

Faculty Roles & Rewards

Q-and-A piece for Academic Affairs' Newsletter

UNCW has recently undertaken an initiative focused on faculty roles and rewards. The Task Force on Faculty Roles & Rewards is charged with examining and describing faculty roles as they currently exist at UNCW. The results will be used to recommend ways of better aligning faculty assignments with our reward structure.

The active engagement of the faculty is vital to this effort's success, and one of the Task Force's aims is to maximize opportunities for communication and faculty participation. The following question-and-answer piece is intended to address some questions that have been posed to task force members about the Faculty Roles & Rewards initiative.

Q: What is meant by "faculty roles?"

A: Faculty roles is a term that refers to the tasks and activities an individual performs in his or her capacity as a faculty member as well as the distribution of those tasks and activities. Teaching, scholarship/creative activity, service, and/or administration are four areas into which these professional activities can often be categorized.

Q: What is encompassed by faculty rewards?

A: While the tendency may be to focus on rewards such as tenure, promotion, and salary, faculty rewards covers a much broader array of acknowledgements, honors, and awards. Programs such as the Awards for Excellence, Educational Leave, and Faculty Development, Research, and Service grants all constitute elements of UNCW's rewards system. Other rewards are less formalized, such as the amount of departmental travel funds or office and research space allocated to a particular faculty member.

Q: Why should UNCW undertake this faculty roles and rewards initiative?

A: In recent years, many universities have initiated formal study of their systems of faculty roles and rewards, in an effort to better align these systems and enhance faculty members' opportunities to be professionally successful within them. The faculty is any institution's most important asset, and it makes sense to ensure that the university's roles and rewards structures are well-understood and operating in unison, in order to be maximally supportive of faculty members. UNCW's initiative was undertaken in response to the faculty's interest in evaluation, faculty assignments and distribution of effort, and reward system. The initiative will result in a better understanding of current faculty roles and workload practices, and recommendations for ways of improving their alignment with the institution's reward system.

Q: Is there a standard workload expectation for a full-time faculty member at UNCW, and if so, what is it?

A: Yes, there is a standard load. The UNC Policy Manual 400.3.4 states that “Standard faculty teaching load measured by number of organized class courses a faculty member is assigned in a given academic year is the following: Masters (Comprehensive) I: 6.” The Faculty Handbook addresses faculty workload by referring to the UNCW Faculty Workload Policy, which provides the following parameters:

Several concepts are important for departments to keep in mind as they develop workload policies.

- First, a full workload for a faculty member at UNCW is considered to be a teaching assignment of four three-credit hour courses per semester including credit hour equivalencies as defined below (4/4), and the completion of the routinely expected faculty duties such as advising, committee work, professional development, etc.
- Second, departures from the full workload teaching schedule to a schedule of four three-credit hour courses in one semester and three three-credit hour courses in the second semester(4/3) or three three-credit hour courses per semester (3/3) are possible, but must reflect a faculty member's involvement in research and/or artistic or creative activities and service as well as other instructional activities.
- Third, the course load per faculty averaged across the University must be a minimum of three three-credit hour courses each semester including credit hour equivalencies. (3/3) This standard, established by General Administration, reflects the university's status as a Comprehensive Level 1 institution. This designation determines the standard, or averaged, teaching load. It is not a definition of the maximum teaching load for all faculty.
- Fourth, GA's workload guidelines give consideration for graduate instruction and laboratory and clinical instruction in assigning Credit Hour Equivalents. Neither graduate instruction nor laboratory , studio, or clinical instruction should receive a one-for-one reduction, i.e. a three-credit hour reduction in course load for teaching a three-credit hour graduate course or a two-credit hour reduction for teaching a two hour studio or lab course.
- Fifth, all departmental workload policies will be reviewed by the appropriate dean and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Q: Is the Faculty Roles & Rewards initiative being driven by a desire to raise or make uniform teaching loads and/or overall workloads?

A: No, it is not. From our communications with the Provost, it is clear that the impetus for the initiative is neither to elevate teaching loads and/or workloads, nor to make them uniform. While the standard teaching load at our institution is 9 hours for research active faculty and 12 hours for lecturers, the Provost has stated that she is fully receptive to reassignments that result in a lesser teaching load. It is important, however, that such load adjustments be equitable, justifiable, and based in policy. Reassignment also carries with it an obligation to document that the reassigned time was used productively. What *is* driving this effort is the desire to ensure the

alignment of faculty roles with our rewards system. Such alignment should enhance each faculty member's ability to be successful within that rewards system.

Q: Part of the Task Force's charge is to identify "any disconnections between current faculty activities and those that faculty desire and/or need to pursue in order to be professionally successful." What is meant by the word "disconnections?"

A: "Disconnections" refers to misalignments between systems or processes that ought to work in synch. We are being asked to identify any such misalignments between current faculty activities - their roles - and those activities that should be pursued to maximize one's professional success, which bears on rewards.

Q: Is the Task Force a policy-making body?

A: No. We are charged with collecting data and information, and then studying and recommending a model(s) for faculty effort assignment.

Q: Faculty salary is one form of faculty reward. Will the Task Force undertake an examination of salary inequities and make recommendations about faculty salaries?

A: No, we will not. As described in our charge, the Task Force's objective is to characterize faculty roles and make suggestions about how to better align those roles with UNCW's existing reward system. Our charge does not extend to an examination of the reward system or recommendations for changing that system.

Q: I have heard the phrase "differentiated faculty workload" mentioned in relation to this task force. What does that term mean?

A: Differentiated faculty workload is one approach used in making faculty effort assignments. The underlying premise is that faculty members are not all alike, but differ in terms of their professional interests and strengths. Differentiation of workload allows effort assignments that are customized to reflect each individual's talents and desires; an analogous phrase might be "individualized faculty workload." A commonly used procedure for making differentiated workload assignments is for a faculty member to work with his or her chair or director, often on an annual basis, to reconcile individual workload preferences with the unit's overall workload needs. In this way, the workload assignments of faculty members within a unit can be customized and still permit the unit to meet its teaching, scholarly, service, and administrative obligations. For example, a faculty member who wishes to undertake a significant service project might request an effort allocation of teaching = 50%, service = 40%, and scholarship/creative activity = 10%, while another faculty member in the unit may seek an effort allocation of teaching = 80%, service = 10%, and scholarship/creative activity = 10%. Differentiation supports these kind of flexible load assignments.

Q: I wish to participate in the faculty roles and rewards initiative. What are my avenues for doing so?

A: We strongly encourage faculty involvement in this process. Communication opportunities include the task force's website, <<http://www2.gasou.edu/acadaff/fr/>> which contains an electronic feedback form, as well as our charge, composition and contact information, and a summary of our meetings' action and discussion items. We will also schedule some forums for faculty to participate as well as other such opportunities for exchange throughout the year. Part of our charge includes conducting a faculty assignment survey; we are in the process of developing survey instruments, and encourage faculty members to complete the instruments when they are available.