A new advantage for students
Eight-week classes expected to increase student success

More than 3,500 students graduated from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) last year with degrees and certificates in high-demand fields such as health care, as well as information and engineering technology.

“That’s 3,500 people leaving here with credentials; 3,500 people joining the workforce; 3,500 people earning better and higher wages to support their families,” Dr. Jeff Rafn, president of NWTC, said. “Those are things of which to be pleased and proud.”

This fall NWTC is making a bold, strategic move that promises to help even more students master their courses, stay in college, and earn a credential. The College is starting to transition nearly all courses from 15 weeks to eight weeks in length.

Flexible learning is already a top priority at NWTC. The College offers online, blended, evening and weekend classes; and a few programs already offer eight-week or shorter classes. Moving a majority of classes to eight-week schedules clearly illustrates the College’s ever-increasing commitment to student success.

The new schedule is called the 8-Week Advantage because that is exactly what it is—an advantage for NWTC students. National data shows eight-week courses result in increased success and completion rates.

At NWTC, students who have taken eight-week or shorter courses have felt the benefits.

“I would rather have the eight-week classes versus the 15 weeks,” Nursing student Brittany Lamb, said. “There is a shorter light at the end of the tunnel. I was more successful in an eight-week class.”

With eight-week classes, students meet less frequently each week, but for longer periods of time. Lamb admits feeling nervous trying out an eight-week class. She said, though, the fast-paced program pushed her to go more in depth with the course material and she was able to focus better.

Under the new structure, each semester will have two eight-week sessions, as well as one eight-week session during the summer, for a total of five sessions every academic year.

For students Business Management students like Brian Dieck, the shorter blocks of class time mean increased flexibility for work and family life.

“Going forward, I can see myself scheduling two classes, then three classes – still nailing 15 credits or more a semester and then having the opportunity to work the 25 to 30 hours a week needed to cover all the bills and expenses that life comes across,” Dieck said.
The biggest difference, he added, is that the eight-week schedule essentially cuts his workload in half.

“It really does feel that way,” he said. “Because you’re not learning five subjects all at once.”

Students also seem to build stronger connections with their instructor and classmates in the eight-week classes. By taking longer classes in a shorter timeframe, a four-hour class held twice a week for eight weeks, students may feel more comfortable in their classes sooner than in the traditional 15-week course.

“Honestly, the camaraderie and the fellowship among students in (the eight-week) class was a lot better, simply because we had more time,” said Dieck. “The impact was being a little more comfortable in my own skin in class and being more comfortable raising my hand because I’m more comfortable with the people around me.”