

MAKING ORIENTATION, ADVISEMENT AND SCHEDULING MORE PRODUCTIVE AND ENJOYABLE



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Debby Hill, M.Ed.
Assistant to the Provost for Operations



Freshmen and new students have a hard enough time as it is with new surroundings, new people and new expectations. Campus tours and maps can quickly help the directionally-challenged, but what about those students and parents with degree, course and career questions?

The food court and football field are important amenities, but students – and their parents – are paying for an education. An education they’d like to obtain as enjoyably, productively and efficiently as possible.

Debby Hill, M.Ed., Assistant to the Provost of Operations at The University of Southern Mississippi (Southern Miss,) has seen her fair share of wide-eyed parents and students in her 25 years of experience in higher education. The nervous joy of starting college can quickly turn to anxiety and stress if courses, sections, and schedules don’t sync up for students who want to get a fast start and graduate on time. Hill and her team have reduced much of that risk by adding College Scheduler to their orientation process.

“Students want and need guidance from their advisors, and then they want to be able to put that advice into action by getting the courses they need,” said Hill. “More time and focus is spent on advising now because course selection and scheduling is easier and faster with College Scheduler.”

Southern Miss has rebranded the planning tool as the Southern Miss Schedule Planner. Schedule Planner plugs directly into the PeopleSoft SIS at Southern Miss. The intuitive interface requires little, if any, training and it can be used immediately by faculty, professional staff, students and parents.



Progressive institutions like The University of Southern Mississippi and Mississippi College are saving students and advisors time and tedious scheduling revisions with College Scheduler. And parents appreciate the enhancement, too.



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Ginger Robbins
Registrar



The handouts that Southern Miss provides during orientation describe the process in simple, playful terms: “Easy as 1 – 2 – 3: Add courses; Add breaks; Generate schedules.”

“One of the biggest advantages we’ve seen with Schedule Planner is the higher quality interactions between students and advisors,” said Hill. “Advising is much less about figuring out schedules, and more about figuring out career paths and courses of study, as it should be.”

New student and parent orientation sessions at Southern Miss allow time for parents and students to work on schedules together. Southern Miss staffers lend help or answer questions as needed. The most enthusiastic reactions to Schedule Planner come from parents who still remember their own struggles during orientation and scheduling.

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College Scheduler Stands Test of Orientation – at Mississippi College

Ginger Robbins, Registrar at Mississippi College, describes with empathy the student experience during advisement and scheduling that she used to witness over the course of her 20 year career in higher education.

“It was stressful to watch,” said Robbins. “You’d see students and parents arrive very excited to start the year and then that excitement would turn to frustration as they would have to go through numerous iterations of advisement and scheduling sessions. It was a less than pleasant experience for them.”

EASY SCHEDULING IN THREE SIMPLE STEPS USING COLLEGE SCHEDULER

- 1) Students and parents input desired courses to be scheduled.
- 2) Desired breaks are added in – free times for work, sports and downtime.
- 3) Pre-made, conflict-free schedules with open sections are pulled up instantly.

The old process was a bit more complicated. Students received guidance from their advisors. They would then go to the registrar’s computer lab to build a schedule and reserve classes, only to find out that one or more of the classes weren’t available, causing the whole process to start over again.

College Scheduler fixed that problem. Robbins and her colleagues installed it just before orientation and even decided to go live during a real orientation session with students and parents.

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