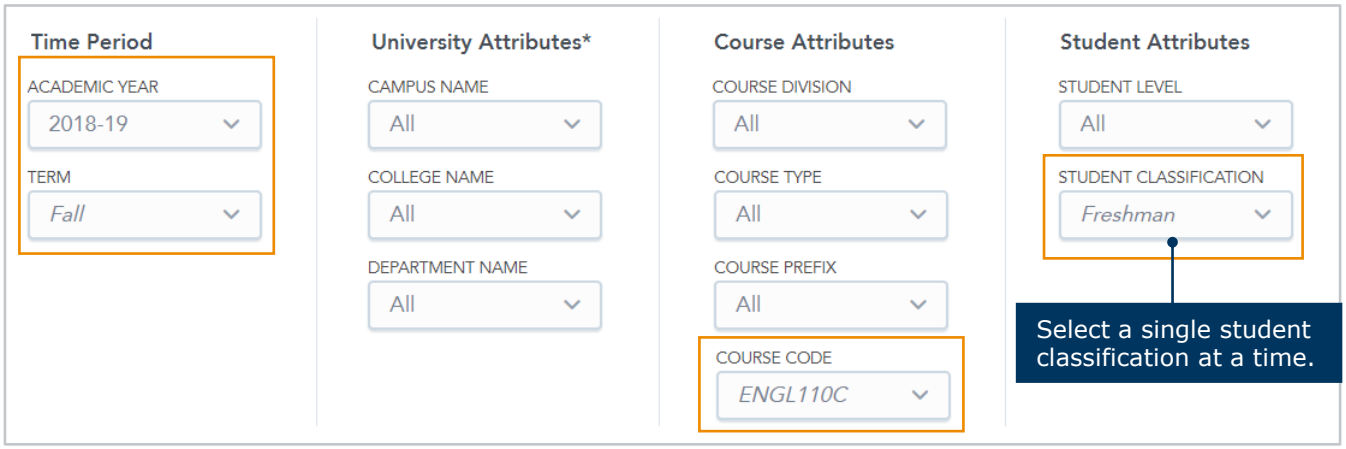
Example

Woodley University is anticipating a 10% decline in incoming Freshmen, a 5% decline in Sophomores, and no change in its Juniors and Seniors.

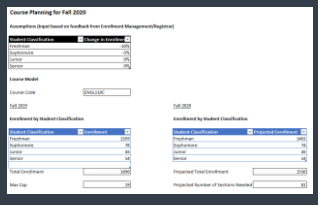
Expected Change in Enrollment by Student Classification at Woodley University

Freshmen	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
-10%	-5%	0% (No change)	0% (No Change)

2 Using the **Academic Year**, **Term**, **Course Code**, and **Student Classification filters** on the Students tab on the APS Analytics dashboard, select the attributes you wish to investigate.



Downloadable Resource



Use the **Course Planning Excel Workbook** template to follow along with this guide and organize your analysis in a pre-formatted Excel workbook.

Click to Download the Resource Online

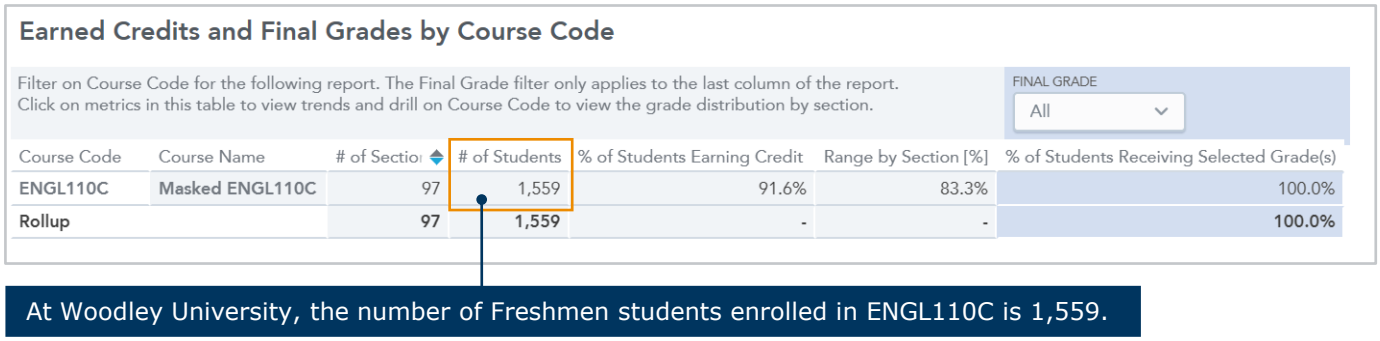
3 Calculate the number of students enrolled in each course by classification in the previous year's like term (i.e. compare fall to the previous fall term).

Key report: Earned Credits and Final Grades by Course Code

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Students tab

Goal: Identify the number of students by classification enrolled in each section of the previous like term.

While the Earned Credits and Final Grades by Course Code report is primarily used to examine course completion and final grades, it can be used here to see the total number of students enrolled by each student classification.



At Woodley University, the number of Freshmen students enrolled in ENGL110C is 1,559.

4 Repeat this process for each student classification by changing the filters at the top of the page. Set the **Student Classification filter** first, then re-select the **Course Code filter** each time, and click Apply.

Example

Enrollment by Student Classification for Previous Fall in ENGL110C

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
1,559	78	45	14

5 Apply the projected changes in enrollment to estimate the new enrollment in the course.

Example

Enrollment by Student Classification for Previous Fall in ENGL110C

Student Classification	Fall 2019 Enrollment	Expected Change in Enrollment	Projected Fall 2020 Enrollment
Freshman	1,559	-10%	**1,403**
Sophomore	78	-5%	**74**
Junior	45	0% (No Change)	**45**
Senior	14	0% (No Change)	**14**
TOTAL	1,696		**1,536**

Based on these assumptions, Woodley University can plan sections for 1,536 students in total in ENGL110C for the upcoming fall term.

6 Calculate the number of sections needed for the upcoming term. Start by setting the maximum enrollment capacity (max cap) for each section of the course.

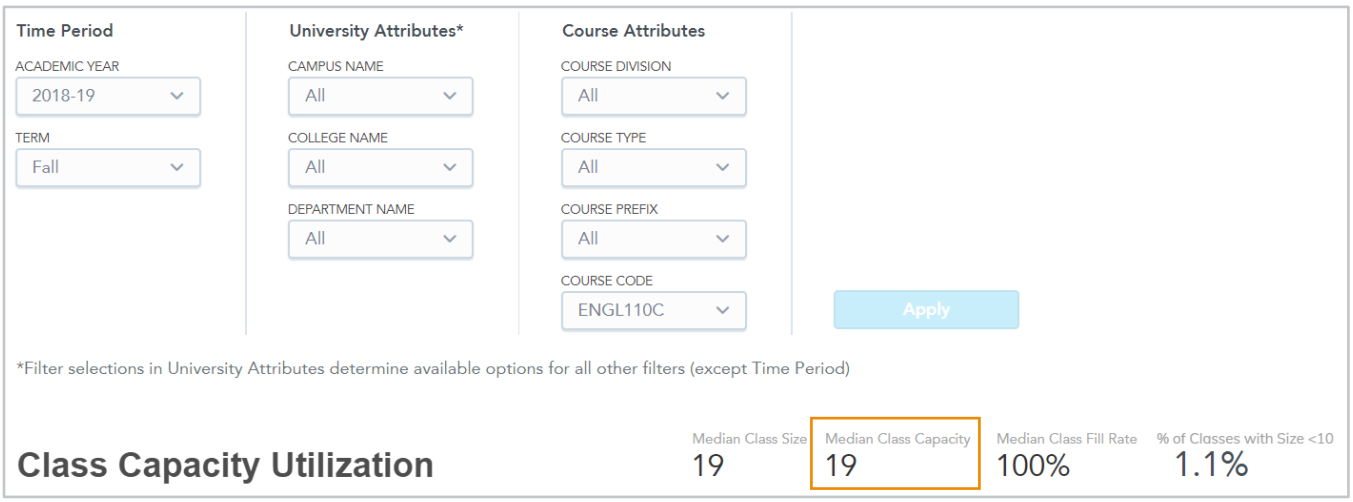
Your filters should carry over from the previous analysis, but confirm that you have the correct **Academic Year**, **Term**, and **Course Code** set.

The median Max Cap is located at the top right of the page, just below the filters.

Key report: Median Class Capacity

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Courses tab

Goal: View the maximum capacity for the previous like term.



7 To calculate the number of necessary sections for the course, take the total projected course enrollment and divide by the Max Cap. We recommended adding 5-10% cushion to allow enough sections to accommodate schedules. Round up to the nearest whole number.

Number of Sections Needed for ENGL110C in Fall 2020

$$\frac{\text{Projected Enrollment + 5-10\% Cushion}}{\text{Section Max Cap}} = \frac{1{,}536 + 1.05*1536}{19} = 85 \text{ Sections}$$

Woodley University will only need 85 sections of ENGL110C in Fall 2020 based on their enrollment projections with an added 5% cushion for flexibility. Since they offered 93 sections in Fall 2019, they can consolidate 8 sections.

Questions for Consideration

1. Can you keep the same maximum enrollment capacity as previous terms?
2. If you are moving to a hybrid model, how will you regulate student attendance? For example, will all students come to campus at once or be split into groups and be asked to attend in-person with their respective group?
3. Can you set different caps based on different course modalities (i.e. in person vs. online) for the same course?
4. Can you set up shadow sections to quickly open as enrollment thresholds are met?

Revitalize and Rightsize the Program Portfolio

AREA 2

- **Strategy 1**: Identify Programs with Growing and Shrinking Demand
- **Strategy 2**: Assess the Program's Breakdown of Own vs. Service Major SCH
- **Strategy 3**: Diagnose Factors Contributing to Migration Into and Out of a Program

Revitalize and Rightsize the Program Portfolio

Prioritizing Growing and Shrinking Programs

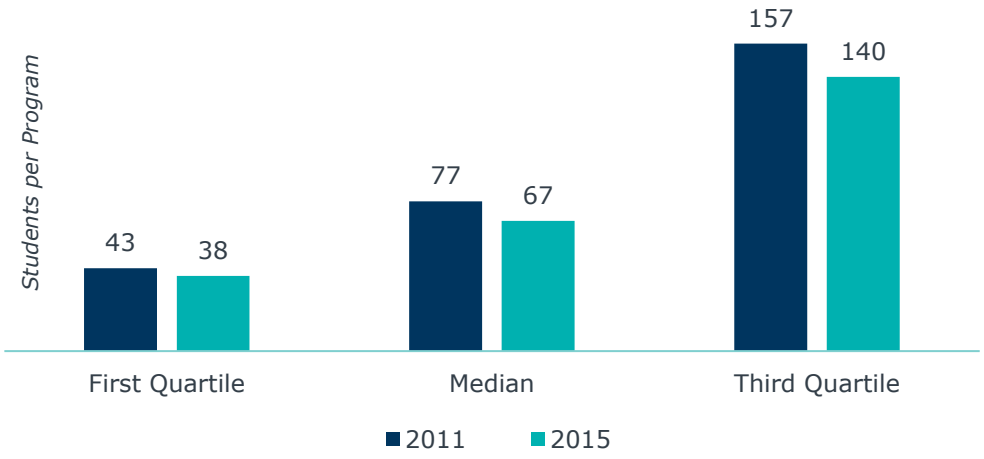
The ever-changing landscape of higher ed has pressured institutions to diversify their program portfolios to attract students and boost enrollment. In an era of increasing costs, especially the unknown financial impacts of COVID-19, it is critical for academic leaders to conduct more frequent reviews of programs rather than the typical 5-10 year academic program review cycle. By evaluating program health, performance, and resource use on a more frequent basis, leaders can better understand their program portfolios. Regular and frequent reviews allow for better management of a balanced program portfolio that advances the institutional mission, responds to market demands, and contributes to the bottom line

Financial Impact of COVID-19 Prompts a Deep Dive into Program Proliferation

Program expansion is a natural outcome when conducting program reviews. Adding new programs allows institutions to innovate, introduce diverse perspectives and voices into the classroom, and maintain an entrepreneurial mindset that helps retain and recruit instructional staff. However, adding numerous new programs while not reviewing existing program offerings is detrimental. Program proliferation contributes to growing complexity among undergraduate students as they select their degree paths and makes it difficult for academic leaders to maintain quality across all programs and research areas.

In an analysis examining the number of students per program across three years, we found that average enrollments stayed flat during the same period, but students per program fell. This indicates that an expanding number of programs is at the heart of this trend.

Students Per Program Continues to Decline, a Product of Program Proliferation



13%

Decline in median "students per undergrad program" from 2011 to 2015

The strategies outlined in this portion of the playbook pertain to analyses available in the APS Program Analytics dashboard. **This dashboard requires the collection of new data files from the partner institution and is currently being rolled out across the APS Collaborative, meaning your institution may not have the dashboard yet.**

If you serve on your institution's APS Leadership team (Program Sponsor, Owner, or Value Lead) and wish to pursue implementing the new dashboard, please connect with your APS dedicated consultant.

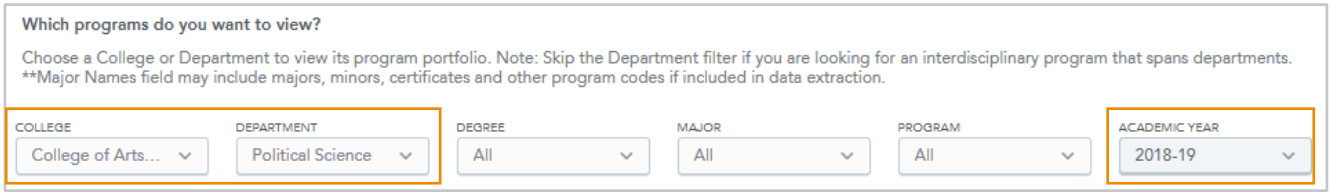
1) Fill Rate: The percentage of seats that are filled in a course or section at the last posted enrollment date. Course Enrollment divided by Max Cap.

Source: "Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System," National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/; EAB interviews and analysis

Strategy 1: Identify Programs with Growing and Shrinking Demand

Program retention and enrollment are informative indicators of either growing or declining demand for a program. These two metrics can help you short-list programs that may require additional or fewer resources. In APS, a program is defined as a pedagogical track that students follow in order to attain a credential in their chosen field of study. Students must have a declared credential (i.e. degree) associated with a field (i.e. major) in order to be counted as enrolled in a program. *Please note: The Program Analytics dashboard is currently being rolled out across the APS Collaborative, so your institution may not have the dashboard yet.*

1. Use the **College** and **Department filters** on the Program Portfolio tab in the Program Analytics dashboard to customize your analysis and examine academic units of interest.

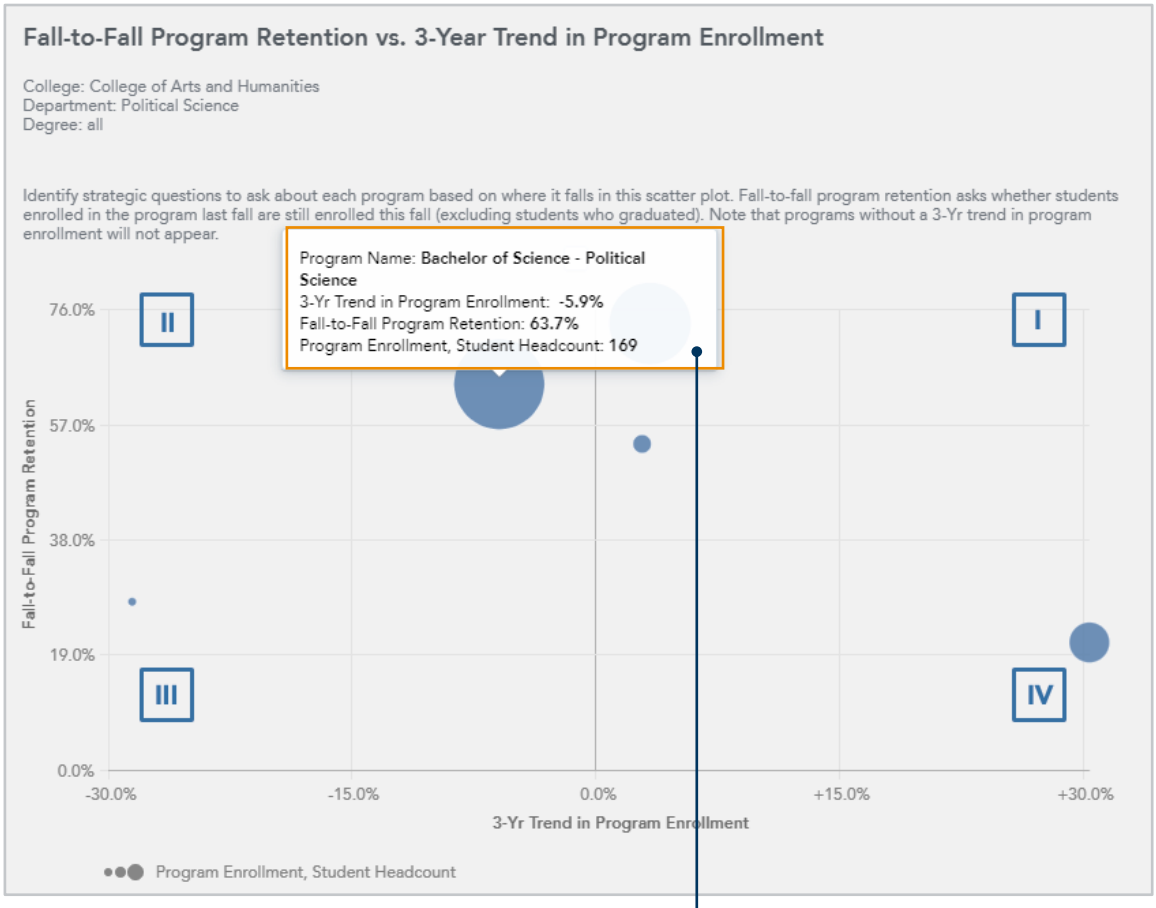


2. Review fall-to-fall retention and enrollment for programs in the selected academic unit.

Key report: Fall-to-Fall Program Retention vs. 3-Year Trend in Program Enrollment

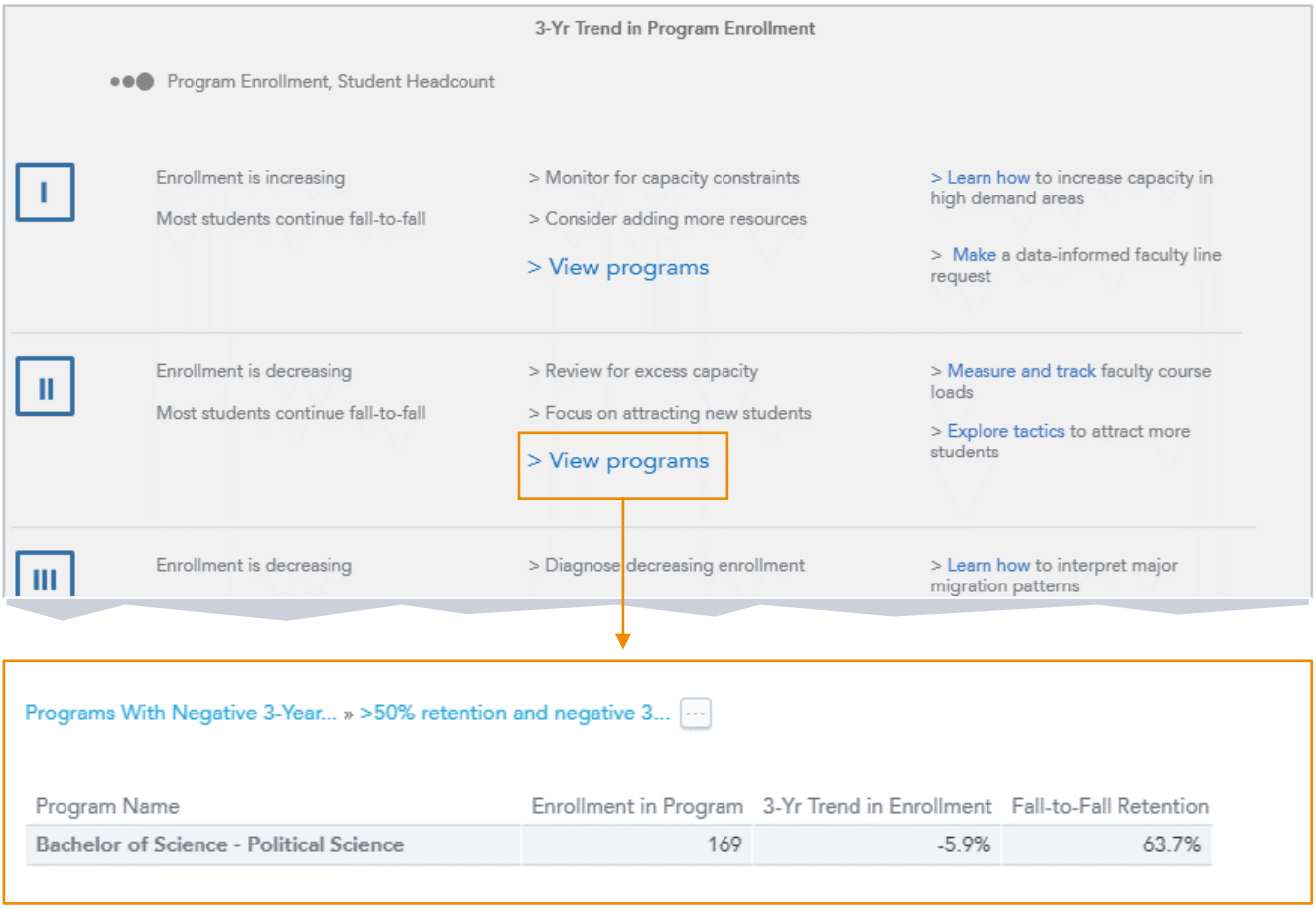
Location: Program Analytics dashboard, Program Portfolio tab

Goal: Identify growing programs to monitor for capacity constraints and shrinking programs with excess capacity that can be reallocated to higher demand areas.



The bubble chart has four different quadrants, making it easy to see which programs are facing capacity constraints or have excess capacity. In Quadrant II, the Bachelor of Science – Political Science program has experienced declining program enrollment and steady program retention. This indicates that the program should be reviewed for excess capacity.

3 Just below the scatterplot, the APS platform includes quadrant-specific guidance and resources to support your next steps.



Questions for Consideration

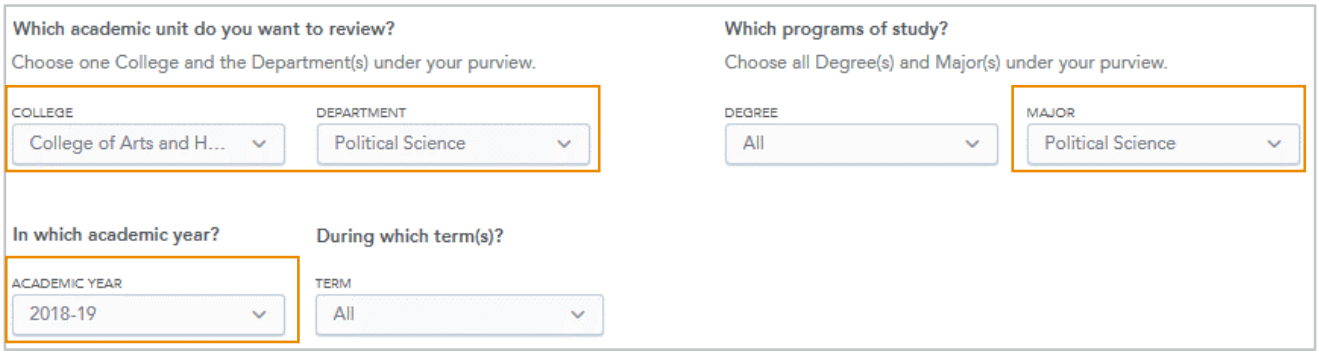
Despite programs having low program enrollment and/or retention, the program may serve an outsized portion of service majors or be mission-critical. For example, religiously affiliated institutions typically offer numerous theology courses to uphold their missions. Thus, there may be justification to keep the program(s).

1. What about this program attracts service majors, and could this be rearticulated or shaped to better retain program majors?
2. Is there another program that offers similar curriculum that could be combined with or replace this program?
3. Could this program's curriculum be integrated into the top service programs instead of keeping this program open?

Strategy 2: Assess the Program's Breakdown of Own vs. Service Major SCH

Despite programs having low program enrollment and/or retention, the program may serve an outsized portion of service majors. Thus, there may be justification to keep the program in your portfolio. *Please note: The Program Analytics dashboard is currently being rolled out across the APS Collaborative, so your institution may not have the dashboard yet.*

1. Use the **College**, **Department**, and **Major filters** on the Department/Program Review tab in the Program Analytics dashboard to customize your analysis and examine academic units of interest.

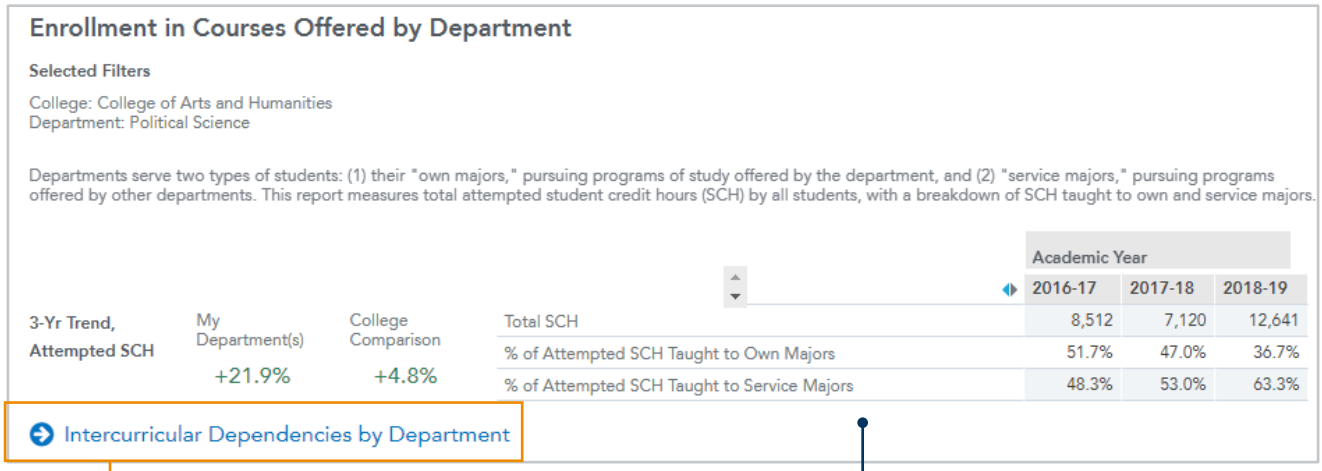


2. Assess how many student credit hours (SCH) the program is teaching to both own majors (students who are pursuing programs of study offered by the department) and service majors (students who are pursuing programs offered by other departments).

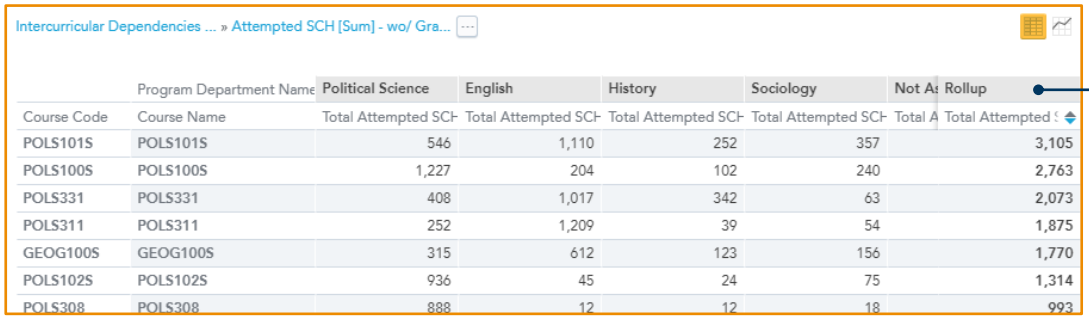
Key reports: Enrollment in Courses Offered by Department; Intercurricular Dependences by Department

Location: Program Analytics dashboard, Department/Program Review tab

Goal: Identify to what extent the department is supporting students outside of its programs.



Although the percentage of Attempted SCH Taught to Own Majors has declined across the past three years, the 3-year trend is growing at +21.9% and is higher than the college comparison. This is due to an increase in the percentage of Attempted SCH Taught to Service Majors.

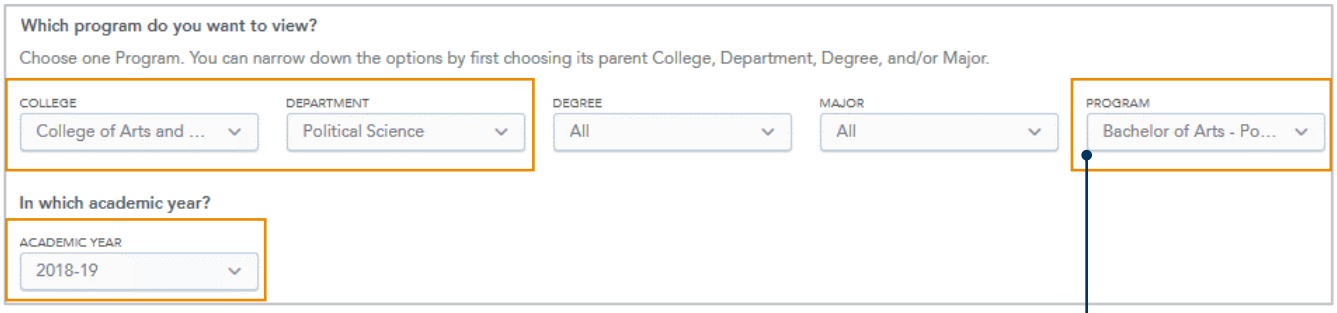


Use the drill-in report to see which other specific programs the department is serving.

Strategy 3: Diagnose Factors Driving Migration Into and Out of a Program

Understanding the factors that are contributing to students leaving or entering a program allows unit leaders to carefully craft their curriculum, better articulate the program's value, consider student engagement practices, and determine if there is opportunity to collaborate with other programs. *Please note: The Program Analytics dashboard is currently being rolled out across the APS Collaborative, so your institution may not have the dashboard yet.*

1 Use the **College**, **Department**, and **Program filters** on the Program Enrollment and Student Progress Drivers tab in the Program Analytics dashboard to customize your analysis and examine academic units of interest.



In this example, we are examining the Bachelor of Arts – Political Science program, because the Fall-to-Fall Retention vs. 3-Yr Trend in Program Enrollment report showed that this program has low retention compared to the two larger programs in the department.

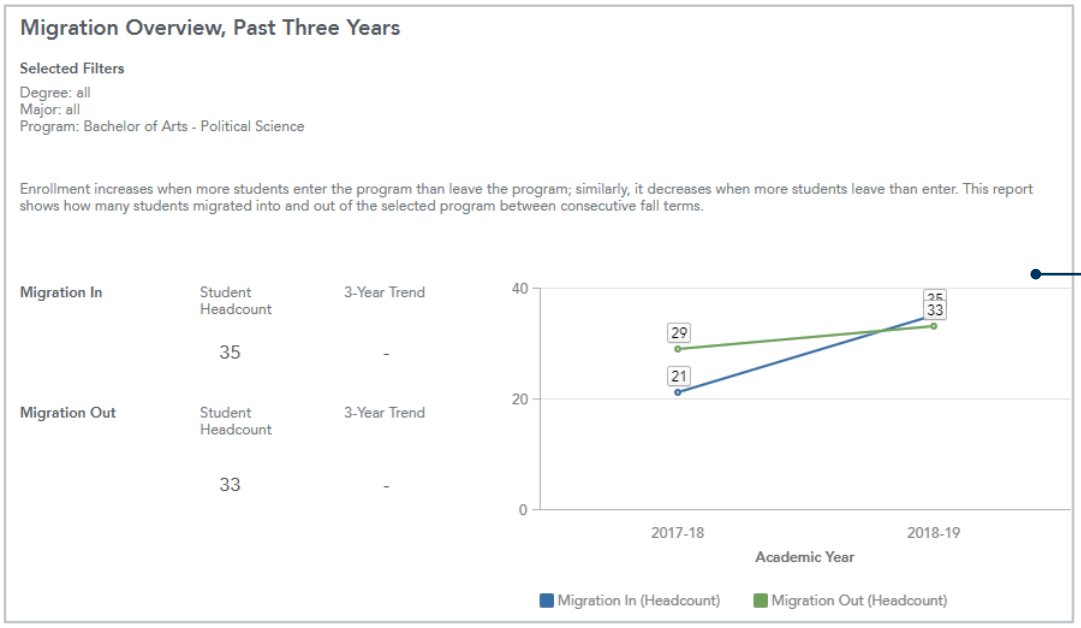
2 Assess trends in migration into and out of the program to determine if the program requires or does not require additional resources to better serve not only the program, but also students.

Key report: Migration Overview, Past Three Years

Location: Program Analytics dashboard, Program Enrollment and Student Progress Drivers tab

Goal: View how many students migrated into and out of the program across the past three years.

Note: The APS demonstration Program Analytics site contains only two years of data, thus the 3-year trend rate is not populated and shown in the screenshot below.



The program has experienced an increase in migration into the program over the past two years, but migration out of the program has remained relatively flat.

3 Gain context for the Migration In trend by examining from which programs students are migrating.

Key report: Migration In: Three Questions to Ask

Location: Program Analytics dashboard, Program Enrollment and Student Progress Drivers tab

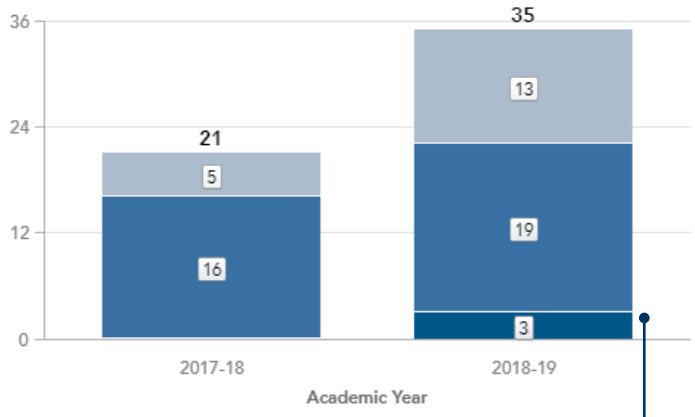
Goal: Identify from which source programs students are migrating into the program.

Migration In: Three Questions to Ask

1. Does our program attract mostly new/previously undeclared students, or major-changers?

This report provides further detail on the students included in Migration In, grouping them into four categories based on their prior fall term status.

- **New to Institution** - no record of program enrollment at the institution during the prior fall term
- **Previously Undeclared** - enrolled but not associated with any program of study during the prior fall term
- **Switched from Another Program** - enrolled and associated with a different program of study during the prior fall term
- **Other** - none of the above (for example: student added this program as a second major; student returned from leave of absence)



2. Are there common "source programs" from which we attract major-changers?

> View Source Programs

> Explore tactics to better align degree requirements across common programs

Most students migrating into the program are new to the institution or were previously undeclared.

Source Programs (HL) » Program Inflow Sources

Academic Year	2017-18	2018-19
Previous Program	# of Students	# of Students
Intended Degree - Political Science	10	5
Bachelor of Arts - International Studies		5
Intended Degree - Criminal Justice		2
Bachelor of Science - Political Science	2	1
Bachelor of Science - Physical Education	1	1
Bachelor of Arts - Philosophy		1
Bachelor of Science - Communication		1
Bachelor of Science - Occupational/Tech Studies		1
Intended Degree - Communication		1
Intended Degree - Economics		1
Bachelor of Science - Psychology	1	
BS in Computer Science - Computer Science	1	
Intended Degree - Business Analytics	1	
Rollup	16	19

The primary source programs are Intended Degree – Political Science, Bachelor of Arts – International Studies, and Intended Degree – Criminal Justice. While the first source program is expected, the latter two programs present a potential opportunity to better algin curriculum to better supposed student progress.

4 Perform a similar analysis using the Migration Out: Three Question to Ask report to identify to which destination programs students are migrating.

Uncover Hidden Capacity Among Full-Time Instructional Staff and Fill Capacity Gaps

AREA 3

- **Strategy 1**: Compare Actual Typical Teaching Loads with Expected Loads
- **Strategy 2**: Size Your Need for Contingent Instructors for Fall 2020

Uncover Hidden Capacity Among Full-Time Instructional Staff and Fill Capacity Gaps

Optimizing Instructor Mix and Workload

Instructional staff are an institution's most valuable, yet costly investment. They are a limited resource whose responsibilities span far past the classroom into activities such as advising, administrative tasks, and scholarship. Defining a 'standard' courseload is subjective and dependent on department goals, mission, and student demand – but aligning to the standard workload is imperative to achieve balanced workload across instructor types and efficient use of this valuable resource.

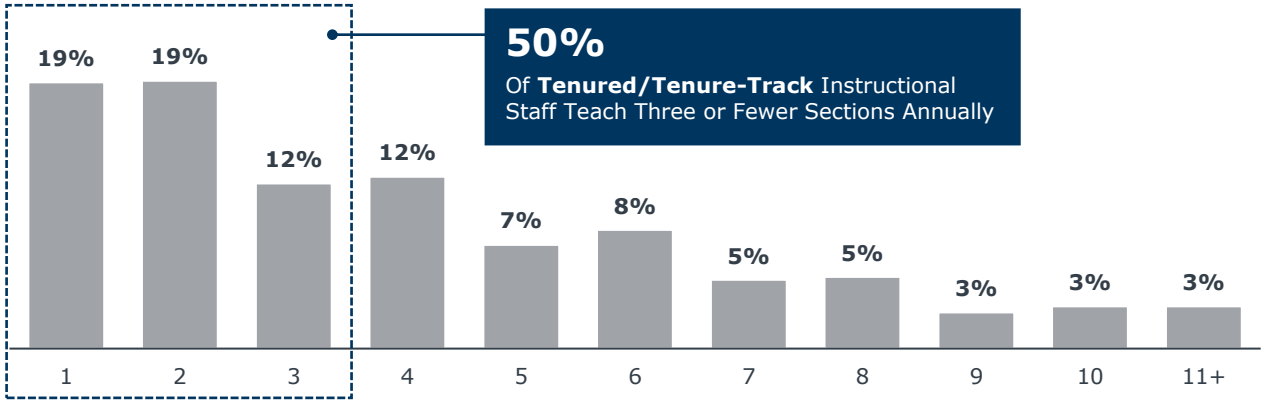
Financial Pressures Require More Scrutiny of Instructor Workload Disparities by Discipline

Over the past decade, changes in student demand, as well as growing research and service requirements, have resulted in unbalanced workloads. While most institutional policies have a 'standard' courseload and distribution of effort (across teaching, research, and service) in reality, instructional workloads vary enormously. Instructional staff in units with growing enrollment often struggle to keep up with demand, while instructional staff in units with declining demand may teach well below the standard load.

Increase transparency, flexibility, and unit accountability to support departments in developing more balanced workload allocations. Comparing data on actual course loads and student credit hour production by department can reveal which units are under- or over-resourced. Setting clear expectations is critical, though disciplinary differences mean that each department may require a unique set of targets.

Distribution of Tenured and Tenure-Track Instructional Staff By Sections Taught[1]

n=41 institutions



The strategies outlined in this portion of the playbook are designed to help academic leaders determine how much instructional capacity will need to come from adjunct or contingent instructors and how much a department may have to adjust its historical workload to come into balance with institutional expectations and needs to plan for Fall 2020 and beyond. Download the Instructional Staff Planning Excel Workbook to input your institution's data according to the steps outlined in each strategy.

When setting Fall 2020 teaching loads, a critical component to consider is the number of necessary sections you will offer. For guidance on calculating this value, please see the Rightsize Course and Section Offerings portion (pages 6-12) in the playbook.

1) Includes data from Fall 2014 and Spring 2015; Individual Instruction course types were excluded.

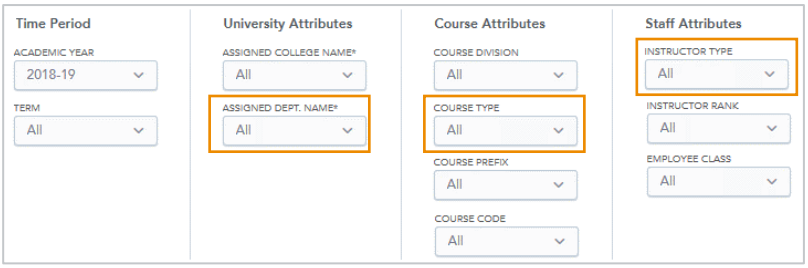
Source: Academic Performance Solutions data and analysis.

Strategy 1: Compare Actual Typical Teaching Loads with Expected Loads

While many institutions "know" how many sections each instructor type is expected to teach annually, there is often a significant discrepancy between that theoretical expectation and how much teaching instructors do in practice—frequently for good reason. Nonetheless, the current climate necessitates revisiting teaching loads to ensure resources are used thoughtfully and deliberately to support today's urgent needs.

1 Using the **Assigned Department Name**, **Course Type**, and **Instructor Type filters** on the Instructional Staff tab of the APS Analytics dashboard, apply relevant attributes you wish to investigate.

- Select the department for which you are conducting the analysis.
- Exclude course types that do not count towards load, such as independent studies or theses.
- Optionally, select one instructor type at a time. Alternatively, if you prefer to see more data at once, choose all instructor types to enable comparisons.

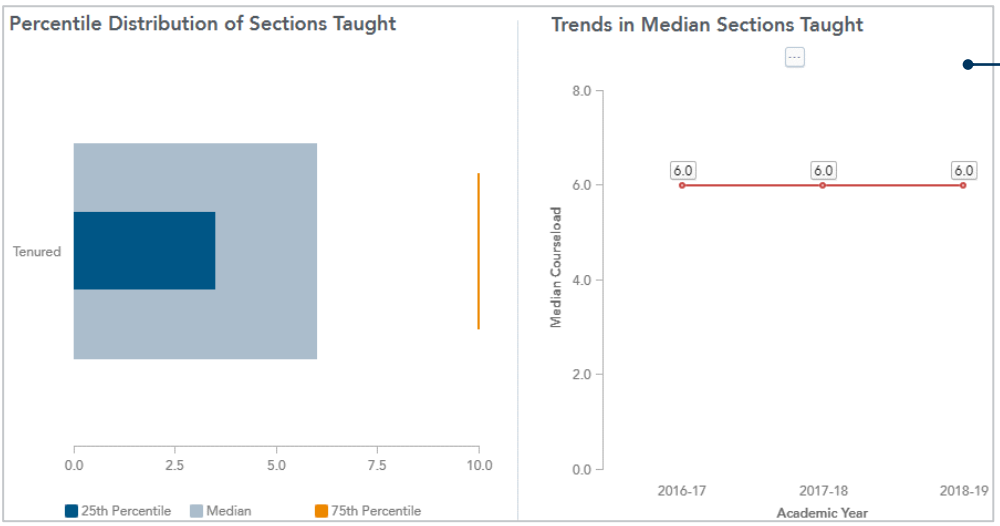


2 Scroll down to the middle of the Instructional Staff Tab to find the distribution of sections taught.

Key reports: Percentile Distribution of Sections Taught; Trends in Median Sections Taught

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Instructional Staff tab

Goal: Identify the typical distribution of sections taught by each instructor type



1. Left report: What is the median number of sections (light blue bar)? What is the range between the 75th percentile (orange stripe) and 25th percentile (dark blue bar)?
2. Right report: What are the highest and lowest median number of sections annually?

If you wish to compare section taught across departments, use the Department Scorecard tab. The same filters apply as before, except for Assigned Department Name.

3 Based on these data, summarize the department's typical actual teaching load by instructor type. How does it compare with stated policy?

Questions for Consideration

1. Could instructional loads be increased for Fall 2020?
2. What would the consequences of increasing the teaching load be (in terms of lost research productivity, decreased capacity for service, etc.)?
3. Are courseloads equally distributed among your full-time faculty? Is there a large difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles?
4. If courseloads have decreased over time, was that an intentional choice?

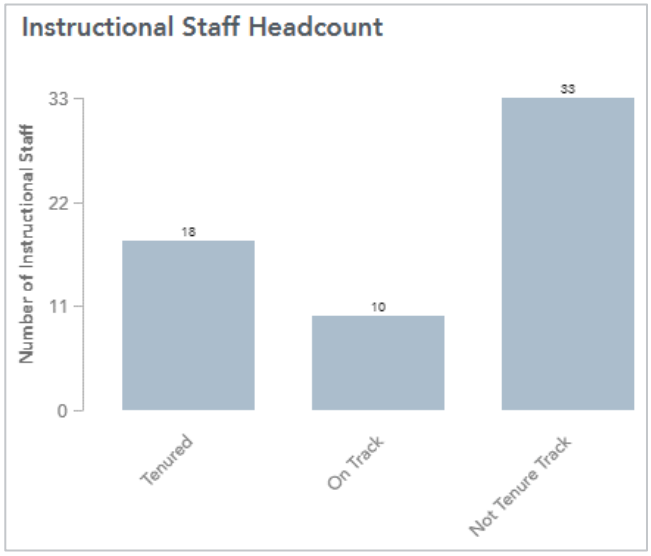
Strategy 2: Size Your Need for Contingent Instructors in Fall 2020

1 Determine your expected headcount of non-contingent instructors for Fall 2020. Use last year's headcount as a starting place, then adjust to reflect known changes (sabbaticals, retirements, new hires, etc.).

Key report: Instructional Staff Headcount

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Instructional Staff tab

Goal: Identify the number of instructors available by instructor type



2 Using the input from Strategy 1, set your teaching load expectation for each instructor type. Then, calculate the number of sections that can be taught with your available number of instructors, assuming each instructor teaches a full load. *An Excel workbook is available online to support these calculations.*

Example

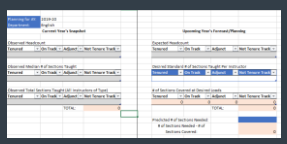
Instructor Type	Headcount		Load		# of Sections Covered
Tenured	18	X	8	=	144
On Track	10		6		60
Not Tenure Track	33		10		330
				TOTAL	534

3 Compare the number of covered sections you calculated in the previous step with the total number of sections you'll need to cover in Fall 2020. For guidance on calculating the total number of needed sections, download our online resource or contact your dedicated consultant. For comparability, ensure you include the same course types in both sets of calculations.

Example 540 sections needed – 534 sections covered = 6 sections not covered

Any sections not covered by your non-contingent faculty teaching at load will need to be covered by contingent instructors or over-load non-contingent instructors.

Downloadable Resource



Use the **Instructional Staff Planning Excel Workbook** template to follow along with this guide and organize your analysis in a pre-formatted Excel workbook.

Click to Download the Resource Online

Surface Non-Instructional and Instructional Staff Cost Inefficiencies

AREA 4

- Strategy 1: View Department's Cost Data Relative to the College's Similar Departments
- Strategy 2: Assess Changes in the Department's Costs Over Time
- Strategy 3: Contextualize Department's Cost Data with Peers' Using APS Benchmarks

Surface Non-Instructional and Instructional Staff Cost Inefficiencies

Taking Short to Medium-Term Actions to Lower Costs

Across higher ed, every institution is subject to both non-instructional and instructional staff costs. APS uses five standard account categories to understand and contextualize costs across the APS Collaborative.

Non-Instructional Staff Costs

- **Non-Instructional Salaries**: Includes all non-instructional staff who are not students (e.g. administrators, advisors, etc.)
- **General Operating Expenses**: Includes all direct costs relevant to the delivery of teaching and related services and excludes indirect costs such as capital expenses, depreciation, internal transfers, etc.

Instructional Staff Costs

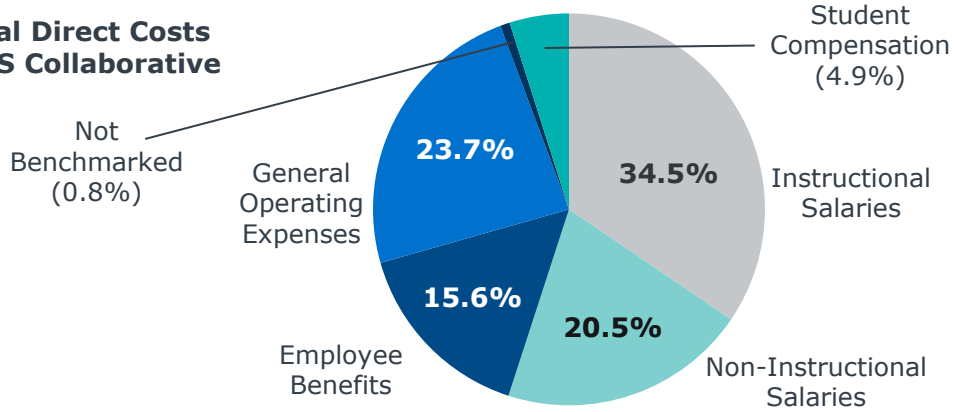
- **Instructional Salaries**: Includes salary payments to all faculty and instructional staff who are not students
- **Employee Benefits**: Includes all non-salary compensation (e.g., fringe benefits) directly benefiting the employee for non-business purposes. Both instructional and non-instructional staff payments are included in this category. Excludes any benefits/compensation for students.
- **Student Compensation**: Includes all salaries and wages paid to student employees. This includes graduate/undergraduate assistants, research assistants, teaching assistants, work study, and other student employees.

COVID-19 Financial Contingency Planning Requires Cost Reduction Wherever Possible

Cost reduction can be in the forms of either short or medium-term actions depending on the nature of the cost itself, as well as logistical, cultural, and legal hurdles. In an APS benchmarking analysis evaluating the percentage of departmental direct costs each standard account category consumed, we found that instructional staff costs are the largest piece of the pie – but non-instructional staff costs consumed a sizeable portion, as well. Reduction in both types of costs can have a large impact.

Distribution of Departmental Direct Costs by Category, Across the APS Collaborative

AY 2019, n=60



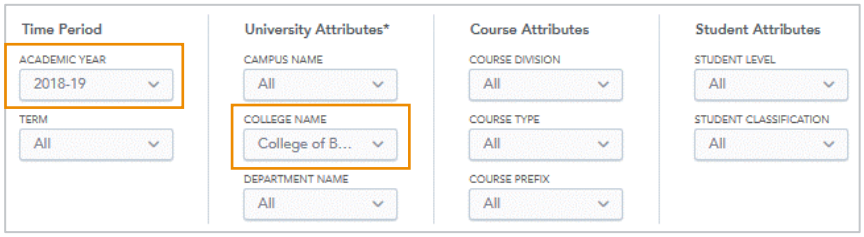
The strategies outlined in this portion of the playbook allow you to monitor both types of costs, in order to reveal opportunities for enhanced efficiencies in your institution's respective departments.

Source: Academic Performance Solutions data and analysis.

Strategy 1: View Department's Cost Data Relative to Similar Departments in the College

You can contextualize your department with similar departments at your own institution. Keep in mind that each department is unique, making it important to **compare departments that have enough in common**; avoid comparing "apples to oranges." To verify if the departments have enough in common, ask yourself: Is your pedagogy similar (e.g. private lessons are needed in all, not just one, of the departments) and are similar types of teaching materials used? Evaluate similar social sciences departments, humanities departments, and natural sciences departments to gain better context.

1 Use the **Academic Year** and **College Name filters** on the Department Scorecard tab on the APS Analytics dashboard. Select the most recent year of cost data and the college you wish to investigate.



2 Scroll down to the Total and Per Credit Hour Costs header.

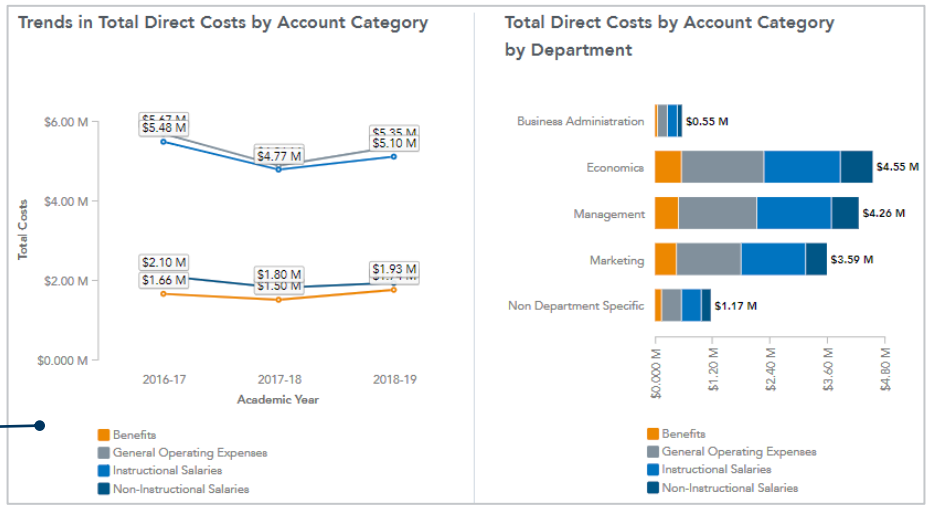
Key reports: Trends in Total Direct Costs by Account Category; Total Direct Costs by Account Category by Department

Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Department Scorecard

Goal: Assess total direct costs by account category across the college.

Hover over the categories:

- How do non-instructional staff costs (Non-Instructional Salaries, General Operating Expenses) compare?
- How do instructional costs (Instructional Salaries, Benefits) compare?



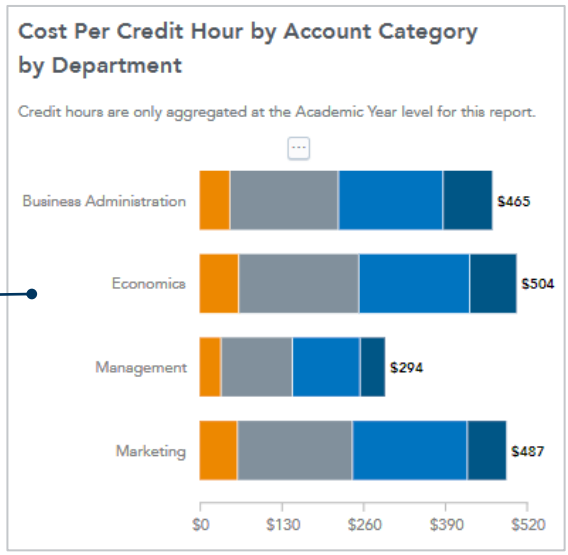
3 Scroll down to achieve a deeper look by evaluating cost per credit hour for each department.

Key report: Cost per Credit Hour by Account Category by Department

Goal: Assess cost per credit hour by account category for each department in the college.

Hover over the categories:

- How do non-instructional staff costs (Non-Instructional Salaries, General Operating Expenses) compare across departments?
- How do instructional costs (Instructional Salaries, Benefits) compare?



Strategy 2: Assess Changes in the Department's Costs Over Time

Evaluate how your department's cost data has changed over time in terms of the various account categories and compare with your expectations. Export data from the APS platform to Excel to perform a separate analysis.

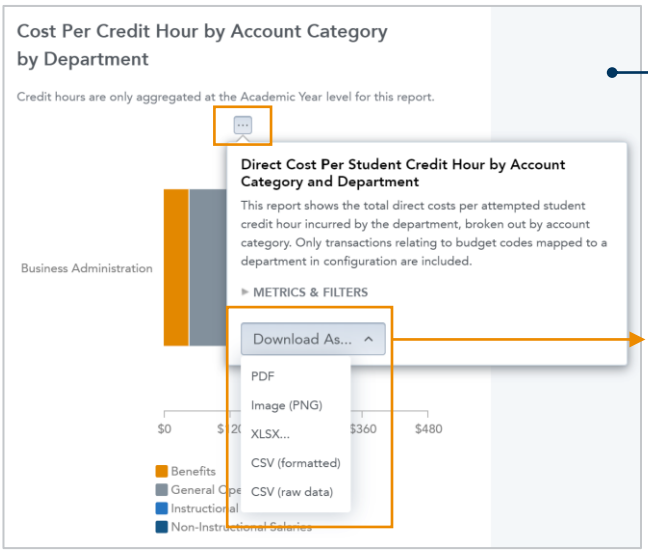
1. Use the **Academic Year**, **College Name**, and **Department Name filters** on the Department Scorecard tab. Select the most recent year of cost data and the college you wish to investigate.

2. Scroll down to the Total and Per Credit Hour Costs header.

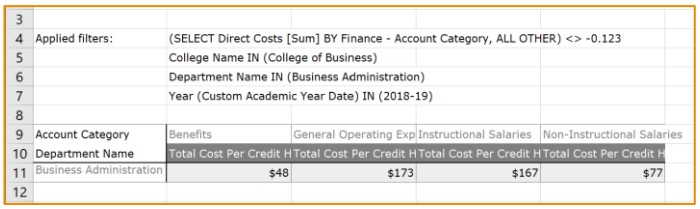
   Key report: Cost Per Credit Hour by Account Category

   Location: APS Analytics dashboard, Department Scorecard

   Goal: Export cost data to Excel in order to perform a separate analysis.



Hover over the center of the report until an ellipsis appears at the top of the report. Click on the ellipsis to open a new window. Click "Download As" to see a drop-down menu. Click "XLSX."

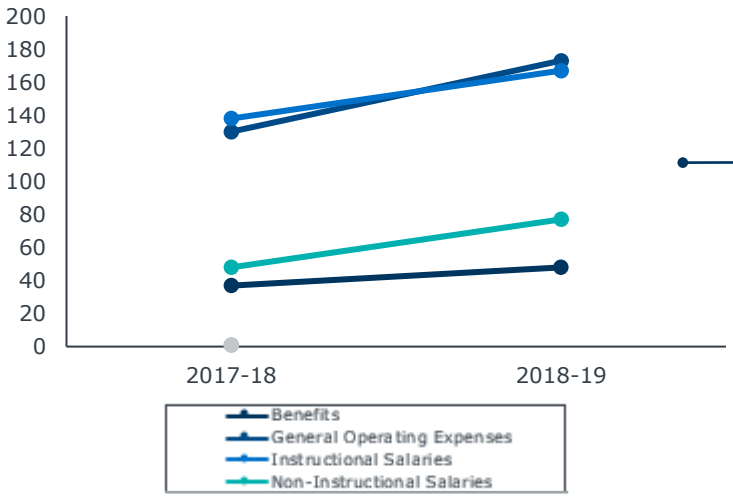


3					
4	Applied filters:	(SELECT Direct Costs [Sum] BY Finance - Account Category, ALL OTHER) <> -0.123			
5		College Name IN (College of Business)			
6		Department Name IN (Business Administration)			
7		Year (Custom Academic Year Date) IN (2018-19)			
8					
9	Account Category	Benefits	General Operating Exp	Instructional Salaries	Non-Instructional Salaries
10	Department Name	Total Cost Per Credit H	Total Cost Per Credit H	Total Cost Per Credit H	Total Cost Per Credit H
11	Business Administration	$48	$173	$167	$77
12					

3. Use the **Academic Year filter** at the top of the tab to select the year prior. Repeat Step #2 to export the prior year's data to Excel. Compare the two sets of data by creating a table and line graph. Examine the trends in the account categories over the two year period.

Example

Business Administration Direct Cost Per Student Credit Hour By Account Category at Woodley University				
Year	**Benefits**	**General Operating Expenses**	**Instructional Salaries**	**Non-Instructional Salaries**
2017-2018	$37	$130	$138	$48
2018-2019	$48	$173	$167	$77



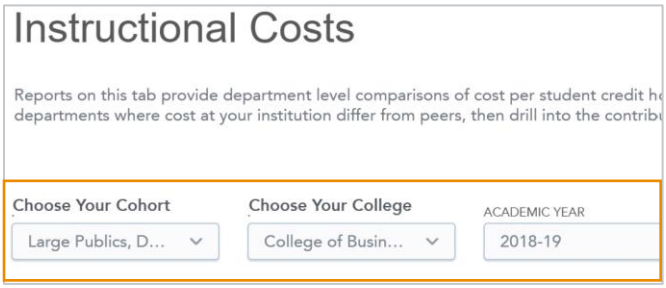
All cost account categories have increased over the past year for the Business Administration department at Woodley University (APS demo site).

- Why has cost per credit hour increased for all categories?
- Was this trend expected?
- Is there opportunity for increased efficiency across the non-instructional staff and instructional costs?

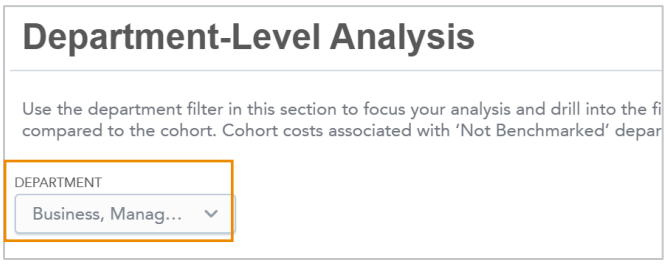
Strategy 3: Contextualize Department's Cost Data With Peers' Using APS Benchmarks

To compare your department's cost data with that of peers, use the APS Benchmarks dashboard to evaluate metrics for standardized departments across different account categories. When choosing your benchmarking cohorts, it's important for both senior and department leadership to collaborate to decide what works best for the department you wish to contextualize. Perhaps one cohort of institutions is more relevant for comparison than another cohort depending on the funding or structure of the department at the cohort schools.

1. Use the **Choose Your Cohort**, **Choose Your College**, and **Academic Year filters** on the Instructional Costs tab on the APS Benchmarks dashboard. For more information about your institution's cohort, see the Cohort Profile Tab.



2. Scroll down to the Department-Level Analysis header. Use the **Department filter** to select the department you wish to investigate.

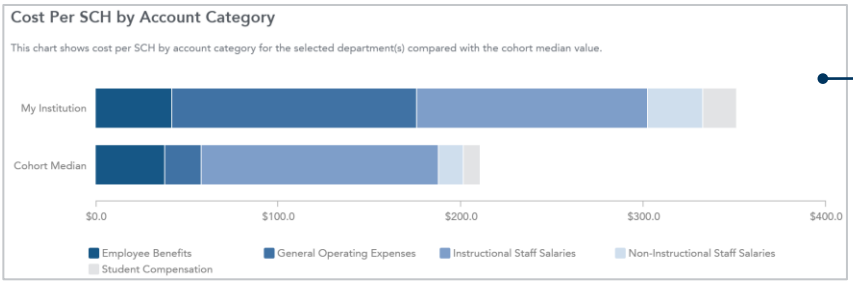


3. Evaluate how your institution compares to the cohort median in terms of the standard department name. Pay attention to both non-instructional staff costs (Non-Instructional Staff Salaries and Employee Benefits) and instructional costs (Instructional Staff Salaries, Employee Benefits, and Student Compensation).

Key report: Cost per SCH by Account Category

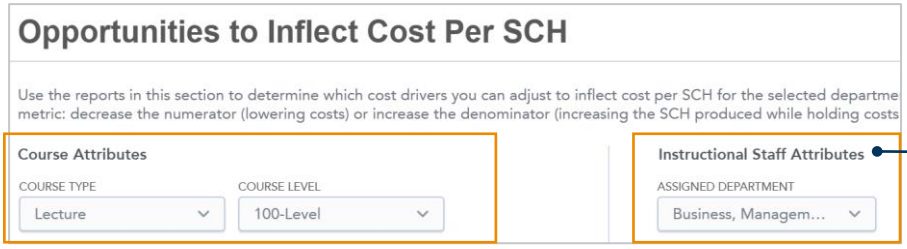
Location: APS Benchmarks dashboard, Instructional Costs tab

Goal: Compare non-instructional staff and instructional costs for your institution and the cohort.



Hover over the categories to identify where your institution is higher than the cohort.

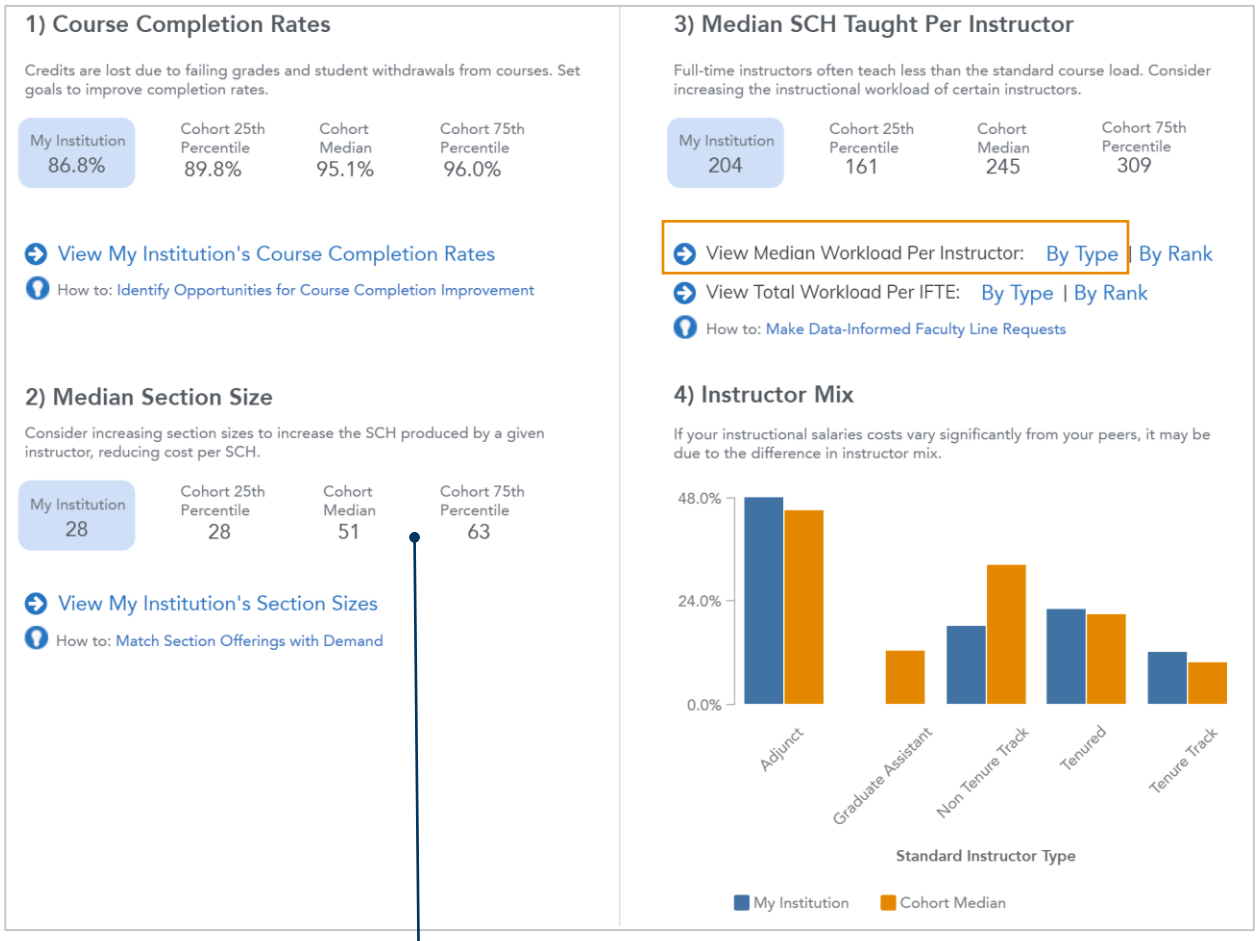
4. Scroll down to the Opportunities to Inflect Cost Per SCH header to evaluate areas to inflect instructional cost in your selected department. Select your filters for **Course Attributes** and **Instructional Staff Attributes**.



- Course Type: Consider expectations for class sizes by removing courses that may skew the data, such as independent study.
- Assigned Department: APS assigns instructional staff to where they teach the most. Select the department where you wish to investigate the corresponding instructional staff.

6 Review the four opportunities to inflect cost per SCH for your selected department. Take note of where your institution falls in terms of the percentile distributions. Is your institution much lower than the cohort median in the below attributes? Depending on your cost constraints, where would you like to see your institution fall on the distribution in the future?

Under the third opportunity, Median SCH Taught per Instructor, click the View Median Workload per Instructor by Type link to see a more detailed look at disparities in workload.



With COVID-19, social distancing requirements may make maximizing in-person instruction classes challenging. Consider hybrid in-person/online courses or offering different meeting times for the same section to balance need for cost efficiency with pandemic-related requirements.

Questions for Consideration

Reflect on the opportunities you've identified to inflect both non-instructional staff and instructional costs.

1. Is there flexibility in non-instructional staff salaries costs (Travel, Admin, etc.) in the social distanced and budget-constrained climate of COVID-19?
2. Which opportunities to inflect cost in terms of instructional costs are most relevant and impactful?
   - Course Completion Rates
   - Median Section Size
   - Median SCH Taught Per Instructor
   - Instructor Mix

Read our blog post to learn more about managing instructional costs.

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