Faculty Senate Issue Log Form

Title of Issue: Inequity in Teaching Load

Description of Issue: Across the six colleges at ODU, there is variation in the teaching load which creates inequities in work load. Our focus is on the inequity that results from the 3-3 teaching load for the College of Arts and Letters relative to the 2-2 teaching load for the Colleges of Science, Engineering, Business, and Education. We are asking the faculty senate to explore why this difference in teaching load exists and to push for a reduction in teaching load for the faculty of the College of Arts and Letters.

Rationale for Submission: With some exceptions (for example, release for administrative work, and teaching in a doctoral program), the teaching load for faculty in the College of Arts and Letters is 3-3. For the Colleges of Science, Engineering, Business, and Education however, again with some exceptions, the teaching load is 2-2. This difference in teaching load raises the question of equity in the workload. The question of equity is heightened because the criteria for determining the teaching load across colleges are unclear.

To deal with the issue of equity we ask that the faculty senate examine the following questions. The first question is, what are the criteria by which decisions are made about teaching load across the university? It is our sense that one set of criteria may be research productivity and/or grants. We could not find anything, however, that specified teaching load across the colleges and a formal process/method by which that has been determined. Whether the inequity in teaching load has happened because of criteria used by the
university in a formal process, or a less formal and more piecemeal process, uncovering this process and clarifying how decisions about teaching load are made will be a first step in reducing inequity in workload.

Once the criteria and process through which decisions about teaching load are made have been clarified, the second question is, if there is a set of criteria, when was the last time there has been an internal evaluation of the performance of the colleges based on those criteria? If, in fact, teaching load is based on research productivity and/or grants, when was the last review, who did that review, and what were the results? Whatever differences that once existed across colleges that may have warranted a difference in teaching load, these differences are likely to no longer exist. If there are differences, are they enough to warrant the inequity in teaching load? The university should well consider a reduction in teaching load for the College of Arts and Letters. The research productivity for the college is high. How much further might this productivity rise? A reduced teaching load would allow further support for the university’s desire for ODU to be recognized for its research as well as the development and success of doctoral programs, and retention of faculty.

The final question is, if there is an inequity, or even if just out of a commitment to further ODU’s ascent as a leader in research, how do we implement a lower teaching load in the College? A good way to move forward in addressing this question is to examine how reductions in teaching load have occurred, such as how other Colleges at ODU have moved toward lower teaching loads. This could include consideration of whether certain departments, which have shown greater progress in terms of rates of publishing and
receiving grants, teaching graduate students, or regularly teaching larger class sizes, warrant a reduced teaching load.

Thank you for consideration of this issue. We look forward to your response.
XiuShi Yang
Tracy Sohoni
Mona Danner

Xueh Feng
Tracy Sohoni
Mona Danner