**Data and Documentation to Justify Maximum Course Enrollment/Course Caps**

This document is to outline a criteria-based rubric for identifying the suggested data and documentation to include in a proposal to justify the Maximum Course Enrollment/Course Caps housed within the curriculum course management system. The criteria are to be used to inform faculty and curriculum committee members on writing and reviewing justifications. **Note:** A proposal that includes a Recommended Maximum Course Enrollment/Course Cap and its justification must be submitted in accordance with the Curriculum Committee’s effective dates, curriculum deadlines, and Board approval process.

**The Process for establishing Course Caps**

The process has been established by the curriculum committee and supported by the Academic Senate on February 7, 2024 as approved in “[Curriculum Process for Class Caps](https://www.valleycollege.edu/about-sbvc/campus-committees/academic-senate/agendas-minutes/2024/02-07/curriculum_process_for_class_caps.pdf).”   
  
The curriculum committee is tasked with reviewing carefully all course proposals from discipline faculty to ensure that all appropriate factors have been included in making the decision and that all relevant data have been considered and documented (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 5, pp. 2).

**Definitions**

**1. Course Caps** are the maximums for student enrollment for all sections of a course as listed on the Curriculum Course Management System (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 20). Course Caps and Class Caps can be used interchangeably,

**2. Enrollment Maximums** are the total number of students that can enroll in a section of a course due to campus site, classroom size, or modality. Fill rates for individual sections of a course are to be determined by the maximum enrollment for a course, not the course cap, because the course cap may be higher than the classroom size allows. However, enrollment maximums must not ~~to~~ exceed course caps (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 20).

**Data and Documentation**

Appropriate documentation to support a proposal to change a course cap may include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Comparative research of caps for similar courses at other California community colleges (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21).
2. Requirements from a widely recognized professional or academic publication or organization (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21).
3. Standards published by national organizations including fire codes and safety standards where relevant (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 9, para. 3).
4. CTE courses and programs, such as nursing, have external demands from separate accreditations or advisory boards that must inform their course sizes (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 9, para. 4).
5. Course specific documentation, such as the Course Outline of Record, the course syllabus, assignment criteria, SLOs, and objectives (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21).
6. Local data on student success and student learning outcomes assessment may be useful in determining which classes require more individualized attention for students in order to help them succeed (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 9, para. 5).
7. College researchers (Division of Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness) may be able to help discipline faculty analyze various types of data on which decisions regarding enrollment caps can be based (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 9, para. 5).

**Criteria for the Modification of Course Caps**

Modifications to a course cap should be justified with the following criteria, and it is recommended that two or more criteria be considered in a proposal to modify a course cap. Under each criterion below, suggested examples are provided of the types of data that may be used to justify a modification to a course cap. Many of these reasons involve the amount of time and attention that a faculty member can and should dedicate to each individual student in order to facilitate the most effective learning. In addition, faculty members who propose a new course to the Curriculum Committee can opt to establish the course cap based on the course cap of a similar course(s) within the discipline or based on one or more of the suggested criteria below:

1. Health and Safety

* Supervision: Number of students who can be safely supervised by available faculty and/or staff within a classroom when the students are undertaking hazardous activities or working with hazardous equipment (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21).
* Fire Codes and OSHA Compliance: Faculty may justify course caps based on fire code limitations, room capacity restrictions, and safety regulations that impact student occupancy in labs and classrooms in connection with pedagogical concerns.
* Classes involving performance of activities and physical contact among students, where accidents, disruptions, or conflicts among the students may be more likely to arise require supervision for safety reasons (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 7, para.3).

2. Facility or Other Class Capacity Limitations

* Availability of seats, desks, or workstations (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)
* Availability of equipment or supplies (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)
* Availability of required or necessary teaching or lab assistants (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)

3. Course Modality

* The different proportion of in-class time for a lab course creates different demands and expectations for an instructor: the entirety of lab time typically involves direct, individualized student contact, and therefore enrollment numbers must allow the instructor sufficient opportunity to give each student the attention assumed within this course format. Furthermore, although the students are not expected to spend time completing work outside of class, faculty may still spend significant additional time evaluating the work done during the class period (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 7, para.1).
* Career Technical Education (CTE), physical activity, and performance courses carry demands similar to those of lab courses. Students need time on task to develop a given skill, and filling the class with too many students impedes the ability for students to gain that time on task under necessary guidance (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 7, para.2).
* Distance education courses present a unique set of issues in terms of determining appropriate class sizes concerning maintaining Regular and Substantive Interaction with each and every student and to mitigate the significant negative correlation seems to exist between increased class size and student learning (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 7, para.4).
* Course is designed for a special population of students (such as those for an Honors Program) who require a smaller class size to achieve the goals and intent of the course (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 29).

4. Instructional Delivery

* Nature of classroom activities (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)
* Nature of interaction between instructor and students (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)
* Use of group work, or group projects (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)
* Use of group discussions that contribute to student learning and the synergy of the class (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 3, para. 3).

5. Student Assessment

* Types and/or amount of individual assignments, projects, presentations, and/or papers to assess (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 8, para.2).
* Methods of student assessment, feedback, or evaluation (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 21)
* Course-level or Program-level Student Learning Outcomes (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 22)
* Course objectives in the COR (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 22)

6. Compliance Factors

* Standards outside of the college calling for specific student:teacher ratios. (Examples: nursing, police, fire tech, aviation) (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 30)

7. Use of Existing Course Cap for a similar course(s) within the discipline

* For new courses only—can not be used as one of the required criteria for modifying an existing course cap (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 22)
* New course should be comparable (i.e. objectives, topics and scope, assignment, assessment, and pedagogy) to other course(s) in the discipline (ASCCC, 2012, pg. 22)

**Administrative Considerations in Course Cap Modifications**

Pedagogical factors should drive course cap decisions, with safety and legal compliance as necessary constraints.

1. Factors That Should Not Primarily Determine Course Caps

These factors should not be the main justification for course cap modifications, as they do not directly impact instructional effectiveness:

* Administrative or union considerations (e.g., financial efficiency, workload agreements unrelated to pedagogy).
* Physical space or classroom size constraints (unless tied to safety concerns).
* Logistical limitations (e.g., scheduling conflicts, staffing availability, budget constraints).

*These fall under administrative oversight and should not drive curriculum decisions.*

2. Essential Compliance Factors

While not pedagogical, these factors must be followed to ensure safety and legal compliance:

* Fire codes and OSHA regulations (e.g., room capacity, hazardous material handling, lab safety).
* Legal requirements (e.g., ADA accessibility, Title 5 regulations, accreditation standards).

*These requirements must be met, but faculty-driven pedagogical concerns should remain central in course cap decisions.*

**Balancing Pedagogy, Safety, and Compliance**

Faculty must balance student learning opportunities with safety and legal compliance. While faculty determine appropriate course caps based on pedagogy, enforcement of regulations, including fire codes and space limits, remains the responsibility of administration. Thus, course caps must align with the legal and safety requirements, and stacked course enrollment should not exceed the maximum enrollment for a single course. Pedagogy should remain the guiding principle in curriculum committee decisions, but safety and legal compliance must also be prioritized.

**References**

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. (2012, Spring). *Setting course enrollment maximums: Process, roles, and principles*. ASCCC. https://www.asccc.org/papers/setting-course-enrollment-maximums-process-roles-and-principles

**Approved by SBVC Curriculum Committee on 3/3/2025**