

# PROVOST'S TASK FORCE ON RESEARCH FACULTY WORKLOADS

## RESPONSE TO FRA FACULTY SURVEY ON RESEARCH FACULTY WORKLOADS

### REPORT OF FINDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION

The Provost's Task Force on Research Faculty Workloads (RFW Taskforce) thanks the UCCS Faculty Representative Assembly, and especially its President, Professor David C. Moon, for administering the Research Faculty Workload Survey during January 2022.

The RFW Taskforce has met to discuss the results of the Survey, and we have put together this report. This report summarizes responses to the Survey and compiles patterns of faculty comments to particular questions.

#### SUMMARY OF RESPONSE RATE

The FRA Survey was sent to 293 TT and T faculty. 203 responses were received, a 69.2% response rate. Of those who responded, 192/203 answered every question. 37% of respondents (75) were Assistant Professors; 24% of respondents (49) were Associate Professors; 31% of respondents (62) were Full Professors; and 8% of respondents (17) did not state rank.

#### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND FACULTY COMMENTS

- I. *Q1 asked faculty to rank six different ways to support research active faculty's research: (i) lower course load/year; (ii) TA support; (iii) fewer class preps/year; (iv) paid research assistants; (v) summer research stipends; (vi) reduced teaching or graduate student mentoring*
  - A. 69% of all responding faculty identified lower course load/year as the most useful strategy for providing research active faculty more time for research. When disaggregated by rank, this finding remained: 66% of Assistant Professors, 78% of Associate Professors, and 69% of Full Professors thought lowering course loads/year is the most useful strategy for providing research active faculty more time for research.
  - B. None of the other choices were nearly as frequent for responding faculty as lowering course load/year. Still, providing more robust TA support, preparing for fewer classes/year, providing paid research assistants, providing summer research stipends, and reducing graduate student mentoring were each identified as other useful strategies for providing research active faculty more time for research.
- II. *Q2 asked faculty to provide other ways to support research active faculty's research. Responses varied. However, the following trends were identified:*

- A. OSPRI needs more infrastructure to support and encourage pre-tenure TT faculty to be research active. A statistician or stats center was also frequently suggested.
  - B. Sharing software resources across CU campuses (databases, RedCap, etc.) would be helpful
  - C. Faculty teaching loads need to be considered for pre-tenure TT faculty, especially offloads for grant-writing, pubs, independent studies, student advising, no overloads. One innovative idea was to have rolling release time among TT and tenured faculty—rolling course releases through academic years across faculty in a given department/program
  - D. Service requirements need to be decreased
- III. *Q3 asked faculty to identify their contracted workload.*
- A. 64% of respondents reported that their contracted workload was 40% teaching, 40% research, 20% service. The remaining 36% varied, some with more than 40% devoted to research, some with less than 40% devoted to research. However, across all respondents, 87% reported that their research workload was at least 40%, while 13% reported that their research workload was less than 40%
- IV. *Q4 asked faculty what, in their experience, what percent of their workload was actually dedicated to research.*
- A. Answers varied: There was a significant difference between faculty's contractual workload dedicated to research (item Q3 above, typically 40-40-20) and how faculty reported *actually* spending their time. The mode among respondents was 20% of their time on research with a mean of 27% (for those who reported the typical 40-40-20 workload). Such results indicate that faculty do not experience sufficient time to allocate the expected time to their research.
- V. *Q5 asked faculty to rate themselves on a scale reflecting their research activity, from 'Not at all,' to 'Slightly,' to 'Moderately,' to 'Very,' to 'Extremely'.*
- A. <2% of respondents ranked themselves Not at all; 11% of respondents ranked themselves as Slightly; 30% of respondents ranked themselves as Moderately; 29% of respondents ranked themselves as Very; and 29% of respondents ranked themselves as Extremely
- VI. *Q6 asked faculty why they ranked themselves as they did in Q5. Responses varied. However, the following trends were identified:*
- A. Explanations split into two general sorts: the first explains why faculty are research active; the second explains why they are not research active
  - B. Group 1 talks about publications, research grant submissions and received, mentoring time with students, getting research awards

- C. Group 2 talks about too much teaching, service, COVID and personal life disruptions
  - D. A number of faculty noted that research happens in the summer but not during the academic year because of the heavy teaching loads
  - E. A few faculty noted that their research requires travel and that teaching schedules impinge on their scholarship
  - F. A few faculty noted that managing equipment is a big part of the job for them as PIs in certain kinds of labs and that lab techs are needed
- VII. *Q7 asked faculty to rate their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with how much time they currently have to dedicate to research/creative work on a scale from 'Extremely Dissatisfied,' to 'Moderately Dissatisfied,' to 'Slightly Dissatisfied,' to 'Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied,' to 'Slightly Satisfied,' to 'Moderately Satisfied,' to 'Extremely Satisfied'.*
- A. 69% of all respondents (140) rated their satisfaction as either extremely dissatisfied, moderately dissatisfied, or slightly dissatisfied; 18% of all respondents (26) rated their satisfaction as either slightly satisfied, moderately satisfied, or extremely satisfied; 6% of all respondents (12) rated their satisfaction as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; and 7% of respondents (15) did not respond to this question
  - B. When the findings are disaggregated by faculty rank, 72% of all Assistant Professors are dissatisfied, 86% of all Associate Professors are dissatisfied, and 69% of all Full Professors are dissatisfied, illustrating a similar pattern of dissatisfaction across ranks.
- VIII. *Q8 asked faculty to state what they found most and least satisfying about the time they currently have for research/creative work. Responses varied. However, the following trends were noted:*
- A. There is not enough time or energy to do research given current teaching loads and poor TA/RA support
  - B. There is too much service/administrative work requested, which limits time for research because teaching time and tasks cannot be altered
  - C. There is too much student (undergraduate and graduate) mentoring
  - D. Online teaching has been so demanding that it has cut into research time
  - E. There is inadequate research infrastructure (equipment, staff, mentoring, statistics help, graduate student funding, etc.).
  - F. The research culture across campus needs to be improved to allow dedicated continuous time for thinking and working that is not disjointed.

- IX. *Q13 asked faculty to think about the objective of the taskforce by stating “The strategic planning process identified a “2-2” faculty course load per academic year as a target for research active faculty. As we think about how to realize that goal, where would you suggest we start?”*
- A. 58% of respondents suggested starting with a solution that provides faculty who exceed expectations for research in their annual review a 2-2 teaching load. 52% listed this option as their second choice, easily making it the most popular starting solution.
  - B. The next preferred starting place was offering a 2-2 teaching load to new faculty hires, with 35% of respondents suggesting this as their top strategy and 58% suggesting this as their second-choice strategy.
  - C. Faculty comments included giving faculty autonomy in selecting their workload each year depending on their goals, starting with all pre-tenure faculty, counting summer teaching as part of the workload credit, and being careful not to create have/have not perceptions of research active units.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Research Workload Taskforce is grateful for the efforts that went into constructing and administering the Research Workload Survey. We have learned that some concerns are shared across all ranks of TT faculty and that some concerns are more salient for one group rather than another. We will use these findings as guideposts and guard rails for our deliberations about developing three viable models for improving campus support for research active faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

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