

CONSIDERATION OF CLASS CANCELLATION BOARD POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

I. INTRODUCTION

The District has been carefully considering its Board Policy and Administrative procedures that specify the criteria for making class cancellation decisions. The current permanent policy provides the guideline (based on minimum class size) to cancel classes with fewer than 20 students. It also requires the District to be efficient and it provides some guidance for flexibility. In addition, each of the campuses has created student-centered class cancellation guidance documents to support the flexibility of the current policy.

After working with the governance processes of the District, including the District Participatory Governance Council (DPGC) and District Academic Senate (DAS) in particular, a revised Board Policy and associated Administrative Procedure have been recommended to the Chancellor. In turn, the Chancellor is recommending the adoption of the revised Board Policy and is presenting the drafted Administrative Procedure (see Appendix A) to the Board for consideration and feedback before making a final decision.

II. BACKGROUND

The SMCCCD has a current [Board Policy 6.04](#) on Minimum Class Size Guidelines that reads as follows:

1. “The District's Colleges will organize classes in as *efficient* a manner as possible consistent with good instructional practices and the needs of students.
2. Classes with fewer than twenty (20) students will normally be cancelled or merged with another section.
3. Certain classes with enrollments of twenty (20) or fewer, for example required sequential courses, single sessions required for a major, and classes in facilities which will not accommodate twenty (20) students, will be carefully reviewed in consultation with discipline faculty and, if offered, will be balanced against large classes.”

[Emphasis added.]

This Board Policy has been in place since at least September of 2014. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the District and the AFT entered into an MOU for the Fall 2021 semester that officially lowered the minimum class size for class cancellations to 10 students. This MOU language was then continued in a Spring 2022 MOU:

“Article 5.S.2: Classes that achieve an enrollment of at least 10 students will not be cancelled...”

Following the expiration of the Spring 2022 MOU, the then Chancellor issued an executive order extending the minimum class size of 10 students through the Fall 2022 semester in order to allow for study and discussion of the issue with the Board as part of continued management of the COVID-19 global pandemic. At its regular meeting on September 8, 2022, the Chancellor brought a discussion item to the Board regarding Board Policy 6.04. At that meeting, the Board requested information to inform a discussion about minimum class sizes guidelines codified in this Board Policy, and how a potential change to that policy would

impact class cancellations. A detailed report was provided to the Board at its regular meeting on November 30, 2022 that included data on course cancellation trends, the estimated cost of those canceled courses, and student re-enrollment patterns. After discussion with the Board, it was agreed that the Chancellor would extend the executive order to maintain the minimum class size guidelines for class cancellations at ten (10) students through the Spring 2023 semester, and that the District Participatory Governance Council (DPGC) would bring a recommendation to the Chancellor on possible revisions to BP 6.04 in the Spring.

On February 28, 2023, Governor Newsom ended the COVID-19 State of Emergency for the state of California. Upon the sunset of this order, all temporary suspensions or modifications of Board Policy also came to an end, including the temporary adjustment of minimum class size. As such, the Interim Chancellor no longer had the sole authority to modify BP 6.04, and the policy as it was adopted was in effect. Subsequently, at the regular meeting of the Board on May 24, 2023, a recommendation was brought by the Interim Chancellor to the Board on suggested revisions to BP 6.04, incorporating some, but not all, of the recommendations from DPGC. Importantly, this recommendation maintained the minimum class size guideline at twenty (20) students. After hearing from constituents and discussion with the Board, staff was directed to provide additional time and information for analysis and discussion at a future study session of the Board.

At its Study Session on November 8, 2023, the Board of Trustees received a report and engaged in a discussion of different concepts that could impact decision-making on class cancellations and invited our constituent groups to be a part of the discussion with the Board of Trustees. Following the Board Study Session, the District formed a Class Cancellations and Course Maximums work group to revise the existing Board Policy 6.04 – Minimum Class Size, and to develop a draft Administrative Procedure to guide the process of class cancellations. At its April 8, 2024 meeting, DPGC requested that the Administrative Procedure be completed prior to making a recommendation of the revised draft board policy to the Chancellor. The draft AP includes specifics for the timeline and criteria for class cancellation decisions that include an approach that incorporates consideration of achieving a percentage of course maximum enrollment limits at specified points in time prior to the start of a class. It also includes requirements for communication to faculty and students impacted by class cancellations, and contractual considerations. The Board of Trustees received an update on this work at its April 24, 2024 regular meeting.

The work group concluded its work on May 3, 2024. A revised BP 6.04 had been provided to DPGC, where it was reviewed and discussed at three successive meetings during the Spring semester. The revised board policy includes a title change to focus the intent of the policy on Guidelines for Class Cancellation, as opposed to Course Minimums. This change is intentional and reflects the removal of any consideration of class size from the draft revised BP 6.04. Instead, the board policy now includes higher level guidelines that should be considered prior to cancelling classes, including a focus on minimizing impact on students and scheduling in a fiscally responsible manner.

While the changes to the BP were generally supported, members of DPGC expressed reservations about specific aspects of the draft AP. Because the revised BP specifically references the AP for the timeline and parameters for class cancellations, members of DPGC were reluctant to recommend the BP to the Chancellor at the May 3, 2024 meeting. This resulted in fewer than the required 60% of members voting to

move the recommendation forward without reservations, as required for the DPGC (see [BP 2510](#)). As a result, the Board approved the continued temporary suspension of BP 6.04 through the Spring 2025 registration period to allow additional time for a recommendation to come forward by the deadline of November 20, 2024.

III. THE CURRENT RECOMMENDATION

At its meeting on November 4, 2024, DPGC voted to recommend a revised Board Policy (6.04; see Appendix A) to the Chancellor. This BP was largely unchanged from the one considered in April. However, importantly, an alternative associated Administrative Procedures (AP) was also considered, with general support for the AP expressed by DPGC (NOTE: DPGC under its current policy does not formally recommend APs; a change is being considered to that policy to allow for a formal recommendation of APs in addition to BPs). This AP proposes a new criteria and timeline for making class cancellation decisions. The most important change from existing policy would be to lower the threshold from an enrollment of 20 to 15 for classes with scheduled meeting times (i.e., in-person, hybrid, or synchronous online classes), while maintaining a threshold of 20 for online asynchronous classes. In addition to these criteria, a more detailed timeline of decision points and specification of faculty and student communications are also included in the AP (also see Appendix A).

To better understand the implications of the recommended change to the current BP and the draft AP, data and information are presented below that focus on historical trends and potential financial impacts.

IV. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As outlined in the recommended revised BP, there are several factors that are considered prior to cancelling any section, regardless of the enrollment. These factors address legitimate concerns, such as the needs of students for any particular section to complete their educational goals, supporting new and developing programs of study, and other higher order factors. However, ultimately there must be a financial consideration and this takes the form of setting a minimum class size to use as a general guideline, all other factors being equal.

FTES AND PRODUCTIVITY

There is a mathematical relationship between enrollment, FTES, Productivity, and financial cost to offer a schedule of classes. A refresher on the calculation of Productivity is included in Appendix B. The production of FTES is directly related to enrollment, and for Districts not community supported, the basis for apportionment funding from the state of California. Although the SMCCCD does not receive apportionment, the production of FTES has a cost that varies in relation to the Productivity used to produce it. That is, the same amount of FTES can be produced using more or fewer class section depending on the enrollment in each of those sections. As shown below, FTES in the District for 2023-24 has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, exceeding 15,000. This is a useful benchmark to then examine the cost of producing that FTES given different levels of Productivity and ultimately enrollment.

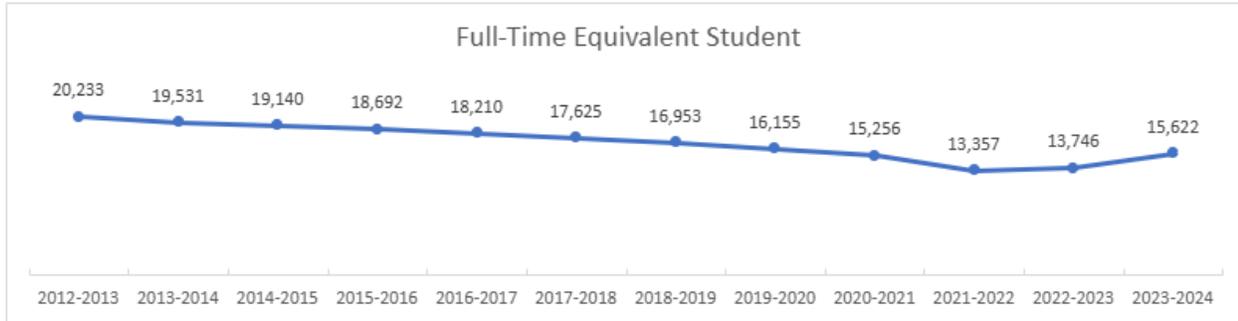


Figure 1

As shown below, the average class size across the District has varied from year to year in line with fluctuations in FTES. Recent increases in enrollment are reflected in increased FTES, Average Class Size, and Productivity in the most recently completed 2023-24 academic year.

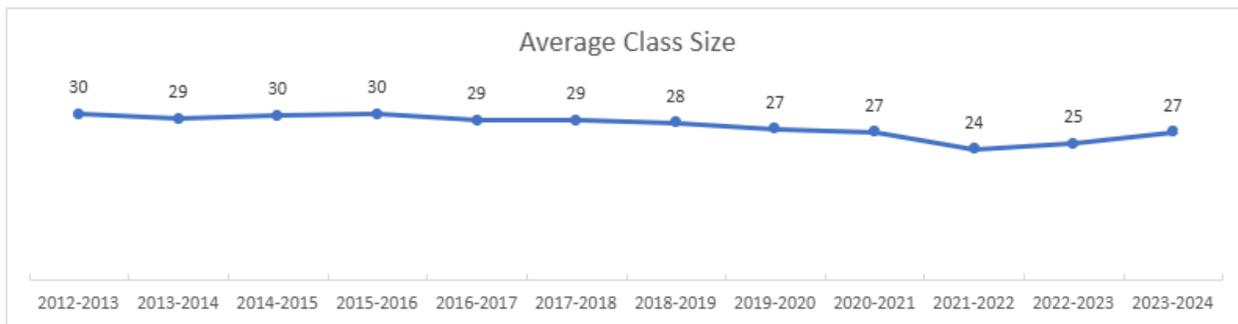


Figure 2

Additionally, the Productivity achieved (see chart below) while generating FTES also tracks with average class size fluctuations. We will now examine the most recently completed academic year 2023-24 in greater detail.

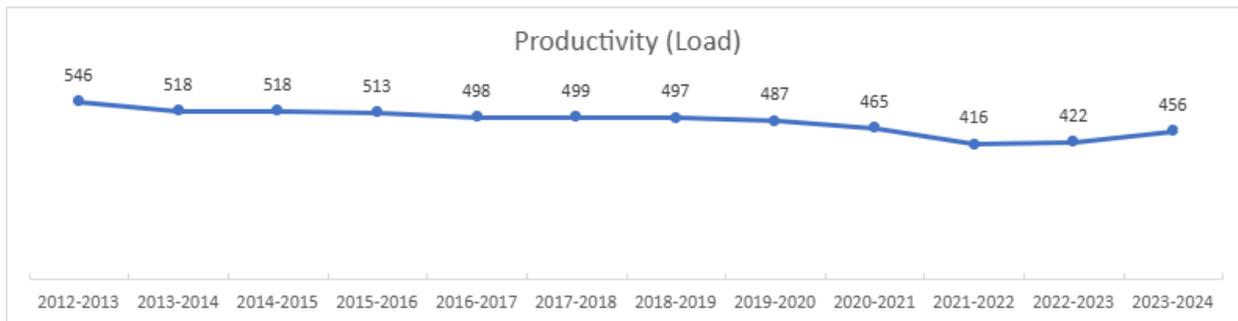


Figure 3

IV.B ENROLLMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND FISCAL IMPACT

There is a direct relationship between class size, productivity, and the fiscal impact on the colleges and the District. Table 1 below shows an example of what it would cost to produce a constant amount of FTES (15,000), with a constant number of full-time faculty (365 FTE), but a variable level of Productivity due to class sizes, and as a result a variable amount of Part-Time faculty. As shown, the differential in faculty cost between a Productivity of 525 and a Productivity of 450 is approximately \$7.5M.

| Average Class Size | FTES | Productivity | FT FTE | PT FTE | Faculty Cost |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------|--------------|
| 35 | 15,000 | 525 | 365 | 64 | \$6,737,641 |
| 32 | 15,000 | 480 | 365 | 104 | \$10,995,982 |
| 30 | 15,000 | 450 | 365 | 135 | \$14,308,024 |
| 25 | 15,000 | 375 | 365 | 235 | \$24,906,561 |
| 20 | 15,000 | 300 | 365 | 385 | \$40,804,366 |
| 15 | 15,000 | 225 | 365 | 635 | \$67,300,707 |

Table 1

Applying these calculations to the 2023-24 academic year (see Table 2 below), the District produced 15,622 FTES with a productivity of 456 and an average class size of 27. Looking specifically at the FTES and Productivity, *if* the District had achieved a productivity of 480 through higher enrollment in fewer sections, it would have saved approximately \$2.7M.

| Average Class Size | FTES | Productivity | FT FTE | PT FTE | Faculty Cost |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------|--------------|
| 32 | 15,622 | 480 | 365 | 123 | \$13,056,072 |
| 27 | 15,622 | 456 | 365 | 149 | \$15,779,268 |

Table 2

It is important to note that the threshold for class cancellations is not the only factor that influences the eventual Productivity of any given semester. It is but one of several important factors in strategic enrollment management. In the 2018-19 academic year the District generated 16,953 FTES with a Productivity of 497 and an Average Class Size of 28. This was done under the existing Board Policy that sets 20 as the minimum enrollment number for a class to not be canceled. However, in that same academic year, 31% of sections were offered with enrollment below 20 students (as shown in Figure 5 below). This was balanced by a significant number of sections with enrollments above 30 students.

Contrasting 2018-19 with 2023-24, we see a similar trend in the proportion of sections offered with enrollments below 20 and above 30, but a large difference in the absolute number of classes with lower and higher enrollments, contributing to the lower Productivity. This was done under the suspended Board Policy, setting the threshold of 10 as the enrollment needed. This highlights that the exceptions that are outlined in the revised Board Policy are applied regardless of the minimum class size threshold, but ultimately the lower the threshold is set the greater the possibility that more low enrolled sections will be offered.

PERCENTAGE AND NUMBER OF COURSES BY CLASS SIZE, 2023-24

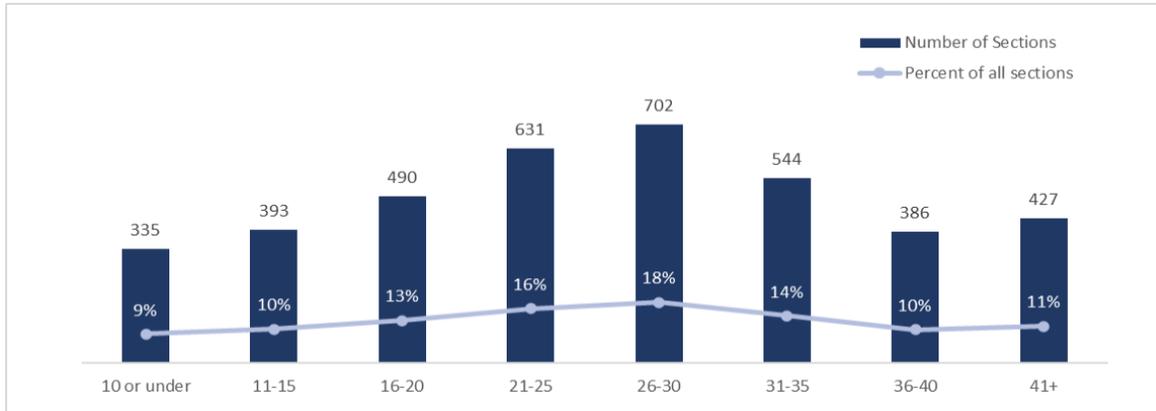


Figure 4 - Number and percent of sections by distribution of class size, 2023-24 Note: All sections include face-to-face, fully online, and hybrid modality

PERCENTAGE AND NUMBER OF COURSES BY CLASS SIZE, 2018-19

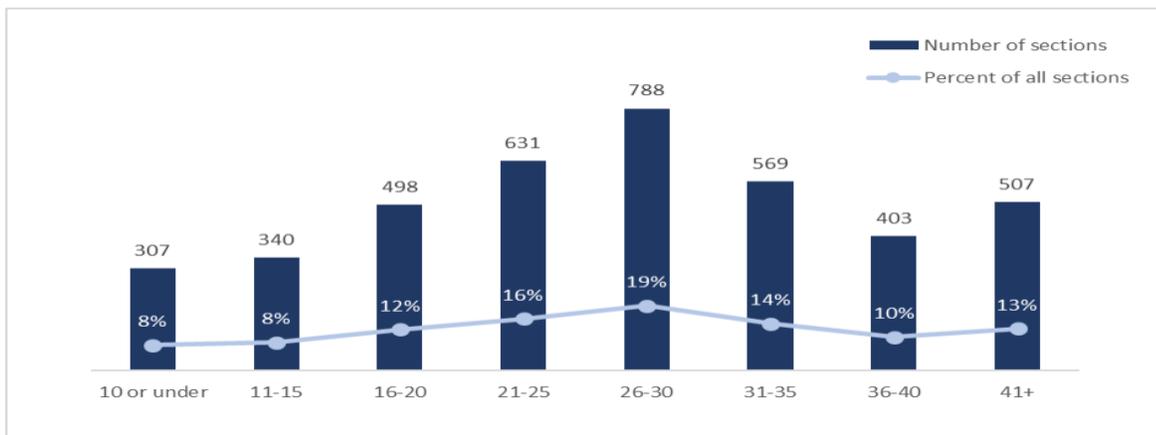


Figure 5 - Number and percent of sections by distribution of class size, 2018-19. Note: All sections include face-to-face, fully online, and hybrid modality.

V. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Setting section enrollment minimums to guide class cancellations is a standard practice at other community college districts in the CCC system. For example, the Peralta CCD, a four-college district in the East Bay, sets a minimum class size of 20 for vocational/technical classes and 25 for all others to guide cancellation, with similar exceptions made for classes that are needed to complete certificates or degrees, sequential courses, etc. Additionally, they allocate a set number of full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF) to each college each semester that limits the size of the schedule that is produced. However, Peralta CCD is a revenue-limit district that depends on state apportionment.

West Valley Mission CCD, a two-college community funded district, sets an informal minimum class size of 16 to guide cancellation decisions. The College of Marin, a single college district, sets a minimum class size of, “no less than fifteen (15) enrollees while College of Marin maintains its status as a Basic Aid District.” Similar to the SMCCCD, the Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) and Foothill-DeAnza District set a class minimum of 20, with standard exceptions made (see Table 3 below).

| District | Class Cancellation Guideline | Community Funded (Y/N) |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| College of Marin | 15 | Y |
| Contra Costa CCD | 20 | N |
| Foothill-DeAnza CCD | 20 | N |
| Peralta CCD | 20 vocational/25 all others | N |
| West Valley-Mission CCD | 16 | Y |

Table 3

VI. CONCLUSION

Existing Board Policy 6.04 provides a guideline (based on minimum class size) to cancel classes with fewer than 20 students. It also requires the District to be efficient and it provides some guidance for flexibility. In addition, each of the campuses has created student-centered class cancellation guidance documents to support the flexibility of the current policy.

After working with the governance processes of the District, a revised Board Policy 6.04 and associated Administrative Procedure 6.04.1 have been recommended to the Chancellor. In turn, the Chancellor is recommending the adoption of the revised Board Policy and is presenting the draft Administrative Procedure to the Board for consideration and feedback before making a final decision.

The decision to cancel a course section is not a simple one. Deans take into account several factors outlined in the recommended Board Policy before doing so. Prior to releasing a schedule of courses for a semester, historical trends and other relevant information is considered before offering a course section. All of these factors and efforts combined are known as Strategic Enrollment Management. However, ultimately, offering course sections comes with a real financial cost. Inefficiency in course scheduling that results in lowered Productivity will cost significantly more to serve the same number of students as could have been served with fewer sections, all things being equal.

Setting a minimum enrollment threshold provides a guideline for Deans, faculty, and students to use when making decisions. The higher the threshold, the more likely there will be greater Productivity and efficiency, resulting in lowered costs. However, this has to be balanced with considerations included in the Board Policy, but also other factors such as encouraging in-person classes to be scheduled on the campuses of the colleges to maintain a vibrant student and campus life. As such, the Board is asked to carefully consider and weigh all of the information presented and to provide their opinions and guidance to staff so that a final decision can be made and communicated.

CONTACT

For questions related to this report, please contact Dr. Aaron McVean, Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Planning, mcveana@smccd.edu.

APPENDIX A – BP 6.04 AND AP 6.04.1

Subject: BP 6.04 Guidelines for Class Cancellation

Review Date: 9/14; 6/XX

1. The District's Colleges use student-centered scheduling to offer class sections in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner consistent with best instructional practices and the needs of students.
2. The District's Colleges work to minimize the impact of class cancellations on students' progress toward their educational goals to the greatest extent possible in accordance with this Board Policy and associated Administrative Procedure.
3. Intentional consideration will be given to courses emphasizing and supporting anti-racism, equity, and social justice;
4. Before cancelling classes, the Colleges and their Deans, in consultation with faculty, consider factors including but not limited to:
 - a. The impact on student degree and certificate completion;
 - b. Degree and certificate requirements and required core and selective courses;
 - c. Current and historical enrollment patterns;
 - d. The availability of the same course or other courses in the same modality that fulfill the same certificate, degree, or graduation requirement at one of the colleges within the District.
 - e. The availability of the same course or other courses in the online modality that fulfill the same certificate, degree, or graduation requirement at one of the colleges within the District;
 - f. Needs of the students within a program;
 - g. Student progress through course sequences;
 - h. New and experimental courses and/or modalities;
 - i. Regional workforce needs;
 - j. Faculty contractual obligations;
 - k. District or College strategic enrollment priorities.
5. Classes are cancelled following criteria specified in AP 6.04.1 which includes guidance for the Colleges on class cancellation.

Subject: AP 6.04.1 Guidelines for Class Cancellation

In consideration of Board Policy 6.04, the procedures for class cancellations are as follows:

1. Timeline and Criteria for Class Cancellations

- a. Classes are cancelled in a timely manner that takes into consideration class enrollment at specific time periods, and the factors outlined in BP 6.04 (1, 3, 4);
- b. Both Deans and Faculty are expected to monitor enrollments for the classes they hold responsibility;
- c. Classes are not cancelled due to low enrollment more than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the start of the class.
- d. Classes with specific meeting times (i.e., classes using the modalities of face to face, hybrid, and online synchronous) may be cancelled as follows:
 - i. Face to face/hybrid/synchronous classes may be cancelled within ten (10) business days before the class starts if enrollment is fewer than six (6) students.
 - ii. Face to face/hybrid/synchronous classes may be cancelled within five (5) business days before the class starts if enrollment is fewer than ten (10) students.
 - iii. Face to face/hybrid/synchronous classes may be cancelled within two (2) business days before the class starts if enrollment is fewer than fifteen (15) students.
- e. Asynchronous classes may be cancelled as follows:
 - i. An asynchronous class may be cancelled within ten (10) business days before the class starts if enrollment is fewer than nine (9) students.
 - ii. An asynchronous class may be cancelled within five (5) business days before the class starts if enrollment is fewer than fourteen (14) students.
 - iii. An asynchronous class may be cancelled within two (2) business days before the class starts if enrollment is fewer than twenty (20) students.

| Timeline | Course Enrollment | |
|----------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Face to Face/Hybrid/Synchronous | Online Asynchronous |
| 10 Days | 6 | 9 |
| 5 Days | 10 | 14 |
| 2 Days | 15 | 20 |

Table 1

- f. Classes shall not be canceled due to low enrollment after the first week of instruction without the consent of the instructor;
 - g. Deans may allow time for enrollment to increase up to the first class session, per their discretion, and in collaboration with faculty. If a class is cancelled after the first class session, faculty will receive compensation at the appropriate rate for the hours of instruction as required by the collective bargaining agreement;
 - h. Classes may be canceled with the consent of the instructor at any time;
2. Communication of Class Cancellations
- a. Communication to Faculty
 - i. Faculty are notified of low-enrolled classes as early as possible, but at least three weeks prior to the start of class and collaborate to identify strategies to increase enrollment;
 - ii. The Vice President of Instruction works with instructional deans to report low enrolled classes to counseling;
 - iii. Faculty will be contacted at least five days before the first cancellation decision point with a firm timeline on allowing the class to run or cancel;
 - iv. Scheduled classes shall be canceled only after communication by the appropriate administrator/designee with faculty via email, telephone and/or in person that their classes will be cancelled;
 - b. Communication to Students
 - i. When a decision is made to cancel a class, the Dean will contact students registered in the class via email, text message, and/or phone call. This communication shall include:
 - 1. Subject code, number, and title of the course
 - 2. Day and time of course
 - 3. Reason the course was cancelled
 - 4. When possible, alternative courses that are as similar to possible (i.e., modality, time slot, GE area, etc.) will be suggested.
3. Contractual Considerations
- a. Following cancellation of a class, administrators work with faculty to adjust the teaching assignment in compliance with the collective bargaining agreement, as appropriate;

- b. If a class is cancelled after the first class session, faculty will receive compensation at the appropriate rate for the hours of instruction as required by the collective bargaining agreement.

APPENDIX B - PRIMER ON CALCULATING FTES AND PRODUCTIVITY (LOAD)

For the majority of California community colleges, FTES determines over 90% of the funding that they receive. As such, the production of FTES commands the attention of everyone from administrators to faculty. The most basic calculation of FTES, and the relation to students and weekly contact hours (units) is as follows:

$$1 \text{ FTES} = 1 \text{ student} \times 15 \text{ hours/week} \times 2 \text{ semesters of } 17.5 \text{ weeks} = 525 \text{ contact hours}$$

$$\text{Class meets } 3 \text{ hours/week} \times 30 \text{ students enrolled on Census Day} \times \text{TLM} = 17.5 \text{ then FTES} = (3 \times 30 \times 17.5) / 525 = 3.00$$

It is from this calculation that the concept of Productivity (or Load) is derived. Productivity or Load refer to measures of efficiency in the scheduling and delivery of sections, and the enrollment per section, as it relates to the production of FTES. For colleges on traditional calendars (i.e., 18 week semesters) the overall efficiency target historically is:

$$\text{Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH)} \div \text{Full Time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF)} = 525$$

So, as an example using a 3-unit class that meets 3 hours per week (i.e., has 3 weekly contact hours) would result in the follow Productivity (Load):

$$\text{WSCH} = 35 \text{ students} \times 3 \text{ hours} = 105$$

$$\text{FTEF} = .20 \text{ (3 units/15 units)}$$

$$\text{And so: } 105 / .20 = \mathbf{525 \text{ Productivity}}$$

| Enrollment | Weekly Contact Hours (Units) | FTEF | Productivity (Load) |
|------------|---------------------------------|------|------------------------|
| 35 | 3 | .20 | 525 |
| 30 | 3 | .20 | 450 |
| 20 | 3 | .20 | 300 |
| 10 | 3 | .20 | 150 |

Table 4

An in-depth discussion of the calculation and considerations of Productivity (Load) can be found in the manual [Understanding and Calculating FTES and Efficiency \(2019\)](#) published by the CCCCO and IEPI. As shown in Figure 8 below, there has been a steady decline in the efficiency of section offerings over the past decade, as measured by Productivity (Load).