

Review and Policy Proposal for Workload in Public Higher Education in Utah

From

The Coalition for Public Higher Education in Utah

Background

Last fall, the Coalition for Public Higher Education in Utah (CPHEU) sent out an email to all faculty and staff surveying the most important issues for higher ed employees in Utah. You may have received a copy of the survey. The overwhelming issue of concern selected by faculty in Utah was workload and the excessive time demands it made on faculty.

Problem

Workload for the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) is contained in two policies, **R312, Utah System of Higher Education and Institutional Missions** and **R485, Faculty Workload Guidelines**. These two policies split the Utah institutions into three classification, research universities, regional universities, and community and state colleges, and define the respective workloads of each classification. To put the USHE faculty workloads in perspective to real life, we can compare them with an NEA study report, **Workload Issues and Measures of Faculty Productivity** found in The NEA Higher Education Journal, Fall 2007. Comparing the two, we find that the USHE policies would require at least 50 hours per week (assuming no scholarly work) for community and state colleges. For Regional Universities, it would be 60+ hours per week and for Research Universities, it would require in excess of 70 hours per week.

These workweek hours are in line with the comments we have received from faculty and staff indicating that many, if not most, are working 60+ hours per week trying to meet employment obligations. The honor of the most serious workload belongs to UVU. UVU has gone beyond the required twelve credit hour equivalents per semester in USHE policies and introduced three additional credit hour equivalents. UVU's 15-hour per semester workload extrapolates to about 76 hours per week on average based on the NEA report. The hours for all institutional classifications are, in general, unreasonable, excessive and unsustainable for faculty, especially for those with families and/or are active in their communities.

Proposal Development

Over the summer we prepared an analysis of the workload as currently defined and developed a proposal to amend and adjust the policies. The coalition board had just prepared a first proposal for publication when it was learned USHE had revised some of its policies, in particular R312, which was helpful in clarifying some issues. As we reviewed the policy, several more

iterations of the workload proposal were developed, but it became clear there was still a lack of definition in the policy terms and a lack of clarity in the certain concepts described in R312, preventing a comprehensive understanding of the workload policies.

An example of the problem is an important term used in the policies, 'credit hour equivalent.' This term is the foundation of workload policies, R312 and R485. 'Credit hour equivalent' is not defined in the policies nor is it defined in any documents referenced by those policies. To evaluate the policies, we have had to assume that a credit hour equivalent refers to the actual time required for an instructor to teach one credit hour of a university level course. In general, every hour in class requires two hours of preparation and one hour of ancillary work and service such as office hours, advising, department meetings, committee meeting, public service etc. This means that every credit hour equivalent is approximately equal to four actual hours of the instructor's time.

The term, 'contact hours,' used in USHE's workload policies is likewise not defined. The contact hours used in the policies are essentially redundant (see the NEA report) and they only add to the confusion and should be removed.

Another problem lies in required or permissible activities of the faculty found in the different institutional classifications. In R312 and R485, both research and scholarly work are part of the **research institutions'** mission and role. The **regional institutions** mission, as stated in R312 and R485, excludes research and contains scholarly work. The **state and community colleges'** mission and role contains neither research nor scholarly work. It is not clear whether these terms are restrictive or only suggestive in nature?

Finally, there is a lack of consideration for faculty's needs and requirements for career and tenure. In higher education, the students should be mature, trained in study habits and responsible for their progress so that faculty need not to be certified teachers as such, but should emphasize their areas of expertise. This requires that the faculty be current in their fields of expertise and active in scholarly work and research. These same attributes are necessary for faculty career development and to fulfil tenure requirements. Research and scholarly activities, as well as other experiences, are important for the advancement of individual careers and are reflected in their students' successes as well as the standing of their institutions.

WORKLOAD PROPOSAL

1. Workload should be standardized, based on a maximum of twelve credit hour equivalents per semester throughout the Utah System of Higher Education (The objective is not to change the actual hours worked by faculty between classifications but to adjust the ratio of teaching responsibilities to research and scholarly responsibilities according to the classifications. It takes the same time and preparation for an instructor

to teach a university courses regardless of the institution's classification or a CHE is a CHE is a CHE.)

2. The ratio of teaching to scholarly work and research should be:
 - a. Research institutions – an average of two credit hours equivalents for teaching to two credit hour equivalents for scholarly work and research.
 - b. Regional institutions – an average of three credit hour equivalents for teaching and one credit hour equivalent for scholarly work and research.
 - c. State and community colleges – four credit hours of teaching. (Faculty should discuss the need for scholarly activities and may want to propose a different ratio)
3. The ratio of responsibilities should be a factor at all annual reviews, tenure reviews, tenure applications, rank advancements, promotions, etc.

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Addendum

Caveats

The workload report compares the USHE workload policies, R312 and R485, with an NEA 2007 report on “Workload Issues and Measures of Faculty Productivity”. The purpose was to determine the impact of USHE workload policies on Utah higher ed faculty. The NEA report provides an account of actual work requirements for faculty under various conditions. There are several caveats to be consider in comparing the policies with the study. First, the term, credit hour equivalent (CHE), lacks definition. For our purposes, we assumed that it refers to the average effort required by faculty to teach one credit hour and for which a student receives one hour towards graduation.

Secondly, the differences between the terms ‘research’ and ‘scholarship’ are not clear. Scholarship can include research or may be defined separately. In R312-4. Institutional Roles and Missions, only research universities have research as a defined role, although regional and community institutions include scholarship as a defined role. The question is: are these roles restrictive or only suggestive in nature. This is an important question for faculty concerned with faculty development, tenure, service, post tenure review, etc. We have assumed that scholarship includes research in our proposals.

Thirdly, USHE policies categorize the different levels of institutions into three categories whereas the NEA report uses five categories. We have tried to choose the most compatible categories for comparison in the report.

Computations

In the first Paragraph under Problems, we have computed what the USHE workload would look like according to measures of productivity in the NEA report. To approximate the expected workload for community and state colleges using the NEA report, we took the average work week for 2-year colleges in table 2. (49.17 hours) and divided it by the total classroom credit hours in table 4. (12.7) to get the number of faculty hours required for one credit hour (3.9 hours per week per credit hour). We then multiplied that number by the institutional workload for state and community colleges (15 hours per semester) to get the expected workload for faculty in R485 (58.0). This number was understated in our report as “in excess of 50 hours”. We followed the same procedure comparing regional universities with NEA’s comprehensive category. The expected workload for faculty of regional universities is 64.1 hours per week which we expressed as “60+ hours.” For research institutions we compared USHE research institutions with the research category in the NEA study. The expected work hours for research institutions turned out to be 70.7 hours per week.

Note that the number of 3.9 hours per credit hour per week compares very well with our estimation of 4 hours per credit hour per week at institutions in the Proposal Development, paragraph 2. These institutions normally have teaching responsibilities only and usually do not have scholarly or research responsibilities. Note also that 4 hours per week per credit hour, when applied to our workload proposal, when applied to our proposal of 12 credit hour equivalents, corresponds to a 48-hour workload per week.