

## **Reducing Workload and Inequality in Workload Recommendations by the Resource Committee, 4/3/2013**

### **Background**

As announced at the May 2012 faculty meeting, Provost Neil Weissman at President Durden's request convened a faculty working group to examine three key issues:

1. The academic program – current and future, in terms of our needs in relationship to developments in higher education and among our peers,
2. Requirements for heightened assessment of student learning and of the effectiveness of the curriculum itself – this particularly in response to the recommendations from our Middle States review, and
3. Staffing levels and faculty workload.

The group's findings will hopefully be useful to the College's new President, and they will serve as a foundation for determining future directions at Dickinson.

The resource committee is composed of Provost Neil Weissman (co-chair) and Profs. Marie Helweg-Larsen (co-chair; Associate Professor of Psychology), Alyssa DeBlasio (Assistant Professor of Russian), John Henson (Professor of Biology), Karen Kirkham (Associate Professor of Theater and Dance), Ash Nichols (Professor of English), Brett Pearson (Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy), Melinda Schlitt (Professor of Art History), and Cotten Seiler (Associate Professor of American Studies) in addition to Associate Provosts Brenda Bretz and Bob Winston, and Director of Institutional Research Mike Johnson. The committee reports to the Academic Program & Standards Committee (with liaison to the Faculty Personnel Committee and the Planning & Budget Committee). We have met weekly since August 2012 and held an open faculty meeting to discuss our faculty workload recommendation on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

In making these recommendations we have relied heavily on three sources of data: (1) our Fall 2012 Faculty Survey (developed by the Resource Committee) in which faculty specifically commented on strengths and weaknesses of the college as well as faculty workload, (2) the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) faculty survey, and (3) a faculty workload analysis examining course teaching, student advising, and college service loads. Our recommendations are focused on areas in which the evidence suggested a substantial problem or inequality that could be addressed at an institutional level. Because these recommendations are at the institutional level they do not address specific program, department, or division concerns. We found that faculty often feel very burdened by their specific obligations, classes, students, advising, or service. The focus groups we suggest (in section 1) are meant to provide a forum for discussing and finding solutions for these specific structural concerns.

We have attempted to make recommendations that do not require more staff/administrators. Although some recommendations (e.g., improved mentoring) will appear to increase workload for some faculty, we believe all will lead to greater efficiency and equality overall. However, even if all these changes were made (and made well and fully) we would still have inequality across people, programs, departments, and divisions. So the goal has been to create less inequality rather than equality. Finally, we

have intended to make realistic recommendations, many of which should be able to be implemented immediately and created a method for implementation and follow-up.

### **I. Make an Institutional Commitment to Improving Administrative Efficiency**

The HERI survey (slide 75) showed the Dickinson College faculty felt significantly less stress associated with institutional procedures and "red tape" when compared to both peer comparison groups. Furthermore, 50% of Dickinson faculty also felt (slide 71) that it was very descriptive at Dickinson that "Administrators consider faculty concerns when making policy." This statement was seen as significantly more descriptive compared to both peer comparison groups. Nonetheless as the quotes below show (from the Fall 2012 Faculty Survey) many faculty members commented on too much bureaucracy and administrative busywork.

Quotes from Fall 2012 Faculty Survey:

- *"Overload of bureaucratic documentation and administrivia"*
- *"More administrators, it would seem, should lead to a reduced faculty work load, but the converse is true. The more administrators, the more silly meetings are required."*
- *"An administration that continues to grow (especially student affairs side) and still pushes many administrative tasks down to the department level taking away from teaching and other types of student engagement (i.e. too much bureaucracy)"*
- *"Administrative policies and procedures that function by asking faculty to do the work necessary"*

Analysis of the growth in administrative positions shows an increase from 191 in 2003 to 281 in 2012. Furthermore, the ratio of administrators to faculty has increased from 1.15 in 2003 to 1.34 in 2012. That is, the increase in administrators is greater than the increase in faculty over the 9-year period. Some of this increase is the consequence of reclassification of existing staff positions as administrative. The ration of staff/administrators to faculty over this time period actually fell from 2.86 to 2.79.

The below recommendations reflect the fact that it is not immediately clear what is driving the increase in number of administrators, nor whether this increase actually creates more work for faculty. Furthermore, many concerns about administrative inefficiencies are quite specific either to an individual, a department, or a division. Further discussions about this issue by the members of the Resource Group reveal that faculty sometimes want more administrators/staff to help them but at the same time want fewer administrators/staff overall. Faculty focus groups could help to address these specific concerns, communicate the reasons behind certain requirements and procedures, and show institutional commitment to improved efficiency.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Communicate an institutional commitment to improving administrative efficiency and reducing service demands on faculty. This includes expecting administrators

to consider how changes in procedures and required forms will impact faculty workload (for example, forms related to accommodations and field trips).

[President's Staff, Associate Provost/Academic Affairs]

2. Convene faculty focus groups that can discuss and identify excessive red tape and administrative inefficiencies as well possible strategies for improvement.  
[Academic Affairs, College Counsel, HR Services]
3. Examine what is specifically driving the increase in Administrative positions. Determine how many of these positions were new (as opposed to reclassified staff positions), how they were distributed across divisions/departments, how many of the positions are associated with faculty responsibilities, how many were mandated by legal requirements, etc. [HR services and Associate Provost]

## **II. Create Greater Equality in College Service**

When the faculty was asked for their thoughts on the topic of "Faculty Workload" (via open-ended response on the Fall 2012 Faculty Survey), issues pertaining to college service appeared most frequently among the replies. The comments reflected the fact that service at the college level comes in a variety of forms, including not only the seven elected standing committees and two student conduct boards, but also through unelected committees (e.g. pre-health, institutional review board, various advisory and steering committees, sub-committees), working groups, panel discussions, co-curricular activities, etc. While concerns regarding the overall time spent on college service were occasionally expressed, data from the HERI Faculty Service indicate that faculty at Dickinson do not have a higher service commitment compared to other institutions. We therefore focused our attention on the issue of inequality in college service. For example, the two comments below are representative of those addressing such inequality:

- *"The uneven engagement of the faculty in all-college service. Some are called on frequently to serve, others very rarely, which creates the perception of an inequality. Also, chairing while serving on a major committee can be debilitating to faculty."*
- *"Service is not evenly distributed among the faculty... I have been continually expected to serve on nearly every committee, working group, subgroup, etc. related to diversity, ...."*

Based on the Faculty Workload Analysis compiled by the Office of Institutional Research, it appears as if the college has done a relatively good job of equalizing the service load. The Nominating Committee tries to evenly distribute committee assignments and avoid having department or program chairs serve on major committees. That being said, there are a few areas where meaningful differences in service commitment are evident:

- At both the individual and departmental levels, there are outliers at the low and high ends of the spectrum. In other words, there are some individuals and departments who spend *significantly* more time on college service than other individuals or departments while others spend *significantly* less.
- The average number of service credits per faculty member is statistically significantly higher for Division 3 faculty as compared to Divisions 1 and 2.

- The average service load for associate and full professors is more than 50% greater than the average service load for assistant professors (given the expectations for tenure outlined in the *Academic Handbook*, the committee thought this was as it should be).

### **Recommendations:**

1. Continue to make the evolving method of counting service credits as comprehensive and representative as possible. In addition, create a centralized database for service credits so it can be accessed when making committee assignments/recommendations. [Associate Provost, Nominating Committee, FPC]
2. Work on making efficiencies in committee service so that both faculty and administrators are sensitive to not tapping the same faculty repeatedly or having many faculty on a committee when fewer might do. This is particularly important for areas in which some faculty have special expertise or backgrounds that make them candidates for repeated service (e.g., diversity or minority representation, gender issues). [FPC, Associate Provost]
3. Review how faculty are used in committees, ad hoc groups, searches, commissions, etc. in an attempt to lessen faculty workload without sacrificing the sense of faculty governance. [FPC]
4. Inform the faculty of the process and factors involved in creating a list of possible nominees for committee service. [Nominating Committee, FPC]
5. Consider modifying committee elections such that:
  - a. only one nomination is put forward by the Nominating Committee for each open standing committee position (except for FPC). This could better equalize service and prevent the frequent re-election of those whose prior service has made them more visible to the faculty. Nominations from the floor would be welcome, but in the absence of a nomination from the floor, the faculty would be voting to accept the single nomination. [FPC]
  - b. strict divisional representation would not be required for some standing committees. This would provide the nominating committee more flexibility in nominating those divisions/department/individuals who have been serving less than the average. [FPC]
6. Discuss with department chairs the importance of helping junior faculty decide when they can say “no.” Junior faculty typically have no problem finding service to meet the college’s tenure expectations, but part of improved mentoring for department chairs could reinforce this idea. [Associate Provost]

### **III. Reduce Workload for Chairs and Increase Compensation**

“Faculty Workload” was the second most reported College-wide weakness in Fall 2012 Faculty Survey: 53 comments referred broadly to “faculty workload,” which may include chairing; 8 comments referred specifically to “department chair” responsibilities. One faculty member expressed that many chairs were “*overwhelmed and exhausted by mid-semester, especially those chairing committees and large departments.*” Others reported that chairing had a detrimental impact on research, and that “*it was difficult to recover the*

*loss of momentum*” after a term as chair. Here we should keep in mind that about 87% of Dickinson respondents identified their research as “essential” or “very important” in the 2010-2011 HERI survey.

A common concern in the Fall 2012 Faculty Survey was that “*those taking on onerous service burdens (FPC, chairs of large departments) are insufficiently compensated.*” Yearly course reassigned time for chairs was eliminated after the move to a 5-course load and 6-year sabbatical cycle. Some respondents remarked that it was time to reintroduce yearly course reassigned time for department chairs. Under the current system, faculty members are offered one reassigned course every three years or an annual \$1,500 stipend (the monetary equivalent of 1/3 of a course). While some faculty choose the stipend, the College’s current goal (when financially feasible) is to establish a one-course-per-year release as the norm and phase out the stipend option, as the Fall 2012 Faculty Survey responses overwhelmingly indicated that, where chairing is concerned, faculty need time over money. Note: In the case of small departments and program coordinators a stipend may still be more appropriate than a course release.

There was also some concern about the effectiveness of individual chairs particularly with regard to interactions between chairs and junior faculty. Faculty reported a lack of “*mentorship for junior faculty,*” and that “*Department chairs (with skewed understandings of contemporary pressures to publish) can push personal agendas that detract from (junior) faculty time for research.*” Comments like these suggest that additional training emphasis needs to be placed on developing mentoring and personnel management skills for chairs.

On a related topic, one faculty member spoke to inefficiency in chairing: “*There are no horizontal connections within the departments, and even slightest problems have to be solved through the chair. I find it confusing and not effective at times.*” While faculty appeared to agree that chairs should be better compensated, responses on the effectiveness of the chairing structure differed. More or different training for chairs (specifically, training that encourages delegation) might resolve perceptions of inequity, lack of communication, or ineffectiveness within departments. Perceived inequities might also be resolved during training by offering faculty a more nuanced picture of the unique challenges of each department and emphasizing that the stresses and responsibilities often vary widely from one department to another.

The recommendations for addressing chairing issues appear below. We realize that these suggestions might appear to increase (rather than decrease) department chair workload, however we believe that this outcome will not necessarily be the case. We note that chairs are already expected to attend new chair training and chairs’ meetings and that improving the training of chairs will increase efficiency, make workload more equitable, improve mentoring, and therefore actually reduce the overall chairing workload.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Continue to increase support of department chairs (with additional money or course reassigned time). Goal should be a course reassigned time. [Academic Affairs through the budgeting process]

2. Enhance training of all new chairs with the goal of increasing efficiency. Teach chairs about leadership (including for example conflict resolution), mentoring, how to distribute/share work, how to develop efficiencies, how to lead a meeting, etc. Communicate to chairs the institutional expectation of equity in service at the department level. Chairs should also be reminded of the *Academic Handbook* expectations of their required communications with junior faculty as part of the personnel review process. [Academic Affairs and FPC]
3. Make it clear to chairs that it is the expectation of the College that they participate in training workshops and meetings and that FPC will evaluate their performance as chairs as part of regular reviews. [FPC and Academic Affairs]
4. Communicate the institutional expectation that chairs delegate some tasks to other department members. Examples of work that can be delegated: assessment, study abroad advising, admissions contact, prospective student contact, advising of non-declared majors, etc. [Academic Affairs and FPC document on chairing responsibilities]
5. Ease the burden on chairs by eliminating expedited reviews of senior faculty. [FPC]
6. Have departments discuss the possibility of cross-departmental tasking. Can faculty from less burdened departments help others – perhaps in advising or in doing admissions events, etc.? [Academic Affairs]
7. Evaluate the possibilities of creating efficiencies through the merging of departments. [Academic Affairs, APSC and FPC]

#### **IV. Improve Mentoring**

The issue of mentoring centers primarily on junior (un-tenured) faculty with respect to their senior colleagues and their periodic reviews. Concerns reflect everything from what is “expected” within a given department, to what is “expected” by the College, to “how” they should be teaching to achieve the best results in an evaluative context. Also related, however, is the issue of mentoring more broadly across faculty ranks, most particularly with respect to department chairs and lack of consistency or effectiveness in how chairs operate.

The HERI faculty survey did not specifically ask about mentoring although to the question of whether Dickinson College provided “adequate training for administrative leadership,” 28% of Dickinson faculty responded yes and 67% no (this was similar to the responses from our peer institutions). This perception dovetails with the statements below (quotes from the Fall 2012 Faculty Survey) regarding irregularity in the way department chairs function, and the lack of understanding among junior faculty about governance.

Comments from Fall 2012 Faculty Survey:

- *“A vacuum of senior faculty mentoring for junior faculty. One's workload increases in an unproductive way when the amount of work, or where to best to concentrate one's efforts for success, are unknown. For example, no one in my department has ever spoken to me, for the last ten years, about how to read a teaching evaluation.”*

- “*Junior faculty can feel threatened by strong personalities in departments with relatively few senior colleagues, and/or senior colleagues who take strong positions on their research agendas.*”
- “*Greater attention by senior faculty in the voices of their untenured junior colleagues in all department deliberations where college policy is not violated. This varies greatly by department.*”
- “*Lack of institutionalized mentoring through the tenure process. Some departments provide very good, if ad hoc, mentoring; others none at all. I appreciate(d) the FPC info sessions, but departmental mentoring and information-provision should be more institutionalized.*”
- “*Younger faculty haven't been taught how self-governance works, so even when they are put on committees they tend to be silent ... leaving the work and public speech to aging senior faculty.*”

### **Recommendations:**

1. Establish an informal group of senior faculty from all divisions (relatively small), to be available for consultation by junior faculty. These faculty will have been former members of FPC, and will be selected by the Provost in consultation with the present FPC. Junior faculty may seek advice about teaching, scholarship, and service (or other department-related issues) if they wish to speak with a knowledgeable colleague other than their department chair, Provost, Associate Provost, or current FPC member. Length of participation by senior faculty can be determined as appropriate and effective. Service in this capacity should be voluntary. [FPC, Provost]
2. Improve training of department chairs with respect to mentoring junior faculty. Section III describes increased training of department chairs in general. Part of this training should focus on how to best mentor junior faculty. Chairs should be reminded of the expectation of regular communication with junior faculty, especially during the review process. Also, junior faculty should be fully involved in all department business including hiring. Junior faculty’s role in personnel issues is outlined in the *Academic Handbook*. [Academic Affairs]
3. Chairs of standing committees should be expected to mentor new faculty members on the committee (especially junior faculty) about the importance of faculty self-governance as well as what is expected on that particular committee. [Standing Committee Chairs]

### **V. Create Greater Equality in and Clearer Standards for Advising**

Advising students as they navigate all-College and departmental major curricula is one of the professional expectations of faculty—it is, according to the *Academic Handbook* (Chapter 4, Section II.3.a, on pages 4-8), an element of “teaching effectiveness.” However, there is a perception among a number of faculty that advising duties fall disproportionately on some members, while others do not do their fair share. Some faculty responding to the Fall 2012 Faculty Survey described the distribution of the advising workload as “uneven.” There is a sense that some faculty and perhaps departments are more engaged in advising than others, in terms of hours spent, number of advisees, and the quality of the advising relationship. Faculty also spoke to the need for

clearer standards and more effective training for advising, as many are unsure how to evaluate the quality and relative amount of their own and their colleagues' advising.

Comments from Fall 2012 Faculty Survey:

- *“Some faculty invest a lot of time and energy into advising while others do not.”*
- *“Uneven advising and uneven advising responsibilities. Some are spending a tremendous amount of time and energy on advising students - the question is how to take this into account. It's not a simple matter of numbers - thought this can make a difference - but in terms of time spent ... [i.e.] writing letters of recommendation not only for current students but also alums. If one is in a department with many majors and doing a good job advising, then it can take a significant amount of time vs. those who may only have a couple of advisees—or those who have tons but don't really advise.”*

Some of these perceptions of unevenness and inequity correlate with data from the Faculty Workload Analysis prepared by the Office of Institutional Research for the period between Fall 2007 and Fall 2012. Some divisions, departments, and faculty members have heavier advising loads than others, an inevitable result of the College's commitment to major-based advising, First-Year Seminar advising, and pre-health advising, and of most departments' practice of allowing majors to choose their advisors. The College has made progress in eliminating some inequities in advising through the work of the Dean of Advising and the Class Deans to redistribute advisees for faculty on sabbaticals, though more could be done. It bears noting, however, that faculty perceptions of inequity are in some cases contradicted by Faculty Workload Analysis data, among which are the following:

- Division 3 has an advising load (20.7 students) comparable to that of Division 2 (23.3) when pre-health advising is taken into consideration. Division 1 has an average load of 11.3 students.
- Undecided student advisees are already evenly distributed among the three divisions; and
- Average number of advisees varies only slightly by rank: full professors have 18.7; associate professors 20.3; assistant professors 16.2 (non-tenure-track faculty have 11).

## **Recommendations:**

1. Make an institutional commitment to equitable distribution of advising loads. The Dean of Advising should be as transparent as possible in communicating how her office attempts to, and generally succeeds in, distributing advising loads among divisions, departments, and individual faculty members. She should also help to make the necessary changes that lead to equity in advising load [Dean of Advising].
2. At the institutional level, articulate advising expectations with a written set of criteria and goals. Student evaluation of advising is an option that must be carefully considered. Students could be polled on the effectiveness of the advising they have received, from both their first-year seminar advisors and their major advisors. These student evaluations could then be part of the criteria with which FPC evaluates a faculty member's advising load and effectiveness [FPC].
3. Where practical, increase efficiencies in advising so that it may be shared by related departments or special group advising (e.g., pre-health, pre-law). Consider the possibility of general "group advising" for departments (as needed) prior to preregistration each term [Dean of Advising].
4. As part of an institutional initiative to mentor department chairs, emphasize the importance of distributing major advising equitably among department members. It should be noted that responsibility for overseeing advising within the department is a task that chairs may delegate to another colleague. The Dean of Advising, again, must work closely with chairs to convey and control advising loads. These structures and possibilities are already in place; they need to be enforced and monitored [Dean of Advising, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs].
5. Expect each department chair to hold, at least once per academic year, a department meeting to discuss all-college and departmental "best practices" in advising and revisions as needed. These practices could then extend into department-wide advising sessions for students on topics such as how to navigate the major, how to get a job after graduation, how to apply to graduate school, etc. [Associate Provost for Academic Affairs].

## **Appendix: Description of Primary Sources of Data**

### **Fall 2012 Faculty Survey**

Online anonymous survey administered to Dickinson full-time faculty, October 10, 2012 through October 25, 2012. Part one of the survey asked faculty members to identify up to three strengths and three weaknesses of the college and were provided open text boxes for their responses. Part two of the survey asked faculty members to provide up to three strengths and three weaknesses of the overall academic program. In part three faculty members were asked to express up to three concerns they had regarding faculty workload. One final text box was provided for any additional comments the faculty wanted to provide that was not addressed in the previous questions on the survey. Seventy-eight faculty members responded to the survey (~ 43% response rate). All comments were categorized major topic areas and tallied to identify the most frequently mentioned topics and concerns. Files with the actual comments as well as a summary of responses are available.

### **HERI Faculty Survey**

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey is designed to provide colleges and universities with timely information about the attitudes, experiences, concerns, job satisfaction, workload, teaching practices, and professional activities of collegiate faculty and administrators. Information resulting from the survey can be used to facilitate self study and accreditation activities; inform campus planning and policy analysis; enhance faculty development programs; and improve students' educational experiences. This survey has been administered to full-time and part-time faculty members at Dickinson College in 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and most recently in 2010. The instrument has changed very little since the 2001 administration. The response rate for the 2010 survey was 49% and typically varies from 40% to 50% among Dickinson faculty. Analyses allow comparisons with other institutions on the same questions as well as examination of change across time at Dickinson. A summary power point presentation with key results is available.

### **Faculty Workload Analysis**

Analysis was conducted by the Office of Institutional Research on various aspects of faculty workload from Fall 2007 through Spring 2012 to include: course teaching load, student advising load and college service load. Banner was the primary data sources for analyzing the course teaching load. For analysis of advising and college service, Academic Affairs examined faculty CVs (and other records of college service). The analyses included comparing each area of workload by academic rank, division and department. A summary power point presentation with key results is available.