Why Does the Availability Sometimes Seem Wrong in Class Search

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This article applies to both MJC Class Search and Columbia Class Search.

Have you noticed sometimes that a class will list available spots, but yet have a waitlist. Why is that? What’s really going on?

Let’s take a look at CSPCOM-4-4252 as an example.

In the above example, we see a max capacity of 15 for the class, an availability of 9, and a waitlist with 7 students.

How can there be an availability when there is a growing waitlist?

What may appear to be an error is actually not. We’ll get back to that strange behavior in just a moment. First, let’s take a look at how Class Search is designed to work.

Class Search is designed to count down the available spots as students register for the class. Once a class is full, the waitlist will open and as students add to the waitlist those numbers go up. When that happens, the available number usually remains at zero. However, sometimes it does not.

Why is that? Time to get back to that strange behavior from earlier.

If a class is cross-listed with other classes, Class Search is designed to display the total number of available spots that exist across those other cross-listed sections.
Let's look back at our example. It just happens that CSPCOM-4-4252 is also cross listed with CSPCOM-4-4225 and CSPCOM-4-4271 which appear above and below our example class.

Notice that section 4225 has an availability of 8. Notice also that section 4271 has an availability of 1. Added together, we can better see where the availability of 9 in section 4252 comes from.

Why does Class Search do this?

Well, this is meant to be an indicator to students that they may be able to find a spot in a different section allowing them to take the class they want. However, this may not always be great news as the alternative sections may be on a day, at a time, or at a location that does not work for the student’s schedule.