Workgroup Charge

“...study and make possible recommendations for section-size guidelines.”

“Section-size targets should be implemented in a manner that generates savings, yet continues to respect campus and program prerogatives to set course schedules, use physical classroom capacity, and maintain high-quality instruction.”
Finding the Balance
Most of the research addressing the link between class size and student performance in writing-intensive courses agrees that smaller classes increase student success, retention rates and satisfaction.

For college-level writing courses, the governing bodies and professional organizations of writing instructors* have established the following policy regarding class sizes:

- **No more than 20 students.** Ideally, classes should be limited to 15.

For college-level foreign language classes, the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages recommends:

- **Class sizes should be below 20 students.**

* National Council of Teachers of English, Conference on College Composition and Communication, Modern Languages Association, and Association of Departments of English
Negative effects of large class size on student learning occur because large classes reduce student engagement with the course instructor, with classmates, and with the subject matter.

Each semester, UNC System enrolls:

- more than 220,000 students on 16 campuses
- in more than 3,000 academic programs
- with over 30,000 sections
- taught by over 13,000 faculty
Each campus is unique:

- Financial Resources
- Physical Resources
- Human Resources
1. Specific section-size targets that cross disciplines and universities are potentially counterproductive.

2. Establishing campus-specific section-size minimums and well-established processes for approval and tracking of exceptions is considered best practice.

3. Institutions should continue to investigate novel pedagogies that enhance student learning outcomes in larger course settings.
Workgroup Findings: Policy Example

- Each campus must establish minimum section sizes by course type (e.g. UG lower-division, UG upper-division, Graduate lower-division, Graduate upper-division)
- Campus minimums should be reviewed and approved by Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Exceptions to campus minimum must be approved by the appropriate college dean each semester
- Annually, provosts of constituent institutions will collect data from colleges and report the proportion of sections that were below the minimum to Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Large Course Redesign

Courses to target:

- Gateway – critical path
- 300+ annual enrollment
- Large lecture or multi-section
- Multiple instructors
- >25-35% students receive D/F grades
- Limited faculty resources
- Passive learning

Structural changes:

- Flip the classroom
  - Leverage technology for content delivery before class
  - Face-to-face activities with instructor and other students during class
- Allow students to choose how they learn
- Provide students immediate feedback on assessment
Large Course Redesign

NC State redesigns have included:

- Precalculus Algebra and Trigonometry
- Engineering Statics
- Introduction to Statistics
- Calculus I
- Applied Differential Equations
- Physics for Engineers and Scientists
- Foundations of Graphics
- Concepts of Financial Reporting
- Microbiology
- World Architecture
Large Course Redesign

Impacts:

- A, B and C grades remain relatively consistent when comparing traditional to redesigned courses.
- Large course redesign appears to be most effective for marginal students.
- D and F grades and course withdrawals have been reduced by as much as 5-10% in the redesigned courses (percentage varies by discipline).
- Evidence suggests that students who successfully complete a redesigned course will also succeed in the next level course in a series.
Questions