One Hour Overload Charge

Senate Faculty Charge 2011-2012

ACTION REQUESTED: Change practice regarding faculty compensation for semester overload of one-credit-hour. Under business-as-usual conditions, compensate professors for one-credit-hour overloads unless faculty member, chair, and dean are in agreement that an adjacent semester will carry a one-credit-hour reduced load. Under the latter, the agreement should be in writing.

CURRENT POLICY: “Section E. page 3 (compensation/payroll) Extra Courses. In emergency situations, faculty may be assigned a course in addition to the regular teaching load. A faculty member will not, however, be granted overload pay if his assignment does not exceed 13 semester hours. Teaching assignment shall not exceed 16 credit hours per semester. Pay rate schedules are available in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.”

BACKGROUND: There are two areas of concern with the current policy. First, the language is ambiguous with the phase “in emergency situations”. It is not clear whether the policy should be enforced only in emergency situations or at all times. Human Resources currently enforces the latter interpretation unless the Provost’s office makes an exception. However, overload assignments are common and generally do not involve emergency situations. The second area of concern is in regard to programs like the Honors Program, which routinely needs faculty to teach the one-credit-hour Honors 101 and 102 seminars. The Honors Program has the resources to compensate these faculty, but because most faculty carry a full load, they are not eligible to receive this stipend in a business-as-usual fashion. As the Honors Program continues to grow, it needs to offer more sections of these classes each semester. To date, it has relied on volunteers, which is particularly difficult since the Honors Program is not housed in a college or department from which we can recruit, or by asking the Provost’s Office to make exceptions to the current policy. These are not sustainable practices.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES: The Honors Program has adequate budgetary resources to compensate professors for the additional one hour overloads. Additional costs to the university will be minor if most one load overloads are consistently balanced with one-hour reductions in adjacent semesters. According to Joe Wingo, the following distribution of one-hour overloads was carried during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Fall 2010
1 Professor
8 Associate Professors
2 Assistant Professors
2 Instructors

Spring 2011
1 Professor
4 Associate Professors
10 Assistant Professors
6 Instructors

SENATE ACTION:
Senate requests that the EBC evaluate the economic impact of a change to compensating one-credit-hour overloads. Senators also noted that faculty with more than 12, but less than 13, semester-hours should also be compensated if such a change was made. (Lab classes can result in fractional load-hours).

The committee discussed the issue of one-credit hour overloads because the current faculty handbook ignores compensation of credit overloads between 12 and 13 hours. The committee decided the economic impact of compensating faculty for these is not burdensome. In the 2010-11 academic year, there were 31 faculty members carrying one-credit hour overloads and six of those were for teaching one-credit Honors courses. The Honors Program is well resourced to compensate faculty for teaching its courses. The remaining 25 faculty then would cost about $21,000 to compensate (assuming an $850 rate for one credit).

Moreover, current practice is not consistent across colleges and requires the Honors Program to make compensation for faculty teaching one-credit hour Honors courses an “emergency situation.” While the current practice does give administrators greater flexibility in managing faculty teaching courses with labs, it leads to inequities and absurdities. For example, if faculty members are teaching 12 credit hours and then asked to teach one-credit hour overloads in the Honors Program, they would not be compensated unless those overloads are classified as an “emergency situation.” The committee discussed the possibility of making an exception for one-credit hour overloads in the Honor Programs, but decided such a solution does not address the core problem and paves the way for more exceptions.

Also, leaving the policy as is or making an exception may only be a stop-gap measure. It will potentially become a larger labor problem if the proposed changes to the Core Curriculum go through. One of the changes proposes to add a one-credit hour course to the Core Curriculum. If adopted, the number of faculty teaching 13 credits without compensation will rise significantly.

RECOMMENDATION:

At the September 7, 2012 Faculty Senate meeting, the senate accepted a motion to forward a recommendation to the provost that faculty receive overload compensation for any teaching load of 13 hours or above. The motion was unanimously approved.