

Faculty Forum on Workload Reform

April 15, 2009

Motivations for the workload reform project

- Develop an updated workload policy that serves goals stated in the Mercer University and CLA strategic plans.
- Adopt policies capable of accommodating new and changing responsibilities for faculty (e.g. advising for 4-year guarantee, faculty assistance in admissions and recruitment, faculty fundraising).
- Address negative trends in faculty job and workload satisfaction, particularly: (1) since 1997, CLA job satisfaction has decreased 24% to 62.6% (as opposed to 82-85% job satisfaction among full-time faculty nationwide); (2) since 1997, reported stress from workload increased from 61.4% of the CLA faculty to 69.3%; (3) in Spring 2008, 92% of the faculty reported that if they had to begin their careers again, they would return to academia, but only 54% said they would return to Mercer.
- Have in place rational workload and resource policies so that when new faculty resources become available, decisions will be made according to policy rather than on an ad hoc basis driven by self-interest.
- Reduce anxiety and confusion among faculty (particularly junior faculty), by revising the current workload policy so that expectations are clearly stated and reflect actual workload practices. Also revise contract letters (and perhaps tenure/promotion expectations) to match real workload practices rather than unattainable ideal workload balances.
- Existing official workload policies are a legacy of earlier workload demands; current demands on time both at work and at home have changed dramatically in recent years. For example, on average, 88.5% of married female faculty and 56.2% of married male faculty have spouses who work full-time. (The numbers jump to 91.8% and 71.4% for faculty whose spouses are employed in some capacity.)
- We don't seek workload *reduction* – that is not a goal of the project. Instead, we seek *workload re-allocation*, reducing the amount of time spent on some responsibilities (particularly teaching) so that more time of greater effectiveness may be spent on other academic priorities (particularly, though not exclusively, scholarship).

Avenues for reform

- *Curricular change.* One way to reform workload is to change the CLA curriculum. This may be done in a number of different ways (the “4 credit-hour” and “13%” proposals are two examples), but in order to achieve teaching reductions, the number of courses taught would have to be reduced in some way. On the assumption that no new resources will be made available (including additional money for adjuncts), course reductions will likely lead to increased class sizes and decreased number of courses offered, though other pedagogical innovations might mitigate these effects somewhat.
- *Policy change.* A second approach to workload reform is to develop a rational policy and standards for faculty workload. This may be achieved in a number of ways (the “15+X” and variants are some examples), but these policies might be implemented and yet not achieve significant improvement in teaching-load reduction. This approach would yield clear workload policies and would establish workload minimums, maximums and targets. Such policies would help clarify current expectations, and would also provide impartial means for allocating new faculty resources.

Brief description of workload proposals

“4 credit-hour”: Currently the “standard” CLA course is 3 credit-hours. The proposal calls for a shift to a 4 credit-hour standard. For a faculty member teaching 21 credit-hours over 6 or 7 courses, the teaching load would be reduced to 20 credit-hours over 5 courses. A reduction to 18 credit-hours for all faculty would require additional resources.

“13%”: Dale Moore has calculated that decreasing the CLA teaching assignment from 21 to 18 credit-hours without adding new faculty would require decreasing the total number of sections offered by about 13%. This plan calls for a careful examination of the CLA courses offered and perhaps curricular structure in order to find opportunities to improve instructional efficiency so that the decrease in course offerings does not negatively impact the pedagogical mission or quality of education in CLA. There are two primary models for improving efficiency:

1. Consider low-enrollment upper-division courses as a high educational priority. These courses would generally not be part of the 13% that are cut. The cuts would then take place by consolidating lower-division courses, thereby increasing enrollments in them.
2. Consider courses at all levels to have fairly equal priorities. Thus, it would be important for lower-division courses and upper-division courses to have similar investments in teaching time, and similar enrollments. This could be achieved by consolidating upper-division courses, thereby increasing enrollments in them. It could also be achieved by cutting some lower-division courses and directing students to take existing upper-division courses (increasing enrollments in those courses).

“15+X”: Currently the standard teaching load requirements are approximately:

Teaching: 21 credit-hours

Scholarship 3-6 credit hours equivalent

Service: 2-3 credit-hours equivalent

Teaching appointments are then “21-X”, in which the standard 21 credit-hour teaching obligation is reduced and the scholarship and/or service obligations are increased a proportionate amount.

This proposal recommends systematizing workload reductions, creating an “15+X” teaching load appointment, in which minimum workload requirements are specified by workload policy, and additional workload distributions are worked out at the departmental level and approved by the Dean. Each faculty member would submit a workload plan with proposed teaching, scholarship and service loads for the following year. The proposal submitted would fit this formula (though in the final policy, these numbers could be changed):

Responsibilities	Credit-hour equivalents
Teaching	15+X
Scholarship	3+Y
Service	3+Z
Total	27

1. Proposed values of X, Y, and Z would be justified by the faculty member in the proposal.
2. Each department would collect its faculty members’ proposals and put together a workload package for the department. The package would need to cover the minimum course offerings needed by the department, IDS contributions, and service to the college/university. The Dean may additionally have a “pool” of reductions that could be appealed for by the department. Departments may then adjust faculty workload proposals to cover these minimum needs, in some cases “rejecting” a faculty member’s proposal for reduced teaching load.
3. The Dean would approve each department’s workload plan and each faculty member’s personal workload allocation.

Faculty Poll on Directions in Workload Reform

(Also found online: <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/survey-intro.zgi?p=WEB22935936VUL>, this link can also be found on the wiki on workload reform. Details on all proposals can also be found on the wiki.)

Please send completed forms to: Creighton Rosental, Philosophy Department

1. How many sessions of the reading groups on workload reform did you attend? _____
2. Should we continue to develop new workload reforms for CLA? (If you answer "no," you may leave the remaining questions unanswered.) Circle one: YES/NO
3. Should workload reforms be developed in conjunction with broad-based curricular reforms? Circle one: YES/NO
4. Please evaluate the promise of each direction. (For each proposal below, circle a number between 1-5.)

Directions with highest promise

1 2 3 4

Directions not worth pursuing

5

"4 credit-hour": shift to 4 credit-hours for standard courses

1 2 3 4

5

"13%": adjust enrollment distribution and teaching efficiency to achieve a 13% reduction in sections offered

1 2 3 4

5

"15+x": faculty members, in coordination with their departments and the Dean, put together yearly workload plans based on a baseline expectation of service, scholarship, and teaching 15 credit-hours "plus" either more teaching, more service, and/or more scholarship.

1 2 3 4

5

Points-based variant on "15+x"

1 2 3 4

5

Non-quantitative version of "15+x"

1 2 3 4

5

Time bank variant on "15+x"

1 2 3 4

5

5. Please let us know what other suggestions you have for developing an acceptable workload policy: