Title of SEM Project: Transparency in Scheduling
College/District: College of San Mateo
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Fast Facts
Fall 2019 Headcount: 7,992
Fall 2019 FTES: 3,225.89
Fall 2018 FTEF: 386.3
Location: San Mateo, CA
Structure: Multicounty district

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE
To promote student success, we have begun to modify scheduling practices to more explicitly address the needs of disproportionally impacted students. In addition, with the development of guided pathways, we will soon be able to use student pathway plans to more directly guide course offerings. Historically, our schedules have been developed primarily within instructional divisions with informal conversations across divisions and with student services and cohorted learning community programs. We feel that a more comprehensive and transparent process would help bring together the larger group that will now be involved in schedule development.

One goal for our SEM project is to create a scheduling resource guidebook that captures the processes and policies that drive clear student-centered scheduling. The guidebook serves to establish an overall scheduling practice that is consistent across the college and make this practice transparent. Clearly stating the guiding principles, data, participants, and timeline for schedule development will help us develop student-centered schedules and allow us to be resilient in face of external disturbances.

PROCESS & PROCEDURES
The SEM team consisted of faculty who serve in various leadership roles and across disciplines, classified staff in student services, and instructional administrators. Throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, this team met twice a month to create and develop the project. Initial work included the development of two surveys: one to capture student response to the current class offerings and schedule and the second to capture faculty involvement in the scheduling process. Throughout Spring 2020, our team analyzed data, developed the draft scheduling resource guidebook, and presented our initial findings to participatory governance committees.

OUTCOMES & EFFECTIVENESS
The draft scheduling resource guidebook will be piloted during the 2020-21 academic year. This will serve as a reality check to see whether the guidebook captures established practice. More importantly, we will assess whether the process outlined in the guidebook helps to foster communication and leads to the development of a more student-centered schedule. We will integrate feedback throughout the academic year, with the goal of presenting a final version of the guidebook to participatory governance committees for institutional adoption in late Spring 2021.
BENEFITS
The SEM Project helped us capture our current scheduling practices. The student survey provided a partial measure of how well the current schedule meets current student needs (as they existed pre-covid). The faculty survey captured the range of faculty involvement in schedule development and set the stage for improved communication. Explicitly showing schedule development through a diagram highlights the many steps involved and makes clear the internal and external factors that drive the development and modification of the schedule. This project will continue to help us as we move toward a more student-centered approach to schedule development. The scheduling resource guidebook is part of a broader conversation about the use of data, our support of cohorted programs, and the implementation of Guided Pathways.

LESSONS LEARNED
Our SEM team started with a different project in mind, one that would immediately make more comprehensive use of data to drive and support student centered-scheduling. However, we learned that we did not have access to data that would let us know whether and how our schedule meets the needs of our students. In addition, we learned that we needed first to understand our current scheduling practices and make them clear to those directly involved and to the broader college community. Our effort then shifted to capture and codify the scheduling process.
As we shifted to fully online instruction in the middle of spring and continuing through summer and fall, we realized that there are many – often unanticipated – factors that influence the scheduling process – incorporating them explicitly into our schedule development diagram will be helpful.

NEXT STEPS
We will finalize our draft of the scheduling resource guidebook and present it to the Deans for feedback this summer. In the 2020-21 academic year we will pilot the use of guidebook to learn whether we have accurately captured current practice, established a process that can foster communication, and established the groundwork for student-centered schedule development. We will incorporate feedback into a final draft to share with Academic Senate and our Institutional Planning Committee for adoption and ongoing use.