Protocols for Setting/Revising Course Caps
4/24/19 - final

Rationale: BSU's current pattern of course caps, as reflected in the various published semester schedules, is inconsistent even when no apparent issues exist relative to equipment, safety, room capacity, and/or pedagogical approach. Such inconsistency creates unjustified instructional disparities among faculty and hinders the ability to make sound, evidence-based decisions on both adjunct hires in the short term and fixed-term or probationary lines in the long term. As the extent of regularly published waitlists and corresponding student anecdotes suggests, inconsistent and arbitrarily low course caps hinder students seeking to stay on course for timely graduation, while also discouraging prospective students from enrolling at BSU when their registration includes wait-listed courses.

In response to the negative impacts noted above, the following protocols seek to establish a much more standardized and comprehensive process for establishing initial course caps that at the same time accounts for pedagogical and facilities considerations that rightly restrict class size. These protocols, developed through a joint administrative effort, seek as well to support a nimbly responsive and institutionally appropriate means through which Academic Affairs can raise caps in light of demand. Above all, the protocols seek to address issues of significant importance within a context that prioritizes BSU's values as a student-focused institution dedicated to engaged, relationship-based teaching and learning.

Summary Guidelines:

- For courses warranting specialized equipment and/or safety considerations (e.g. labs), room capacity will be set at the capacity of the equipment (i.e. "Optimum" and "Doable" Caps* will be the same).

- For courses that the dean agrees fit established criteria identifying unusually writing intensive and/or speaking intensive pedagogies, the "Optimum" caps will be set at a minimum of 25 (The Academic Deans' Council and the faculty, through a collaborative process mutually agreed upon, will recommend to the Provost the characteristics of an "unusually writing and/or speaking intensive course."). When dictated by demand or anticipated demand, sections of these courses will be raised to the established "Doable" level for an "Optimum" cap of 25.

- "Optimum" course caps for 1000-level courses not requiring specialized equipment and not unusually writing intensive or speaking intensive will be set at a minimum of 40 or at the Fall 2018 enrollment if higher or at room capacity if all classrooms that can accommodate 40 students are occupied. (The Academic Deans' Council and faculty, through the collaborative process described above, will recommend to the Provost the protocols through which classrooms accommodating 40 will be assigned when there aren't enough to meet demand.).

- "Optimum" course caps for 2000-level courses not requiring specialized equipment and not unusually writing intensive or speaking intensive will be set at a minimum of 35 or at the Fall 2018 enrollment if higher.

- "Optimum" course caps for 3000-level (as well as 3000/5000-level) and 4000-level (as well as 4000/5000-level) courses not requiring specialized equipment and not unusually writing intensive or speaking intensive will be set at a minimum of 30 or at the Fall 2018 enrollment if higher.

- "Optimum" course caps for 6000-level graduate courses will be set at a minimum of 25 or at the Fall 2018 enrollment if higher.

- "Doable" course caps will be set at increasing percentages for "Optimum" caps up to 40 (i.e. 15% for a cap of 25-29; 17.5% for a cap of 30-34; and 20% for a cap of 35-40. For optimum caps greater than 40, the "Doable" cap will be 10 above the "Optimum" level.

Scale for Optimum-to-Doable Course Caps*

Optimum	Doable
25	29
29	34
30	36
34	40
35	42
40	48
41	51
100	110

- With the exception of internships, arranged courses, applied lessons, and independent studies, the minimum acceptable "Optimum" course cap will be 25 unless restricted by special circumstances (e.g. equipment, safety).

- Enrollment caps below 25 will always be set at the maximum allowed by special circumstances.

- For online courses, the "Optimum" cap (with the exception of unusually writing intensive and speaking intensive courses) will be 35 for 1000-level and 2000-level courses and 30 for 3000-, 4000-, 3000/5000-, and 4000/5000-level courses (or at the Fall 2018 enrollment if higher).

- The "Doable" caps for online courses will follow the table above.

- For all academic levels, the "Optimum" course caps are minimums; faculty may freely propose higher caps whenever such caps better fit their curricular and/or pedagogical objectives.

- For courses that serve as prerequisites to other required courses, the cap may be over-ridden above the "Doable" limit with permission of the dean if judged necessary for timely progress of students needing the course.

- All "Optimum" and "Doable" caps may be exceeded at the instructor's discretion.

- Academic Affairs will raise caps above "Optimum" in response to demand (e.g. waitlist) or anticipated demand (e.g. an upcoming AAR). For courses with multiple sections, the cap for all sections will be raised to the "Doable" level once the collective level of enrollment indicates the need for making this adjustment.

- Whenever a course's cap is raised to "Doable," its cap for the following term in which it is scheduled will be returned to the "Optimum" level unless the faculty member teaching the course proposes a higher cap.

- When a course's cap has been raised to "Doable" for four consecutive terms in which it is offered, another section of the course shall be added.

- A section may be added at any time when the dean agrees that the need sufficiently exceeds the capacity of "Doable" caps.

- Multiple courses in a program reaching the "add a section" level will be considered strong supporting evidence for adding a full-time faculty line.

Process:
- Faculty members will propose their course caps through their department chair, noting any equipment limitations or special consideration that should be taken into account (i.e. this is the point at which requests for exceptions to the minimum "Optimum" cap should be made).

- The chair shall review all faculty proposals to determine whether they are consistent with departmental practice and make whatever adjustments are appropriate. The chair will then forward all proposed course caps to the dean as part of the draft schedule.

- The dean will approve or adjust course caps according to the guidelines presented above.

- Over the course of registration, Academic Affairs will notify the faculty member, department chair, and bookstore whenever enrollment signals that a course's cap should be raised to the "Doable" level.

- Whenever enrollments are restricted by equipment and/or facilities, the Provost will seek to add equipment and/or facilities to make increases to caps possible within whatever safety requirements apply.

Implementation Timeline:
The protocols above will be implemented incrementally in the following manner over the 2019-20 academic year:

- For Fall 2019, caps will remain at their Fall 2018 levels and will be increased to "Doable" levels in response to need or anticipated need at the percentages/numbers appropriate to their "Optimum" level and delivery method (with any cap below 25 increased by the percentage for 25). The only exceptions will be for equipment and safety.

- During the Fall 2019 semester, the joint Academic Deans' Council/Faculty workgroup (unless faculty prefer responding to an administrative draft) will develop and submit to the Provost its writing intensive and speaking intensive criteria and protocols for assigning rooms when there are not enough at a given capacity to accommodate need.

- For the Spring 2020 semester, caps will be adjusted to the levels called for in this document.

*Definitions:
"Optimum Cap" = The cap (subject to the parameters established above) believed to foster the best possible learning and pedagogical environment.

"Doable Cap" = The temporarily increased cap that, though not preferred, will nonetheless still provide an effective learning environment and not require fundamental changes in pedagogical strategy.