Guidance on Equity-Minded Faculty Workload

Office of Faculty Affairs
2021
INTRODUCTION

The Commission for the Next Generation of Faculty recommended that Georgia State implement regularly scheduled climate surveys. Consequently, we administered the COACHE faculty satisfaction survey in early 2020. One of the nine subject areas of the survey is the nature of faculty work related to teaching, service, and research.

Overall, faculty were not satisfied with the balance between teaching, research, and service. Faculty called for improvement in the time spent on research and administrative tasks. All faculty groups called for fewer service commitments, more even distribution of service, and appropriate recognition for service. Our task is to ensure that the individual workloads of faculty are appropriate and balanced, so that, together, we can meet the needs of our students and accomplish the university's mission.

Three initial action items related to service and workload can be found in Building a Path Forward Together: Georgia State University's 2021 – 2022 COACHE Action Plan. For quick reference, the relevant items are included below.

- **Action Plan 3**: The Office of the Provost will identify best practices for allocating service assignments. In addition, all colleges will retrospectively review the apportionment of service tasks, engage in conversations with faculty members to determine the expected service load for a typical faculty member, and develop a policy for equitable distribution moving forward. Colleges will also be required to include a discussion of service, focusing on service rendered to the college or university in each annual review.

- **Action Plan 12**: The Office of the Provost will implement a Minimester pilot to explore, among other things, whether giving faculty members the option of more flexible teaching schedules may support them to develop more active research agendas.

- **Action Plan 13**: The Office of the Provost, in conjunction with the Faculty Senate, will examine the current Faculty Workload Policy and make changes where possible to support flexible teaching options, including course banking.

As a demonstration of our commitment to changing the culture around of faculty workload, this guidance document will establish best practices for faculty at Georgia State.

The American Council on Education's Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads, What We Can and Should Do Now, will serve as a primary roadmap for our work across the colleges.
and academic departments. The report summarizes research findings from the Faculty Workload and Rewards Project (FWRP), a National Science Foundation ADVANCE-funded action research project. Fifty-one academic units from 20 public colleges/universities were randomly assigned to a treatment or a control group and sought to examine equity in faculty work. Treatment groups took part in four workload intervention trainings that focused on "workload inequity, creating a faculty work activity dashboard, developing an equity action plan, and individual faculty professional development on managing time-use." We encourage you to read the entire report, available for download at this link on the COACHE at Georgia State website.

In addition to The Equity-minded Workload report there is an accompanying workbook. The workbook, Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads Worksheet Booklet, provides templates and examples to illustrate how to carry out the best practices. For example, the workbook discusses creating workload activity dashboards as a mechanism for transparency. According to O’Mera, et al., a “faculty work activity dashboard is an easy-to read display of faculty work areas across different work activities (service, teaching, and sometimes research). A dashboard is intended to be a simple data visualization, such as a table, bar and pie chart, or graph.” Dashboards can include Excel spreadsheets, charts, and graphs, etc. These examples will allow departments to get started on these activities without having to develop these tools on their own.

While no one formula can be applied evenly across all colleges, we aim to address the issues evident in the COACHE survey feedback and utilize technology, innovation, and shared governance structures to envision and implement inclusive, transparent, mission-driven workloads that create pathways for faculty success.
HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Like many institutions, Georgia State, has a workload policy, review, promotion, and tenure guidelines and general practices that dictate faculty workload based on discipline, faculty rank, and appointment types. The current Georgia State University Faculty Workload policy can be found here at the university’s Policy Library. However, research shows that having these items is not sufficient to ensure equity in faculty work.

To help schools/colleges achieve the university goals and their individual COACHE action plan initiatives, we have developed this guidance document. It should be utilized in conjunction with ACE’s report Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads, What We Can and Should Do Now and the accompanying worksheet booklet. Utilizing these documents in concert with one another will provide a foundation for beginning the work of evaluating faculty workload across departments.

The next pages lay out ways the six conditions linked to equitable workloads can be demonstrated in faculty work.

SIX CONDITIONS LINKED TO EQUITABLE WORKLOADS

According to the authors of Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads, What We Can and Should Do Now, six conditions were found to be linked to equity in workloads.

- **Transparency**: Departments have widely visible information about faculty work activities available for department members to see.
- **Clarity**: Departments have clearly identified and well-understood benchmarks for faculty work activities.
- **Credit**: Departments recognize and reward faculty members who are expending more effort in certain areas.
- **Norms**: Departments have a commitment to ensuring faculty workload is fair and have put systems in place that reinforce these norms.
- **Context**: Departments acknowledge that different faculty members have different strengths, interests, and demands that shape their workloads and offer workload flexibility to recognize this context.
- **Accountability**: Departments have mechanisms in place to ensure that faculty members fulfill their work obligations and receive credit for their labor.
INSTRUCTION

Instruction is a key role that all faculty play in the academic enterprise. While instruction is expected, how this expectation is assigned and experienced by faculty members can vary greatly.

Consider the following items related to instruction.

- The course schedule of instruction should be communicated early and often. Creating a spreadsheet or chart of teaching can help provide transparency to the scheduling process.
- All college/departmental guidelines should have clear expectations for teaching load based on a given faculty member’s appointment type and stage in career.
- When possible, clarify items such as how graduate courses are assigned, the number of undergraduate versus graduate courses taught, and how the course capacity may impact the teaching load.
- Give some consideration for the number of course preps assigned, according to the criteria specified by the department.
- Some departments allow faculty to bank credits, which allows them to plan to teach more or less of their annual workload in an academic semester.
- Utilizing minimesters lets departments tailor a teaching load that can allow faculty to focus on research/creative works, while benefiting students’ needs for more flexibility in course offerings.
- The norms for faculty workload should be clearly outlined so that everyone knows what is expected and thus the “less career enhancing” acts (e.g., service) are shared.
- Determine the distribution of graduate courses and, in the case of Graduate Research Faculty, the chairing of dissertations/theses.
- Rotating the teaching of core courses, Area F courses, and introductory undergraduate courses in the major can ensure that everyone is invested in the undergraduate curriculum.
SERVICE

Service to the university and the profession is essential to faculty workload. Service at the department, college, and university levels is the cornerstone of shared governance. The research has shown that women and underrepresented minorities generally do more service yet receive less credit and recognition for it (O’Meara et al. 2017; Winslow 2010). The impacts of added service can derail a faculty career when the balance of teaching and research are not also prioritized.

When reviewing a faculty member’s service contributions, the department should take the items below under consideration.

• The faculty work activity spreadsheet, together with a service audit, can provide transparency regarding how service commitments are distributed in the college or department.

• A service audit consists of detailing the service obligations for each faculty member as they related to the department, college, and university. The audit enables the department chair the opportunity to ensure that service is more equitable.

• All service is not equal. There are some commitments that require little effort, like a meeting once or twice a semester, and there are others that require multiple meetings, creating/reading documents, providing feedback, and collaborating with others. Acknowledging that all service is not equal can provide additional clarity about the expectations.

• The department should set expectations for external and internal service commitments.

• Departments should regularly rotate chairs of committees to ensure that everyone has a chance to lead.

• All faculty workload policies allow for some variance from the norm. Using the workload spreadsheet or other visualization to document these variations can provide transparency.

• Hold all faculty accountable for their contributions to the department and the college. This should be documented in annual evaluations, structured reviews, and post-tenure reviews.
RESEARCH/CREATIVE WORKS

Most of our suggestions are related to instruction and service. Because research/creative works are generally more highly credited for promotion and tenure, there is often more clarity as it relates to being successful. With that said, here are a few items to consider when reviewing research and creative works in the academic unit.

- As mentioned previously, the faculty work activity dashboard, spreadsheet, or other visualizations can be utilized to provide transparency about faculty work in the department. Allowing each faculty member to see how many articles, type and scope of publications, grants, or book chapters others have produced can demonstrate support for differences in teaching or service loads as well as build community through sharing information.

- All college/department guides should clearly lay out the expectations for publications/exhibitions, how faculty can demonstrate their scholarly impact, types of scholarship – first author, collaborative, book chapters, etc. Defining what level of output meets expectations is key for faculty to plan how best to use their time. This clarity will allow faculty to understand how their effort reporting percentages are demonstrated.

- The clarity of research expectations is directly related to how credit can be assigned. This type of clarity can help review committees ensure that they assess dossiers fairly using the same guidelines.