

FINAL FACULTY WORKLOAD WHITE PAPER
Metropolitan State University of Denver – Faculty Workload Task Force
DRAFT—November 15, 2021 March 15, 2022

BACKGROUND

The MSU Denver faculty constitute a talented, skilled, and versatile workforce. Although formal teaching is their most visible activity, faculty are engaged in a diverse array of activities that support the university mission. These activities include formal [undergraduate and graduate](#) teaching, informal teaching (i.e., advising, mentoring, and other types individualized work with students), scholarship, and service. This work directly enhances student learning, academic success, recruitment, and retention and has been essential to the growth of MSU Denver from a college to a university.

In fall 2020, President Davidson, responding to feedback from faculty, instructed Interim Provost Bill Henry to engage with Faculty Senate to explore concerns about faculty workload. Interim Provost Henry charged a committee (the Faculty Workload Task Force), co-led by Gabrielle Katz, Chair of the Faculty Senate Faculty Welfare Committee, with examining these issues and generating recommendations for establishing a more sustainable workload model. Early on, the Task Force decided unanimously to include both tenured/tenure track and Lecturers and Senior Lecturers in the workload proposal. Following his arrival in March 2021, Provost Alfred Tatum indicated his support for this initiative and challenged the Task Force to provide recommendations for a reduced teaching load and to identify potential benefits and barriers to implementation of such a plan. Further, Provost Tatum clarified that the Task Force should develop a general proposal, and did not need to provide a detailed analysis of implementation steps or finances. Current student enrollment declines may present a window of opportunity to implement this proposal at a reduced cost, at least in the near term.

In spring 2021, the Task Force gathered internal workload data, explored workload models, and conducted a survey of all full-time MSU Denver faculty in order to gauge support for a reduced teaching load. The anonymous survey was distributed to all 585 full-time faculty, and received a total of 410 responses (341 tenured/tenure track, 66 Lecturers/Senior Lecturers, 3 Other) for a response rate of 70.1%. Overall, 83.5% of survey respondents were supportive of reducing the tenured/tenure track teaching load by 6 credits per year, and 63.5% were supportive of reducing the Lecturer/Senior Lecturer teaching load by the same amount. Selected survey results are included in this report, and a complete summary of the results is available from the Task Force. In fall 2021, the Task Force ~~finalized-released~~ our [draft](#) recommendations, ~~which are~~ (presented in a separate document (~~Faculty Workload Recommendations~~) and white paper. [The Task Force gathered feedback on the draft documents between November 2021 and March 2022. Now, the Task Force is releasing our final set of documents: Final Faculty Workload Recommendations, Final Summary of Feedback, and this Final Faculty Workload White Paper.](#) The purpose of this white paper is to discuss benefits, concerns, and implementation considerations related to the recommendations. This document focuses on Component I of the Task Force recommendations.

Faculty Workload Task Force members:

Gabrielle Katz (EAS, current)

[Grant Denn \(Physics, Spring 22\)](#)

Bill Henry (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, current)

Bethany Fleck-Dillen (Psychological Sciences, AY 2022)

Yunkyung Cho (Management, AY 2021)

Krista Griffin (Elementary Education and Literacy, current)

Christian E. Hardigree (Dean, School of Hospitality; current)

Deborah Horan (Chair, Elementary Education and Literacy; ~~current~~[AY 2021, and Fall 2021](#))

Amie Kaufenberg (School of Education, AY 2021 and Fall 2021)

Tony Lopez (Accounting, AY 2022)

Kat Martinez (Chair, GITA; AY 2021)

Jill Mollenhauer (Art, current)

Erin Murray (Nutrition, AY 2021)

Jessica Ritter (Social Work, AY 2021)

Bob Schatz (Psychological Sciences, current)

Mandi Schaeffer Fry (Math and Statistics, AY 2022)

Kelsey Smith (Business Intelligence, current)

Maggie Thulson (Assistant to the Vice Provost, AY 2021)

Jacob Welch (Chair, Department of Theatre and Dance, AY 2022)

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The Faculty Workload Task Force recommends a two-fold approach to rebalancing faculty workloads. Together, these two components address the primary objectives of the Task Force: To promote a strategy that 1) will reduce the overall workload for faculty; and 2) will provide greater flexibility in how faculty allocate time to teaching, scholarship, and service. The recommendations are presented in a separate document (Faculty Workload Recommendations).

The first component of the proposal focuses on a reduction to the standard teaching load, to be implemented as soon as fiscally possible, to address the longstanding and growing issue of unsustainable faculty workloads: The default standard average teaching load for all full-time faculty will be reduced by six credits per year. Tenured/tenure track faculty will move from a 24-credit standard annual teaching load to an 18-credit load, with no additional requirements added for scholarship or service. Lecturers and Senior Lecturers will move from a 30-credit standard annual teaching load to a 24-credit load. The purpose of this adjustment is to acknowledge the work that faculty are already doing outside of formal teaching, and to make overall faculty workload more reasonable. Deans, working with their Department Chairs, will begin implementing these recommendations as soon as possible, with support from the Provost. This white paper focuses on the proposed reduction in teaching load, since it is most directly related to our original charge.

The second component of the proposal entails the development of a differentiated faculty workload model, working from the baseline of the reduced workload described above. The differentiated model could follow the general examples outlined below, although precise implementation in a given department should be decided by the department faculty, in consultation with the appropriate chairs and deans. This will allow for development of equitable models that account for disciplinary and program level differences and needs (e.g., graduate programs, accredited programs, disciplines with substantial studio or practicum teaching, etc.).

For example, for tenured/tenure-track faculty, one possibility would be to consider a model with three workload options:

1. Teaching-centered: This option would allow tenure-line faculty to carry more than an 18-credit teaching load with scholarship and service requirements reduced relative to current expectations. This

model would reflect a workload distribution of 70-80% teaching, with the remaining 20-30% of the workload distributed between scholarship and service.

2. Balanced: This option would allow tenure-line faculty to carry an 18-credit teaching load with current scholarship and service requirements. This model would reflect a workload distribution of 60% teaching, with the remaining 40% of the workload distributed between scholarship and service.

3. Scholarship- and/or service-centered: This option would allow tenure-line faculty to carry less than an 18-credit teaching load with scholarship and/or service requirements increased relative to current expectations. This model would reflect a workload distribution of 40-50% teaching, with the remaining 50-60% of the workload distributed between scholarship and service.

For lecturers/senior lecturers, one possibility would be to consider the corresponding model:

1. Teaching-centered: This option would allow lecturers/senior lecturers to carry more than a 24-credit teaching load with minimal or no scholarship and service requirements. This model would reflect a workload distribution of 90-100% teaching, with the remaining 0-10% of the workload distributed between scholarship and/or service.

2. Balanced: This option would allow lecturers/senior lecturers to carry a 24-credit teaching load with some scholarship and service requirements. This model would reflect a workload distribution of 80% teaching, with the remaining 20% of the workload distributed between scholarship and/or service.

3. Scholarship- and/or service-centered: This option would allow lecturers/senior lecturers to carry less than a 24-credit teaching load with scholarship and/or service requirements increased relative to the balanced option. This model would reflect a workload distribution of 60-70% teaching, with the remaining 30-40% of the workload distributed between scholarship and/or service.

BENEFITS OF REDUCED TEACHING LOADS

A review of published scholarship on faculty workload, as well as an analysis of MSU Denver faculty responses to the survey administered in spring 2021, suggest that the benefits to the University of a reduced teaching load will fall into three broad categories: (1) improved student recruitment and retention; (2) improved faculty recruitment and retention, including greater opportunities to hire diverse candidates; and (3) increased opportunities for community engagement. Below we discuss each of these benefits in greater detail. Engaging in these activities would be implemented in ways that would not increase the overall workload for faculty.

Student Recruitment and Retention

An essential over-arching benefit of this faculty workload adjustment will be to enhance the student educational experience at MSU Denver. Specifically, it will allow faculty to better engage in high quality teaching and student mentoring, both inside the classroom (i.e., in “formal” learning environments) and outside the classroom (i.e., in more “informal” learning interactions). This has the potential to increase student recruitment and retention, as high-quality student-faculty contact has been shown to improve student outcomes in many higher education settings (Kuh et al. 2006).

First, a reduced teaching load (and therefore a more reasonable workload overall) will enable faculty to invest more sustainably in the quality of their formally assigned teaching. High quality classroom experiences are

critical to student success, including retention. Indeed, Gyurko et al. (2018) argue that teaching quality is the fundamental determinant of student success in higher education, including development of key intellectual skills, as well as persistence and graduation. Although MSU Denver faculty are already committed to teaching excellence, the reduced teaching load will allow sufficient time to attend to myriad aspects of excellent teaching (e.g., curriculum development, class material preparation and revision, designing/employing active and collaborative learning activities, providing timely and frequent student feedback, etc.) within a reasonable work week, given other workload responsibilities.

The potential for a reduced teaching load to provide faculty the space needed to engage more deeply with these aspects of teaching is reflected in responses to the survey of faculty conducted by the Task Force in spring 2021. When asked to select among a list of potential benefits of a reduced teaching load, 83.7% of faculty respondents identified “enhanced teaching (e.g., updated pedagogy and curriculum, more timely or thorough student assessments, etc.)” as a benefit. Indeed, this benefit was the most frequently endorsed by survey respondents overall. Among tenured/tenure track faculty, 82% (281/341) of respondents endorsed enhanced teaching as a potential benefit; among Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, 92% (61/66) of respondents reported this as a potential benefit.

Second, a reduced teaching load will enable faculty to more sustainably invest time and energy in student interactions outside of the classroom. Purposeful, high quality informal student-faculty interactions (e.g., research mentoring, serving together on committees, social interactions at campus activities, career advising, etc.) are known to improve student success, including retention and graduation (Kuh et al. 2006).

An extensive body of literature demonstrates that advising and mentoring are two of the most effective means of increasing student retention (e.g., Braxton & Mundy, 2001; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013). Advising is effective in part because it involves one-on-one interaction and engagement with students (Tinto, 1987; Hanover Research, 2014). When faculty engage in these kinds of interactions, they bring considerable expertise, perspective and professional resources that can complement the work of staff advisors and career counselors (Burt, et al. 2013; Ayoubi 2017; Lynch & Lungrin, 2018). Additionally, mentoring students in undergraduate research enhances student success and increases retention rates, especially among first-generation, low-income students (Ishiyama, 2001). The proposed teaching load adjustment will better allow faculty to engage with students through participation in undergraduate research, if it aligns with their professional pursuits.

Overall, the policy also will give interested faculty more time to participate in High Impact Practices that have been shown to improve student retention and learning (Kuh, 2008). These include developing internship opportunities, guiding and advising internships, increasing service-learning involvement, providing capstone experiences, and serving as faculty advisors to student organizations. For example, in a study of 110 undergraduate psychology programs student satisfaction and success were significantly related to the degree of student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom, including via academic advising, research supervision, and attending student events (Stoloff, Curtis, Rodgers, Brewster & McCarthy, 2012). When trust, rapport and respect are established between faculty and students, students are more likely to persist through their college studies to graduation (Lynch & Lungrin, 2018). Such practices entail considerable time and effort on the part of faculty (NSSE, 2007). These potential benefits were recognized by the respondents to the faculty survey. Eighty-one percent of faculty respondents reported that “improved faculty-student interactions, including advising and mentoring” would result from a reduced teaching load, and 71% identified “improved informal learning

experiences resulting from faculty having more time to dedicate to one-on-one student interactions” as a potential benefit.

Finally, the new policy also will give faculty more time to participate in activities that have been shown to increase student enrollment, such as recruiting high school students and students at two-year colleges (Morreale, 2009; Zink, 1997). In addition, a study of “exemplary” graduate programs in psychology showed that personal contact with minority faculty is an important strategy in recruiting students of color (Rogers & Molina, 2006).

Faculty Recruitment and Retention

In addition to improving the student educational experience at MSU Denver, this workload adjustment will improve the faculty experience in a variety of ways. In survey comments, both tenured/tenure track and [Category II](#) faculty noted that a reduced teaching load would result in increased morale and improved physical and mental wellbeing. Additionally, respondents suggested that this workload adjustment would improve the University’s ability to recruit and retain faculty. Indeed, several research studies have demonstrated that workload satisfaction is a key factor in faculty retention (O’Meara et al. 2021). Improved employee wellness, recruitment, and retention align with Pillar V of the University’s Strategic Plan. One of the goals associated with Pillar V “Organizational Agility and Sustainability” is for MSU Denver to “be Colorado’s most desired place of employment.” [Beyondy](#) improving faculty morale, wellbeing, and job satisfaction, a reduced teaching load also supports the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. This outcome aligns with Pillar IV of the University’s Strategic Plan “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” which calls on MSU Denver to attract and retain a “diverse faculty and staff, while investing in DEI service, scholarship and practice.”

A reduced teaching load – and better tracking of workload overall (see ‘Implications’ section below) – has the potential to improve faculty workload equity. A considerable body of research documents that university faculty workloads are often inequitable. Faculty from historically minoritized groups do more labor related to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and mentoring of minoritized students than faculty who are white; [femalewomen](#) faculty tend to do more teaching and service, and less research, than [maleen](#) faculty; [femalewomen](#) faculty are asked more often than male colleagues to do work that is less valued for career advancement or promotion (O’Meara et al. 2021). While we do not have comparable workload data for MSU Denver faculty, re-balancing faculty workloads will benefit all faculty who engage in substantial labor that is not adequately tracked and/or properly rewarded under our current system and may especially improve workloads for faculty from minoritized groups and female faculty.

One additional benefit that may result from a reduced teaching load is the increased flexibility faculty will have to engage in more scholarship. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents (both tenured/tenure-track faculty and Lecturers and Senior Lecturers) cited “additional opportunities for faculty professional growth” as a potential benefit for a reduced teaching load. In survey comments, faculty of both categories mentioned that a reduced teaching load would provide opportunities for increased engagement in scholarship. Faculty citing this benefit regularly noted that increased engagement in scholarship may result in improved morale and greater overall job satisfaction. To be clear, the Task Force does not recommend increasing expectations related to scholarship (or to service) for tenured/tenure track faculty as part of this proposal.

Community Engagement

This faculty workload adjustment has the potential to enhance the role and reach of MSU Denver in the Denver Metropolitan Area community by enabling faculty to more sustainably engage in outreach, community-based

research, service-learning, consulting, and other kinds of community partnerships and activities. This outcome aligns with Pillar I “Student Access, Service, and Achievement” of the University’s Strategic Plan, which states that “all students will have the opportunity to research, work and serve in the broader community, through robust service-learning, internships and undergraduate research programs.” Further, Pillar III “Civic and Economic Catalyst” of the University’s Strategic Plan highlights MSU Denver’s role as an anchor institution, leveraging faculty expertise and programming excellence. This benefit was recognized in the faculty survey. Sixty-four percent of faculty respondents reported that “better ability for faculty to contribute to university strategic initiatives” would result from a reduced teaching load. In the survey comments, tenured/tenure track faculty specifically noted that a reduced teaching load would enhance opportunities for faculty to engage with the community. For example, one tenured/tenure track faculty member wrote that the proposal would allow:

more time devoted to enhancing community participation and partnerships like speaking engagements, boards and commissions, policy work, [and] civic engagement.

Another wrote,

The community partnerships [are] a big factor in what I do, personally, and it would give me more time to engage the community and various community organizations.

IMPLICATIONS OF REDUCED TEACHING LOADS

Fiscal Implications

This teaching load reduction may have near-term and long-term financial costs for the University. There are several financial considerations that may come into play, including the following:

- A reduced standard teaching load for full-time faculty (without simply redistributing the same number of students to fewer sections, see below) will result in reduced per capita CHP production, and therefore reduced per capita tuition generation.
- Assuming future student enrollment creates sufficient demand, additional full-time faculty may need to be hired. Currently, full time faculty generate approximately 57% of MSU Denver CHP, while part time faculty generate 43%. It is not the intent of this proposal to alter those proportions, which may necessitate the strategic hiring of additional full-time faculty. There will be a long-term cost associated with these faculty salaries.
- Additional staff and/or administrators may also need to be hired in some areas, in order to support faculty hiring and the potential for selected increases in the volume of certain faculty activities, such as travel, grant productivity, etc.
- The Task Force recognizes that hiring of additional faculty and staff may require significant time. As such, the Task Force encourages the University to publicly commit to a multi-year implementation plan that will allow the institution to achieve these goals in full over a number of years.

These issues were recognized by some respondents to the faculty survey, with about half of the respondents indicating concerns about potential financial implications. Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that “potential cost to the university” was a concern, and 50% were concerned about “potential financial impacts to other budget items (e.g., impacts to salaries)”.

On the other hand, the financial impact of the teaching load reduction can be offset and mitigated by a variety of conditions, strategies, and outcomes. Mechanisms to decrease the cost of this proposal include the following:

- Current and projected student enrollment declines may enable full or partial implementation of this proposal without hiring new faculty, at least in the near term. This would greatly reduce the costs of the proposal.
- There are a number of ways to reduce teaching loads without hiring new faculty, mainly by improving efficiencies in course rotation schedules and other aspects of curriculum (Wardell & Yarish 2008). This could include eliminating certain specialized, elective classes, offering certain classes less frequently, designing new courses that can replace multiple existing classes, employing interdisciplinary courses to fulfill requirements, etc.
- There will be savings associated with improved faculty job satisfaction and retention; this reduces current costs associated with faculty turnover.
- Over the long term, this teaching load adjustment is likely to augment University revenues. It is estimated that 1% increases in student retention and enrollment each generate approximately \$1 million in additional annual revenue. In addition, the teaching load adjustment will enhance the ability of faculty to engage in research and outside partnerships (per individual interests and goals) which has the potential to improve grant-writing and contract revenues. The teaching load adjustment also will enhance the ability of faculty to engage more sustainably in community outreach and programming (per individual interests and goals) which will elevate the visibility and reputation of the University, thereby bolstering fundraising capacities.

Class Size

Small classes are a hallmark of MSU Denver's student-centered approach to undergraduate education. Class size emerged as a key issue in the faculty survey; fifty-eight percent (238/410) of respondents indicated that "potential implications for class sizes (e.g., increased minimum or average class sizes)" were a concern. Several faculty comments also addressed this issue. Average class size at MSU Denver is 21 students. It is not the intent of this proposal to simply redistribute the same number of students into fewer sections, thereby reducing the number of sections offered but increasing class sizes by 33% (i.e., by adding 7 students to a typical section). On the other hand, there may be room to increase class sizes by modest amounts in some contexts, where it is pedagogically appropriate. Such "right sizing" of classes could reduce the cost of this proposal, without diminishing MSU Denver's educational quality.

Faculty Evaluation

Another implication of a change to the regular teaching load for full-time faculty is that job descriptions and faculty evaluation policies and procedures may need to be revised to reflect that change. For example, the following issues should be considered:

- Our current faculty job descriptions typically reference a normal teaching load of 30 credits per year for Lecturers and Senior Lecturers and 24 credits per year for tenured/tenure track faculty. Similarly, the Faculty Employment Handbook specifies that the "regular" teaching load for a Lecturers and Senior Lecturers is 30 credit hours per academic year; this language will need to be revised.
- The sections of the Handbook that define excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service may need to be revised. In developing this proposal, members of the Faculty Workload Task Force noted that many aspects of the faculty workload are not adequately reflected in our evaluation criteria and, because of that, are not consistently documented in faculty evaluation portfolios. Language in the Faculty Employment Handbook should accurately describe the various types of work in which faculty engage

(e.g., informal teaching). By extension, our evaluation procedures should be designed to reward faculty for these diverse work activities.

- Department Evaluation Guidelines may need to be revised to reflect changes to faculty workload. If such changes occur, procedures should be developed to manage the changing workload for current faculty who are mid-way through a given evaluation cycle. However, as noted above, expectations related to scholarship and service for tenured/tenure track faculty will not be increased as part of this proposal.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING REDUCED TEACHING LOADS

Flexible Implementation Strategy

The Task Force recommends that the University begin implementation of these changes to the workload model in spring 2023. However, we acknowledge that complete implementation of the proposal will take significant time. Complete implementation will require, at a minimum, revisions to the Faculty Employment Handbook; revisions to Department Evaluation Guidelines; restructuring curriculum as needed; and hiring of a significant number of new faculty and staff. These changes may require multiple years to fully implement. The Task Force encourages the University to clearly and transparently commit to full implementation of these proposals regardless of how much time it will take.

Within many academic units, some version of a modified teaching load is already being implemented through the use of reassigned time allocations. The two components of the proposal (the reduced teaching load and differentiated workloads) could be implemented either sequentially or simultaneously. However, in order to accrue maximum benefit for students and faculty, these workload recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible. Equally important, implementation of the differentiated workload model must maintain the commitment to an overall reduction in faculty workload, i.e., the goal is to reduce the workload overall, not simply to replace one type of work with another type of work.

In order to adopt a new workload model, any changes to department guidelines will need to be in place by the implementation date. To ease the transition, implementation could entail a phased approach. For example, we could move to a 21-credit annual teaching load for tenured/tenure track faculty and a 27-credit annual teaching load for Lecturers and Senior Lecturers for the 2022/spring 2023 academic year semester, and then undertake full implementation over the next several years. The need for a phased approach, however, will depend on enrollment. MSU Denver is currently experiencing enrollment declines, which present an opportunity to implement these recommendations with little cost or scheduling impact. With lower demand for seats and sections, it should be possible to reduce the teaching loads of many full-time faculty without compromising course offerings or necessitating the hiring of additional instructors. This could allow for a low-cost implementation of the teaching load reduction over the short term, with targeted hiring of additional faculty in the future if/when enrollments recover.

Internal Analysis

Deans, working in consultation with Department Chairs, will need to review curricular offerings to look for opportunities to maximize efficiency. For example, a review of curriculum may lead to a change in the frequency with which certain specialized, elective classes are offered or may result in a reduction in the number of sections of a particular course being offered per semester. Additionally, a careful analysis of current faculty teaching loads will be needed to ensure that teaching assignments make the best use of faculty time. This analysis may examine factors such as FTES or CHP at the individual faculty level. Finally, course offerings should be evaluated to determine if and where class sizes could be appropriately increased. Class size adjustments could offset some

of the costs of this proposal, if carried out carefully and only where pedagogically appropriate. The advantages and drawbacks of larger class sizes vary depending on context (e.g., class level, pedagogical approach, lecture/lab/studio format, etc.). Within this context, class size adjustments should be implemented in ways that would not exacerbate existing disparities in class size between departments with higher and lower enrollments. Therefore, a blanket policy may not be appropriate. However, class sizes should be re-considered on a case-by-case basis. After a careful review of Department curriculum and enrollment, Deans and Chairs will be positioned to identify the staffing needs that would be required to support the reduced teaching loads.

Under our current system, reassigned time is used across units to allow faculty to allocate additional effort to duties outside of formal teaching. These duties vary widely across the university, but examples include substantial service commitments (e.g., chairing certain Faculty Senate committees), program directorships, faculty fellow positions (e.g., DEI faculty fellow in College of Business), and substantial department level roles (e.g., technical director of theatre productions). Colleges/Schools will continue to use reassigned time as appropriate to support the growth of our academic programs, promote balanced faculty workloads, and meet Departmental needs. The Task Force recommends that Colleges/Schools review current reassigned time practices to ensure consistency, necessity, and transparency of reassigned time allocations. The Task Force recognizes that Deans and Department Chairs must play a central role in the allocation of reassigned time.

As part of the implementation of this proposal, Deans and Chairs should look for other opportunities to improve faculty workload efficiency and equitability. For example, additional modifications to overall faculty workload may result from streamlining committees. The Task Force recommends a careful review of Department-, College-, and University-level committee structures, including an examination of the overall number of extant committees, the number of members assigned to each committee, and the committee members' roles. Indeed, O'Meara et al. (2021) provide resources for conducting a "service audit" within units, as well as for restructuring and reducing committees to improve efficiency, accountability, and equity.

Additionally, potential impacts to staff and administrators must be accounted for as implementation plans are developed. Both staff and administrator workloads at MSU Denver are already high, and implementation of this proposal should not increase those workloads further or to unsustainable levels. Even if new faculty are not hired, shifts in faculty effort could result in increased needs for staff support. Similarly, there might be additional work for administrators in supporting, tracking and evaluating faculty activities. Thus, to encourage efficiency of processes and budget, potential impacts to staff and administrator workloads should be analyzed and accounted for as this proposal is implemented.

Revisions to Handbook Language and Evaluation Guidelines

As described in the "Faculty Evaluation" section above, adoption of a reduced teaching load may have implications for our faculty evaluation policies and procedures as delineated in the Faculty Employment Handbook and Department Evaluation Guidelines. One issue that will require careful consideration is the timing of any revisions to these documents relative to the implementation of a reduced teaching load -- i.e., should the revisions to the Handbook and Guidelines be made prior to the introduction of the reduced teaching load or could the changes to teaching load be made before the revisions of the Handbook and Guidelines?

There are currently two other Task Forces working on issues that are somewhat related to the work being done by the Faculty Workload Task Force. The Teaching Evaluation Task Force and the Faculty Diversity Task Force are both exploring topics that may result in changes to the Handbook and Department Guidelines. The Faculty

Workload Task Force recommends that members of the three groups coordinate their efforts to revise these documents to ensure consistency and clarity in the resulting products.

Workload Equity and Transparency

A key finding of the Faculty Workload Task Force was that a substantial amount of faculty work is not adequately tracked under our current framework. This “invisible labor” is important and valuable to the university, and thus should be accommodated in faculty workloads and rewarded. For example, student mentoring and advising can be critical factors in student success, but currently we do not have consistent mechanisms for reporting and rewarding this kind of work. Our existing use of Digital Measures (now Watermark Faculty Success) lays a solid foundation for this effort, but additional training or development of “best practices” may be required in order to ensure success. Further, better workload data could inform assessment of the impacts of this workload adjustment (e.g., in terms of scholarship, outreach, student retention, etc.).

Informal teaching is a specific area of faculty workload that is in need of better definition and visibility. The Task Force recommends that the definition of teaching be clarified to include formal teaching (i.e., assigned organized courses) and informal teaching (i.e., academic and career advising, mentoring, supervision of undergraduate research, and other individualized work with students outside of the formally assigned course load). While formal teaching is relatively straightforward to quantify and track, methods of tracking and rewarding informal teaching should be improved.

Better tracking of faculty work would also support faculty workload equity. This is important because faculty workloads are often inequitable, with female faculty and faculty from historically minoritized groups often engaging in more “invisible” or unrewarded work compared to their male or white colleagues (O’Meara et al. 2021). [It also is important that adjustments to faculty workload be implemented equitably between departments.](#) O’Meara et al. (2021) highlight six conditions that promote faculty workload equity -- Transparency, Clarity, Credit, Norms, Context, and Accountability -- all of which rely on accurate tracking of faculty workloads. Transparency entails sharing information about the range of faculty effort in various workload areas (e.g., teaching, service, student mentoring, etc.), thereby enhancing trust, accountability and a shared sense of justice. Clarity entails clear articulation of workload expectations or benchmarks, in all areas of evaluation. Together, transparency (accounting for what faculty are doing) and clarity (articulating what faculty should be doing) lay the foundation for credit, whereby faculty are rewarded for their effort in various workload areas. Norms involve developing fair workloads, e.g., by rotating certain service or teaching duties. Context acknowledges that faculty have different strengths and interests, and allows for workload flexibility to account for those differences (see “Workload Equivalencies” below). Accountability entails ensuring that faculty fulfil their workload obligations and are properly rewarded for their work.

The Task Force is aware that our current faculty evaluation systems essentially employ a pass/fail rubric to assess faculty performance. It may be beneficial to investigate more nuanced evaluation models, that could differentially recognize and reward varying levels of faculty effort and achievement. For example, the university could consider a three-tiered rating system for the evaluation of faculty. Rather than relying on the current rating system of “Needs Improvement” and “Meets Standards,” a rating system of “Needs Improvement,” “Meets Standards,” and “Exceeds Standards” would allow for better delineating levels of performance. Such a rating system would more clearly articulate to faculty where their performance falls with respect to expectations, and could allow for the possible future implementation of a system of merit adjustments to base salary.

Workload Equivalencies (Teaching)

The Faculty Workload Task Force recognizes that not all teaching activities are the same. The time and energy required to teach a course will vary as a function of many factors, including, but not limited to:

- The type of course (e.g., lecture vs. Laboratory, contact hours per credit hour, etc.);
- The level of the course (e.g., [undergraduate](#) 1000-level vs. 4000-level, [graduate level](#));
- The intensity of interaction between faculty and student (e.g., seminar course vs. survey course); and
- Class size.

In implementing a reduced teaching load, the Faculty Workload Task Force recommends that we carefully consider whether different “weights” should be assigned to the different types of courses a faculty member teaches. For example, a faculty member teaching a large section could be given additional “workload credit” toward their required teaching load. The development of a procedure for assigning differential weights or credits for different types of teaching experiences would also allow for a more nuanced assessment of faculty who teach primarily in graduate programs. Graduate-level coursework typically entails a greater degree of engagement between faculty and students. It may be appropriate to further reduce the teaching load of faculty extensively engaged in these high-intensity courses. Faculty would not be required to reallocate their present work activities; instead, faculty would be given more opportunity to do so.

Workload Models and Credit Systems

The Task Force carefully considered proposing a differentiated workload model only, but ultimately decided that the most straightforward way to reduce faculty workloads was to propose a unimodal workload reduction for each faculty category (i.e., 18-credit standard annual teaching load for tenured/tenure track faculty, and 24 credits for Lecturers and Senior Lecturers), as the first component of the workload adjustment, to be implemented as soon as possible. However, the second component of our proposed workload adjustment entails development and implementation of a differentiated workload model. Broadly speaking, a differentiated model would include a selection of pre-set workload allocation options with teaching, scholarship and service adjusted accordingly, e.g., a teaching-focused option, a balanced option, and scholarship-focused option. Benefits of a differentiated model could include improved clarity in workload expectations, and explicit evaluation guidelines for each workload option. Furthermore, this model would allow some faculty (per individual interests) to devote more effort to scholarship, thereby addressing Provost Tatum’s interest in elevating the scholarship profile of MSU Denver. Moving to a differentiated workload model may require a longer-term planning and implementation process, with many details to be worked out. For example, there are important questions related to the level of flexibility in workload options, e.g., would workloads be adjusted annually? Would the options be available to both tenured/tenure track faculty and Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, and to all faculty ranks (e.g., Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor)?

In conjunction with implementation of a reduced teaching load and/or future differentiated workloads, the Task Force recommends that some academic units may want to consider a workload credit system that would allow faculty and departments to better track, balance, and reward faculty workloads. A workload credit model could encompass all aspects of the faculty member's responsibilities, including teaching, scholarship, and service. As mentioned above, differentially crediting faculty for higher or lower workload effort is a key element of workload equity (O’Meara et al. 2021). Thus, a workload credit system could be created to account for differential effort in various workload areas, such as overload teaching, advising, research mentoring, etc. One way to do this would be to develop a more consistent method for “banking credits” whereby faculty who do

more work in one area could do less in another area. This would be particularly beneficial in improving tracking and reward for credits earned by teaching overloads such as independent studies, thesis supervision, etc. A workload credit system also could allow faculty to devote more time to service roles, such as chairing committees, serving on search committees, etc. (e.g., see O’Meara et al. 2021, Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads Worksheet Booklet). Faculty members also could be given the opportunity to earn workload credits by engaging in more intensive one-on-one student advising/mentoring, high impact practices, and/or recruitment efforts.

Office Hours and Advising

In conjunction with a change to the regular teaching load and/or with development of future differentiated workloads, the Task Force encourages reconsideration and clarification of faculty office hours. Historically, office hours have had two separate functions: (1) Supporting students enrolled in a faculty member’s courses, e.g., answering course-related questions, clarifying course content, etc.; (2) Advising students on broader academic and career-related questions. The fact that office hours have multiple functions makes it difficult to evaluate this aspect of a faculty member’s performance. Does maintaining a set number of office hours per week fulfill a faculty member’s advising responsibilities? Is there a better way of assessing a faculty member’s advising activities beyond a simple reference to the number of office hours held? Should faculty who do professional advising on top of their class-related office hours receive some type of workload credit for that?

The Task Force recommends that faculty workloads explicitly differentiate between office hours used to support students with course-related issues versus time used to provide students with broader academic and career advising. There is substantial variability in the faculty advising commitment across campus, depending on department needs and faculty interests. Some departments require faculty to serve as professional advisors, where they help students plan classes, create Program plans for students, submit Degree Exceptions, review transfer courses, record advising notes in Navigate, and fill out applications for internships and student teaching, for example, on top of supporting the students in their classes. Others do not have this additional advising responsibility. The Task Force suggests that all faculty workloads should explicitly include a minimum number of office hours as part of formally assigned teaching (~~perhaps 3 office hours per week, or one office hour per course section~~), with the option of including additional office hours for advising as part of ‘informal teaching’, per faculty interests and department needs. In addition, processes for evaluating faculty advising activities should be developed to allow for better reward of these important efforts.

Affiliate Faculty

The Task Force suggests that impacts to Affiliate Faculty (i.e., part-time faculty) be considered as these recommendations are implemented. Part-time faculty serve an essential role at MSU Denver, providing approximately 40% of credit hour production and constituting 50-60% of faculty headcount. Part-time faculty are a critical component of the overall faculty workforce, but it is beyond the scope of this proposal to address part-time faculty workload issues or other concerns. However, possible benefits to Affiliate Faculty from this proposal include increased teaching opportunities for current Affiliates, re-hiring of Affiliate Faculty lost due to recent enrollment declines, and the potential for Affiliates to apply for newly created full time faculty positions.

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