Has our 12-Week Cycle contributed much to our credit enrollment?

Figure 1, below illustrates Fall enrollment trends since 2005, the last year before we introduced the 12-Week Cycle. While enrollment in our 15-Week Cycle has been declining, our 12-Week Cycle was steadily growing through Fall 2011; then it too declined in 2012.

*Figure 1*

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Enrollment is not shown for the 12-Week and Accelerated II Cycles of Fall 2013 because registration is still underway. As of September 12, 2013, with 7 days remaining for registration, our 12-Week Cycle had enrolled 178 FTE’s.
The 12-Week Cycle was introduced in Fall 2006 to compensate for declines in our 15-Week Cycle without simply extending registration and “forcing” late arrivals into classes that had already started. The intention was to provide a full range of high-demand courses (developmental in all levels, all subjects, together with required general education courses) that would serve new and returning students with courses that they needed on a timeframe that they could handle. (The 12-Week Cycle, of course, is 80 percent of the regular 15-Week Cycle, but 50 percent longer than our 8-week Accelerated cycles.) When it was introduced in 2006, our new 12-Week Cycle enrolled 110 FTE’s – nearly compensating completely for the loss of 113 in our 15-Week Cycle.

Since then, our 12-Week Cycle has grown substantially, reaching a maximum of 283 FTE’s in Fall 2011. This cycle suffered losses in 2012 along with our other cycles and fell to 198. This year, with 7 days of registration remaining, we currently have 178 FTE’s in this cycle.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate how Fall enrollment was distributed among our cycles in the first year the 12-Week Cycle was offered and in the year when the 12-Week Cycle achieved maximum enrollment (2011). By 2011, our 12-Week Cycle accounted for 12 percent of total credit enrollment.
It is likely that some of the shifting from the 15-Week courses to the 12-Week courses has been due to either student preferences for the slightly shorter cycle or to specific course offerings that were made available. Many seats in our 12-Week Cycle get filled well before our 15-Week Cycle begins, so the 12-Week Cycle can be in effect “robbing” from the 15-Week courses. On the other hand, if some students prefer the former cycle anyway, then we are serving them better by providing the choice.

In the best of all worlds, most of our 12-Week Cycle courses would be ready to offer and advertise on the day that our 15-Week Cycle begins. That way, new and returning students who arrive late in the registration process would be able to choose from a wider range of high demand courses, as defined above. As the only institution offering a full range of college courses beginning in mid-September, we would have a marketing edge over our sister institutions. More importantly, we would be able to provide late arrivals with the courses they need with a schedule that suits them.

The shortage of space resulting from moving all of our LSB classes has reduced, if not eliminated, our capacity to make any further adjustments this Fall. In the future, we might be able to provide an even greater range of high-demand courses in our 12-Week Cycle.