

College of Arts and Sciences Workload Taskforce

General Document

Executive Summary

All advanced nations depend increasingly on three critical elements for advancing economic development. These elements include the production of new knowledge and discoveries, the education of broadly prepared college graduates, and a constantly replenishing pool of people with expert knowledge in specialized areas. In America, universities are primarily responsible for supplying all three of these elements.

The public and their legislators clearly have a right to know where their tax dollars go when they support an institution such as Illinois State University. However, to measure a college or university teacher's workload by simple course count would be like trying to measure college basketball players' efforts only by the time they spent playing on the court during an actual game or legislators' time commitment only by the time they spend in voting sessions. In each of these cases, much invisible work goes into the time spent in front of the public and those activities only scratch the surface of what is involved in each profession. According to recent national studies, for example, university professors work an average of 55 hours per week.

The average work week, then, consists of considerably more activities than the hours spent in front of the students. Faculty engage in **student-centered** work where they are responsible for creating and updating new courses, helping students with subject matter difficulties, and reading, responding and grading student exams and papers. Faculty engage in **disciplinary-centered** work where they are responsible for writing and publishing scholarly articles and books and conducting research to advance knowledge in the discipline. Faculty engage in **university-centered** work where they serve on university-wide committees such as the Academic Senate and where they deliver presentations to university-wide audiences on teaching. Likewise, faculty engage in **community-centered** work where they are often called upon to give presentations to business and school groups and provide advice to national, state, and local government officials.

In an increasingly competitive international economic environment, investment in education becomes an indispensable instrument to help maintain comparative advantage. The bottom line: quality education is important to states as they seek to attract, retain, and develop educated citizens and profitable businesses within their borders.

Committee Report

As a nation, we face a great many challenges that affect our ability to maintain a growing competitive economy while providing adequate opportunity and security for all our citizens. In order to face these difficult challenges, we have come to recognize that all advanced nations depend increasingly on three critical elements: the production of new knowledge and discoveries, the production of broadly educated citizens, and a constantly replenishing pool of people with expert knowledge. In America, universities are primarily responsible for supplying all three of these things.

The University definition of research rests on two fundamental criteria. Both reflect the role of research as a means helping to shape and extend "the conversation in which human beings forever seek to understand themselves." First, research must generate new knowledge. Second, a peer review process must be used so that experts in the field are responsible for gauging the significance of the new knowledge the research has generated. Both criteria speak to the important role that research must play in faculty work. A faculty member's command of his or her own discipline is measured by the extent to which the faculty member can contribute to the disciplinary conversation that is defining the field. Other participants in this disciplinary conversation, peer review panels, determine the significance of a faculty

member's research by gauging whether it should be a part of the discipline's effort to define itself continuously through the efforts of those working in the field. When faculty are creating new knowledge determined to be significant by a panel of peers, they are fulfilling a necessary part of their responsibility as professionals to shape the disciplines they profess, and in the process they are helping the university to fulfill its fundamental purposes.

There are always many people who are concerned about the roles of faculty and the influence of scholarship and service on their teaching responsibilities. What we must never lose sight of, however, is that the above three roles of faculty are inextricably linked. Precise demarcation between and among these activities is often difficult and sometimes impossible; in any case, all university activities of a faculty member must be considered as an integrated whole in the evaluation of faculty workload. In addition, it is important to recognize that an individual's workload must be assigned with the expectation that the faculty member will have the opportunity to meet the criteria for promotion and satisfactory peer review.

The public and their legislators have a right to know where their money goes when they support a public institution such as Illinois State University. When they hear, for example, that professors teach three courses a semester, they may at first think that all professors do is spend nine hours a week teaching in front of the class and then go home. However, to measure a college or university teacher's workload by simple course load count would be like trying to measure college basketball players' efforts only by the time they spent playing on the court during an actual game; or professional golfers' efforts only by the hours they spent in a tournament; or legislators' time commitment only by the time they spent in voting sessions; or actors' work only by the time spent during paid performances. In each of these cases, much invisible work goes into the time spent in front of the public: the everyday drill and practice of the basketball player; the countless buckets of balls hit by the golfer; the endless reading of proposed legislation and meetings with constituents by the legislator; the months of line memorization and rehearsals by the actor--and those activities only scratch the surface of what is involved in each profession.

According to recent national studies, the faculty at American universities work on average between 49 and 55 hours per week.¹ This work includes, but is not limited to, time spent in the classroom. Some of the typical duties of faculty are delineated below.

Student-Centered Work

- Delivering lectures
- Organizing and facilitating seminars
- Planning and supervising student laboratory work
- Updating a course to incorporate new research findings
- Creating a new course
- Helping students with subject matter in person, by e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and phone
- Supervising students on independent or honors projects
- Working with colleagues to update or otherwise modify the curriculum
- Counseling students about personal problems, learning difficulties, etc.
- Writing letters of recommendation for jobs or advanced study
- Sponsoring student conferences and journals
- Preparing for each class session
- Reading, responding to, assessing, and grading student drafts or papers
- Advising graduate students and reading proposals, drafts of theses, and dissertations
- Serving as faculty advisors to student organizations or clubs (e.g. the Math Club, or the Model United Nations)

Disciplinary-Centered Work

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2001*. NCES 2001-072, Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001. National Center for Education Statistics, *National Study of Post-Secondary Faculty*. NSOPF, Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999.

- Generating new scholarship
- Publishing the results of research or other creative activity
- Conducting basic research
- Serving on search committee for new hires
- Evaluating colleague's work for tenure and promotion
- Participating in departmental evaluations
- Writing recommendations for colleagues for grants and awards
- Serving on university committees that write policies for academic programs
- Applying for grants
- Delivering scholarly presentations at meetings
- Editing professional journals
- Keeping up on current issues and controversies in the field by scanning and/or participating in postings on professional listserves
- Keeping up on current issues and controversies in the field by reading or scanning professional journals
- Organizing and attending professional conferences
- Serving as an officer or member of national and international scholarly societies

University-Centered Work

- Serving on committees as part of the University's system of shared governance (e.g. Academic Senate, University Curriculum Committee)
- Serving on University committees mandated by the state or federal government (e.g. Institutional Review Board, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee)
- Giving presentations in department teaching workshops, colloquia, and symposiums (and preparing for them)
- Giving presentations at events sponsored by the Center for Advancement of Teaching (and preparing for them)
- Attending presentations by national figures, sponsored by our department or university

Community-Centered Work

- Giving a presentation to a business or school group
- Providing professional advice to local, state or national government
- Answering phone calls from citizens and offering professional expertise
- Helping to inform the public by talking to the media
- Serving on the boards of local, state or national groups
- Working with teachers in pre-K to 12th grade schools

Conclusion

All advanced nations rely increasingly on universities to provide them with the intellectual infrastructure necessary for enhanced economic development. Faculty members in America's public universities play a multi-faceted role in support of developing our nation's competitive advantage. Faculty work with students in classrooms, lecture halls, and laboratories to produce a broadly educated citizenry. They also mentor graduate students to maintain and develop our nation's supply of highly trained experts in specialized fields. The faculty at America's colleges and universities are also engaged in original research to enhance our understanding of the human condition and of the universe around us. Finally, in addition to serving as an invaluable source of knowledge and experience to the general community, faculty members are also responsible for much of the work necessary to administer our nation's institutions of higher education.

In an increasingly competitive international economic environment, investment in education becomes an indispensable instrument to help maintain a competitive advantage. Given the multi-faceted and central role they play in the life of the university, America's university faculty are also an invaluable national resource.