Custom Research Brief

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I. Research Methodology

**Project Challenge**  Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do other institutions determine and justify appropriate instructional and non-instructional faculty workload expectations?
- What instructional and non-instructional workload requirements do other institutions maintain?
- What systems do institutions maintain to weigh non-instructional workload?
- What responsibilities are counted toward non-instructional workload or overload?
- What unit-specific policies do administrators allow academic managers (e.g., department chairs, college deans) to develop independently for the colleges or departments they oversee?
- Who is responsible for enforcing workload policies?
- What accountability mechanisms are in place to enforce these policies?

**Project Sources**  The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Advisory Board’s internal and online research libraries [www.educationadvisoryboard.com](http://www.educationadvisoryboard.com)
- Institution websites
The Forum interviewed senior academic affairs administrators at five public institutions.

### A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>15,400/17,500</td>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>12,100/14,800</td>
<td>Doctoral/Research Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>9,400/11,500</td>
<td>Doctoral/Research Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University D</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>10,000/14,000</td>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University E</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>17,200/20,300</td>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Executive Overview

**Key Findings**

All profiled institutions maintain a workload expectation for full-time faculty of the equivalent of twelve credit hours per semester; the standard teaching load for research-active faculty is three three-credit courses per semester. However, faculty involved in particularly intensive research may be released from additional teaching obligations, typically up to one additional course. Certain faculty who complete minimal research may teach up to seven three-credit courses per year. However, the vast majority of faculty teach three three-credit courses per semester.

All profiled institutions maintain flexible workload policies; department chairs determine personalized workload expectations with each faculty member. Contacts report multiple benefits to a decentralized, flexible workload policy, the greatest being the ability for departments to capitalize on each faculty member’s strengths. For example, some faculty better suited for teaching may teach three courses one semester and four the next, whereas research-intensive faculty may teach as few as two courses per semester. Department chairs are responsible for enforcing faculty workloads, which they typically report during or after annual reviews.

Research and significant administrative responsibilities release faculty from teaching responsibilities, whereas service such as advising and participation in university governance are expected responsibilities (in addition to the equivalent of a twelve credit-hour teaching load). Typically, department chairs and deans maintain reduced teaching loads. Certain courses may also count for additional credit; for example, teaching particularly large sections may release faculty from a course expectation. At some institutions, graduate courses are weighed more heavily than undergraduate courses (e.g., a three-credit graduate course counts as four credits towards a faculty member’s teaching load).

Faculty rarely work overload, but supplemental pay is more common. Typical sources of supplemental pay include summer teaching, course development for online delivery, and teaching distance education courses. Faculty typically receive compensation for summer teaching and distance education based on a percentage of their base salary. They typically receive stipends to develop online courses, but do not typically receive supplemental pay for online instruction only.

The provost, college deans, and department chairs at one institution measure faculty productivity through student to faculty ratios. Although the institution maintains a university-wide goal of 20 students to one faculty member, colleges and departments maintain their own ratios. These measures of productivity, in addition to enrollment trends, mission of the university, and programmatic needs, determine funding and position reallocation for departments.
### III. Workload Policies

**Development** *Departments Develop Unit-Specific Policies to Accommodate Program Needs*

Senior academic affairs administrators at all profiled institutions assign responsibility to college deans and department chairs for developing unit-specific faculty workload policies, with the approval of the provost. However, all profiled institutions maintain a standard instructional workload requirement of nine credit hours per semester for full-time, tenure-track, research-active faculty. This is based on a twelve credit-hour equivalent workload expectation, with the equivalent workload of one course per semester reassigned for research.

Contacts explain multiple benefits to offering flexible, decentralized workload policies:

- **Department chairs have the flexibility to adapt course offerings to student demand:** Student demand for courses varies by semester. Flexible policies allow department chairs to assign courses to faculty based on area of expertise while also optimizing course offerings each semester based on student demand and each program’s ideal course progression.

- **Departments capitalize on the strengths of individual faculty members:** Department chairs may assign some faculty with more courses while they expect additional research from other faculty, based on individual faculty members’ strengths and academic pursuits.

**Compact Planning Model**

Administrators at University D are implementing a compact planning model for faculty workload development, based on a hierarchy of contracts, referred to as compacts. This model was initially implemented in the North Carolina State University System and the State University of New York (SUNY) System.

- **Faculty Member Compact**
  Department chairs write compacts for each faculty member, individualizing workload expectations based on research and administrative responsibilities.

- **Department Compact**
  College deans write compacts with department chairs to outline department expectations, including teaching productivity.

- **College Compact**
  The provost writes compacts with college deans to establish college-wide productivity expectations and standard workload expectations.
Align Workload Policies with Tenure and Promotion Expectations

Contacts explain that it is crucial to align workload policies with tenure and promotion expectations in order to reconcile expectations of individual faculty members with institutional mission. For example, contacts at University C explain that their policies still reflect a culture in which tenure depended on publications; however, the institution now focuses more on quality teaching and community engagement. Therefore, administrators are revising promotion and tenure expectations and workload policies to credit faculty members for a combination of teaching, research, and service.

A faculty senate committee at University D originally submitted a proposal for a flexible workload policy in 2003 that acknowledges research and service contributions and prescribes ranges of effort expected within each workload area (i.e., teaching, scholarship, and service). However, administrators have not officially implemented the policy because some work, such as advising and mentoring, has not been incorporated into tenure and promotion policies. Contacts explain that the faculty senate and academic affairs administrators should collaborate to align tenure and promotion policies with the proposed workload policies.

Incorporating Boyer’s Model of Scholarship into Workload, Tenure, and Promotion Policies

At University D, administrators are revising policies to acknowledge a broader array of scholarship as defined by Boyer’s Model. The model defines four types of scholarship:

- **Discovery:** Administrators expect faculty to build new knowledge through traditional research.
- **Integration:** Faculty should pursue cross-disciplinary work (e.g., research and teaching) and/or produce original analysis of current knowledge across a single discipline of study (e.g., comprehensive literature reviews or authoring a textbook).
- **Application:** Faculty should devote time to service activities that foster the application of their studies through community engagement.
- **Teaching:** The majority of most faculty members’ workloads is devoted to teaching.

Contacts explain that, when developing non-instructional and instructional workload expectations, they must accurately reflect the proportional amount of time required in each mode of scholarship for faculty to obtain tenure.

Part-Time Workload Policies Must Exempt University from Providing Benefits

Contacts explain that part-time workload policies must reflect the maximum workload faculty can legally be assigned without earning eligibility for additional benefits. For example, University D allows part-time faculty to teach up to seven credit hours per semester according to IRS guidelines. Contacts explain that the IRS may express concern with faculty who teach over seven credit-hours per semester but retain part-time status and do not receive benefits. Similarly, the human resources office at University E requests that administrators limit part-time faculty workload to 12 credit-hours per year because these faculty do not receive benefits. However, some departments want to hire adjunct faculty to teach more than 12 credit hours per year so they can offer additional courses within that faculty member’s area of expertise. Therefore, the provost is discussing this policy with the human resources department.
Policies Require the Equivalent of a 12-credit-hour Workload per Semester

All profiled institutions expect full-time, tenure-track faculty to maintain the equivalent of a 12-credit-hour workload per semester (24-credit-hours per nine months), which includes teaching, research, and service. Although in most cases a three-credit course counts as three-credit hours, the following activities may count toward additional credit hours:

- **Graduate courses:** Some contacts have considered granting additional weight to graduate courses when determining teaching load. For example, University E previously counted three-credit graduate courses as four credits toward teaching loads. However, at all profiled institutions, current policies typically do not differentiate between undergraduate and graduate courses; this standardizes faculty workload and increases the number of credits taught per faculty member.

- **Large sections:** Faculty who teach large sections that produce a high number of student credit hours, which increases overall departmental productivity, may be released from up to one additional three-credit course. At University A, faculty teaching sections with 60 or more students receive the equivalent of four credit hours toward their teaching load for three credit-hours of instruction.

- **Thesis Supervision or Independent Study:** At University A, faculty members receive one teaching hour credit per thesis supervised. For each credit hour per semester of independent study supervised, faculty receive one-twelfth teaching hour credit for undergraduate students and one-sixth teaching hour credit for graduate students.

- **Student Teaching:** In the College of Education at University A, the supervision of four to five students is equated to three credit hours, and the supervision of 18 student teachers is equated to a full teaching load.

Release Time Incentivizes Quality Research and Administrative Undertakings

At all contact institutions, the majority of faculty teach three three-credit courses per semester, with one course reassigned for research activity. However, faculty who are particularly research-productive may receive six credit hours of reassigned time. While workload policies expect faculty to participate in professional service, university governance, student advising, and other service on campus in addition to a twelve credit-hour-equivalent workload, particularly time-intensive administrative tasks may release faculty from workload expectations. Administrative positions most frequently release faculty from teaching; other duties that may release faculty from teaching include serving as program or center directors. Student advising rarely releases faculty from teaching expectations.

Sample Administrative Responsibilities that Release Faculty from Teaching Expectations

- **Department Chairs**
  - At University A, department chairs teach *six credit hours per semester.*

- **Assistant Deans**
  - At University B, assistant deans teach *three courses per year.*

- **Associate Deans**
  - At University B, associate deans teach *two courses per year.*
Supplemental Pay and Overload

Supplemental Pay Incentivizes Online Course Development, Distance Education, and Summer Teaching

Institutions often offer supplemental pay for the following activities:

- **Online course development:** While most administrators believe supplementing online course instruction “cannot be defended in principle or sustained in practice”¹ institutions often offer stipends to incentivize online course development, which average around $3,000.

- **Summer teaching:** Faculty who instruct during the summer receive supplemental pay, often based on their base salary. At University D, faculty receive seven percent of their base salary per course.

- **Distance education:** At University A, faculty receive compensation for teaching in-load courses that they deliver at remote locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance to Remote Location</th>
<th>Percentage of 9-Month Equivalent Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20 miles</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-40 miles</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60 miles</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 miles</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overload Pay is Rare and Discouraged by Accrediting Organizations

Overload pay across all profiled institutions is rare, and contacts at University D explain that overload is discouraged by accrediting organizations. However, department chairs and deans may approve of faculty overload in emergency situations (e.g., an instructor suddenly went on medical leave). A research-active faculty member who is already teaching three courses in a semester typically receives overload for a fourth class, though this burden of responsibility is rare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>$2,100 per course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>$3,000 per course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University E</td>
<td>2.5% of base salary per credit hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Oversight and Enforcement

**Individual Faculty Members**  
*Department Chairs Develop Personalized Workload Expectations with Faculty Members*

At all profiled institutions, department chairs meet with individual faculty members to determine workload, based on a 12 credit-hour equivalent expectation. Although the standard workload for research-active faculty is nine credit-hours of teaching supplemented by the equivalent of three-credit hours of research, some faculty member’s teaching hours may be reduced to six credit-hours for particularly intensive research, book writing, or publications (e.g., four to six journal articles per semester). During the annual review process, faculty submit a review of their workload to department chairs. At University B, department chairs report individual faculty workloads to their respective deans during a faculty activity reporting, which occurs in August.

**Department-wide Productivity**  
*Deans and Provosts Measure Productivity Based on Student-Faculty Ratios*

Administrators at University C enforce productivity through established expected student-faculty ratios for each college rather than individual faculty workloads. Four years ago, the institution established a student-faculty ratio target of 20 to one (at the time, the ratio was around 16 or 17 to one). The provost and college deans develop targets for each college and deans develop a range of ratios for each department and/or program within the college under his or her supervision.

**Range of Student to Faculty Ratios at University C**

- **23:1** The College of Arts and Sciences maintains the largest student to faculty ratio, in large part due to the amount of high-enrollment introductory courses.

- **16:1** The College of Education maintains the lowest student to faculty ratio. For undergraduates, the ratio is 20:1, whereas the ratio of graduate students to faculty is 14:1.
Department Productivity Affects Funding and Position Allocation

Senior academic affairs administrators determine funding decisions and position reallocation in part according to department productivity, measured by student to faculty ratios and/or student credit hours produced. Administrators consider the following when determining where to reallocate a vacant position:

- **Department productivity**: based on student to faculty ratios
- **University mission**: based on the strategic plan of academic affairs at for the university and individual colleges
- **Enrollment trends**: based on predicted areas of growth
- **Programmatic need**: based on subject-area expertise of current faculty

Administrators at University A review the *Delaware Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity* to benchmark departmental productivity and establish productivity expectations in terms of student to faculty ratios.

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