

Northwest University's Student Magazine

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COMMENTARY: COMMUTERS STRESSING OVER CHAPEL CREDIT

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When the semester began, my commuter friends and I were discussing how we would possibly be able to fulfill all 35 chapel credits, recognizing that the weekday chapels alone would not be enough. Tension and stress grew as we tried to figure out how we would be able to find time for Life Groups and Pursuits in our already tightly scheduled lives in order to pass. From this conversation, I began to realize that it's unfair that every student is required to fulfill a minimum of 35 chapel credits per semester, specifically for commuter students.

Before I go any further, there is one opposition I would like to address. Some may believe that my views on decreasing the minimum chapel requirements for commuters stem from my own dislike of chapel, Life Groups and Pursuits and that therefore I am seeking an excuse to get out of it. That idea is completely, 100 percent false.

As a group who has chosen to attend a Christian college that requires us to commute, it should be assumed that we actually want and desire to participate in the Christian aspects of this university. Most have specifically chosen to attend this university because it provides spiritual vitality as well as academic excellence. The spiritual component of Northwest University is what sets it apart from any other university.

We believe that while spiritual life on campus should be required, commuters shouldn't be held up to the same standards as on-campus students. Fellow commuter Kristen Arciaga said, "We would all be far more enthusiastic about chapel if we were not stressed about trying to reach a standard of chapel credit that is hard to achieve when you do not live a 5-minute walk away from all the Life Groups." My goal is to illustrate how difficult it is for commuters to be involved on campus and to discuss possible solutions.

Although they make up a large portion of the student body, the needs of commuters are often overlooked in regards to the planning of student activities. Most commuters, aside from being students, often hold jobs or have other responsibilities. Outside of the weekday chapels, all other chapel credit opportunities are scheduled at inconvenient times for most commuters. Arciaga said, "Pursuits [and Life Groups] are too late and would require

most commuters to return to campus after work, or to take time off work in order to attend... Since we are not considered in these activities that we would have to attend in order to meet the minimum chapel requirement, we should not be held to the same standard as the on-campus students who are the target of these activities." Due to the late hours of most chapel credit opportunities, most commuters don't have the time, energy or even the gas money to be able to attend.

As commuters we struggle enough just to beat morning traffic, do our homework and go to work. We have hardly any time for social or spiritual activities. Larry Rogers, a commuter, described his life as a "juggling act" rather than a balance. Rogers said, "I have school from 9 AM-1:45 PM Monday through Friday. I also work 40 hours a week from 2:30 PM -11 PM. This schedule alone mitigates the possibility to come back to school and attend a Life Group. Additionally, doing homework, keeping the house clean, internships, and having a social life thwart the idea of 'balance.'"

While Rogers is only one example, he represents a large number of commuters who have similar lives. This is not to say on-campus students don't have busy schedules; however, on-campus students don't have to factor in time sitting in rush-hour traffic to just attend Pursuit or a Life Group.

I have argued that commuter students have more difficulty achieving chapel credit, but how should this be remedied? I have two solutions.

Solution 1: Limit the chapel credit requirement to the number of weekday chapels. By implementing this suggestion, commuters won't have to stress about how they are going to earn extra chapel credits. If they miss any weekday chapels, commuters will be obligated to make time to attend a Pursuit or a Life Group to earn the missing credit.

Solution 2: Northwest can provide more ways to earn chapel credit during normal and reasonable hours. As of a few weeks ago, there is a commuter Life Group that takes place Mondays 10 AM-11 AM in the Pecota Lounge. It would be beneficial to have more Life Groups and other chapel credit opportunities aimed toward the needs of commuters.

As a Christian community, we should strive to help people as much as possible. By lowering the standard chapel requirements for commuter students, commuters will be able to rest easy and have one less thing to be concerned about. And believe me, one less stress makes all the difference.