

The Trinity University Registration Process

Registration Sequence

New students register in random order in August. In their next registration, First Years (FYs) who registered on the second day of the 2-day period in August are placed at the front of the FY student line. (Note: this is new for November 2008 registration.) In addition, prior credits earned by FYs, such as AP, are not taken into account in their first November registration; instead, a random order is used (this is also new for Nov. 2008). After their first semester, all Trinity undergraduates register according to seniority. They are placed in an electronic queue in order of the highest total credits completed to the lowest total credits (including AP, dual credit, and transfer credit). The entire queue is then divided into about 40 groups of approximately 60 students each that cycle through online registration one group at a time at one hour intervals. Nine groups register each day with the first starting at 8:30 a.m. and the last group cycling through at 4:30 p.m. No groups start outside of normal business hours. This goes on for one week until all students have registered. Students receive email instructions on preparing for registration and how to confirm their registration date/time. Once a student's start time arrives they have access to register online or change their schedule from that point until the last day of registration. Registration lasts two weeks in November and April. Rarely is any student allowed to register out of sequence, and priority is not given to those receiving scholarships/financial aid or to student athletes. All students have another opportunity to register or adjust their schedule once again during online Add/Drop, which lasts one full week at the beginning of each semester. There is no established sequence for Add/Drop; it is open to all students the entire week.

Course Offerings and Course Availability

Trinity's academic department Chairs determine the schedule of classes each semester. In consultation with their faculty members, the Chairs decide which courses will be offered, how many sections will be offered, what times of the day the courses will be taught, and the number of seats ("caps") in each section. The Chairs then submit their department's class schedule proposals to the Office of Academic Affairs for approval – a process that takes place months in advance of registration. The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs reviews the proposed course offerings, department by department, coordinates with the Chairs if changes are deemed necessary, and then approves the final version of the class schedule. Afterward, the Office of the Registrar enters the approved class schedule to the online registration system. Any changes to the schedule must be approved by the department Chairs and the Office of Academic Affairs. In addition, Academic Affairs monitors enrollments during registration and tries to make appropriate adjustments in consultation with departmental chairs, such as cancelling classes with low enrollments and replacing them with high demand sections.

Controlling Enrollments

Department Chairs must balance the needs of their student majors, the needs of the University (to provide common curriculum courses), the needs of their department, faculty resources, faculty preferences, availability of physical space, etc. Needs and concerns vary from department to department, as do the various strategies for controlling enrollments in classes. Some departments limit registration of JRs and SRs in lower level courses in order to prevent upperclassmen from filling them, thus leaving no space for FYs and sophomores (SOs). FYs are desired and given preference in some departments to encourage more majors. Other departments have more majors and prospective majors than they can readily accommodate so upper level majors/minors are given priority. Some faculty members strive to create an ideal class environment composed of a blend of students from various class levels (i.e., a balance of SRs, JRs, SOs, and FYs). Others give priority to students who were on the waitlist the prior semester. Many departments strive to keep class caps low, in keeping with the "small class size" philosophy, but find this difficult to do in areas of high demand.

Some department Chairs manage their enrollments (or allow instructors to do this) by starting off with low caps during registration. This causes waitlists to form once the cap is exceeded. More seats may actually be available; however the class appears as closed or waitlisted when students try to register. Instructors then choose from the waitlists based on the criteria above. Permission may be granted to those students who present the most compelling case for needing the class. Some departments and instructors actively monitor their waitlists, initiating contact with students. Others simply allow the waitlist to be processed in first-come/first-served order. In most departments with high demand courses, instructors and department Chairs exercise a great degree of control over who gets into their classes.

Waitlists

Electronic waitlists were incorporated into online registration in 2005. They have, to a large extent, replaced the pencil and paper waitlists and “pink slips” (or closed class overrides) faculty previously used to regulate enrollment in classes. However, some faculty members, and some entire academic departments have opted not to use e-waitlists. Thus pink slips are still used by departments that use paper waitlists. Instructors can issue online permissions to register to any student on the e-waitlist, regardless of their rank or the number of students registered, or they can let waitlists process automatically in first-come/first-served order should a space become available due to a drop. Instructors or Chairs may also choose to re-rank their waitlists, giving preference to individual students, as described above. Once a student receives permission to register, which happens by email, they have until midnight the following day to register themselves online. If they do not, their permission expires and the next student on the waitlist gets an automatic permission notice if space is available. After the last day of registration in November and April, all registration activity and waitlist processing comes to an end. Waitlists from November registration are kept intact and are reactivated during add/drop in January. Waitlists left over after April registration are cleared prior to the start of the new school year.

Because there is a great deal of faculty and/or department Chair discretion involved, students need to get on waitlists and then make contact with instructors to express their interest in the class. They stand a good chance – better than 50/50 – of getting into at least one waitlisted class.

November 2007 registration period

- 1,417 students placed themselves on at least one e-waitlist
- 768 waitlisted students (54%) received permission to register in one or more classes, and did so. 186 permissions to register expired when students didn't accept the offer to enroll.
- 1,051 seats in waitlisted classes were filled from the waitlists

Note: some departments and faculty members don't use the e-waitlist system, so these numbers only tell part of the story. However, most departments do use them, so waitlisted course data are now available to department chairs and the Office of Academic Affairs as a tool for planning purposes.

Registration is a *Process*

With so many seats becoming available via waitlists during the second week of registration in November and April, and also during Add/Drop at the beginning of each semester, students need to look at registration as a step by step process. It is far from over in the first 10 minutes they sit down to register.

- 2,517 seats were added by 1,374 students during the Add/Drop week in August 2007
- 1,932 seats were added by 1,170 students during the Add/Drop week in January 2008
- It is common practice for upperclassmen to sign up for an extra class in November and April, then drop it during Add/Drop

The bottom line: students must not get discouraged if classes show up as closed or waitlisted when their initial registration time comes and goes. The best advice is to be patient and work through the process. Instructor involvement is inherent in the registration process at Trinity. Students are therefore encouraged to make contact with instructors and express their interest. They need to sign up on the waitlist and then pay close attention to their emails for permissions to register. Students are given clear instructions to this effect prior to each registration. If they are no longer interested, they need to drop themselves from waitlists out of courtesy to their classmates. Students should also check course availability online regularly during Add/Drop since openings may occur in classes not using e-waitlists (the printed class schedule indicates which classes do and don't use e-waitlists). Students should realize that they will gain priority in the registration sequence as they progress and earn seniority.

Add/Drop goes on for one week at the beginning of each semester. If students have not been able to get a full schedule together by the 3rd day of Add/Drop, they should consult with their academic advisor right away. Between the advisor, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Office of the Registrar, we will work together to find appropriate classes.

The Registrar's Office cannot create new sections, nor does it determine which classes are offered or when, but our staff is always on hand to assist and advise students. We're often able to suggest alternative courses, and we can provide a current list of open classes at any time. Our office is here to assist students, and we're happy to guide them through the process, giving tips and advice. If your student is having problems, they should not hesitate to contact the Office of the Registrar for help.