

March 28, 2016

Dear President Johnson, Provost Boyd, Deans, and Department Heads:

The Senate understands you are deliberating about faculty workload policies and will be engaging the faculty and the Senate at a later date. As we understand it, the goal of this exercise is to encourage, facilitate and reward research productivity. **We support this goal.**

As you work on this endeavor, we request that you consider the following guiding principles that balance this important goal of facilitating research productivity with other considerations important to our shared mission. Undoubtedly you have thought of these factors; we enumerate them nonetheless out of a desire to ensure that any solutions pursued take a holistic view that facilitates success and innovation among our faculty. We also wish to relate the feedback and input we have received from faculty during the past week, and accentuate the importance of maintain faculty morale, which affects our overall productivity.

**Enumerate how revised workload assignments will result in better outcomes:** Revised workload assignments should be clearly linked to the expectation of improved outcomes. Such outcomes should include, but not be limited to, financial outcomes.

**Emphasize positive incentives:** Many faculty perceive that CSM has had in the past an overemphasis on “punitive” or “enforcement” measures in its approach to faculty; this emerges strongly in comments on the 2014 Climate Survey. A robust yet thoughtful workload policy will garner greater faculty and administrative support if it is framed in terms of incentivizing and rewarding excellence. For example, a positive approach would be, “If one achieve a goal this year in terms of research funding, graduate students or publications in relevant high-impact journals or university presses, then one may receive an incentive the following year that may include a reduction in teaching load, an appropriate raise, additional TA support, summer salary, or a combination of these or other incentives.” This will promote a more effective mindset than a negative, threatening overtone such as “If one doesn’t achieve a specific milestone, then be prepared to more classes that will most likely be over-enrolled and not at times of your choice.”

**Take a holistic approach that syncs the workload policy with new P&T guidelines and FDRs:** We must have consistent guidance for faculty that is reinforced every step along the way: through formative checkpoints, annual evaluations, and promotion/tenure. If we mean what we say in our enhanced P&T guidelines – that excellence and innovation in teaching matters, that meaningful service and good citizenship are required, that the impact of our scholarship is vital, that engagement with the wider academic professions is important – those must be reflected in how we define, assign, and assess workloads. We should be careful not to develop a workload policy that is at odds with our P&T expectations by implying that only two metrics matter (research dollars awarded and student credit hours delivered).

**Be attentive to language and policies that may appear to denigrate other aspects of the faculty mission such as teaching and service:** For example, the ME policy notes that faculty who don't meet research targets are not "in good standing." It implies that those faculty are not valued, with more teaching as the punishment. Yet there may be sound reasons for a dip in research performance, such as significant service to the university (major curricular overhaul, following through on a pressing initiative, serving on a relevant task force, leading an external visiting committee, etc.) or profession (editing a top journal, organizing a conference, serving on a review committee, etc.) This should be recognized by defining workloads as the sum total of all contributions to the university, understanding that this might be different from faculty member to faculty member.

**Create pathways that facilitate "course correction":** Regardless of the path forward, baseline standards need to be defined, and corrective actions made when one's work goes astray. If a faculty member has fallen behind in his/her research, but has a realistic path for pursuing greater activity in a reasonable timeframe, our leadership should retain the flexibility to facilitate this growth.

**Empower our leadership:** To the extent the aim of this endeavor is to make sure a few low performing faculty or departments are pulling their fair share, we may make more headway by empowering our departmental and college leadership to make adjustments locally, rather than creating a blanket policy that may not apply across all units. Such an approach may -- by eroding morale in those units that are already operating effectively and among those faculty who are making valuable contributions that may not precisely fit the blanket policy -- achieve the opposite effect than intended. A good starting point is for there to be transparency within each department about who is teaching how many courses each AY, what is expected for research productivity and service, and for the DH to explain any departures from the standard.

**Recognize broad standards of impact:** The impact of our scholarship, and the contribution to our reputation, is not measured by dollars alone. As the new P&T guidelines emphasize, faculty are expected to raise funds needed to support their research, not as an end unto itself. When external evaluators assess our scholarship, they look at research outcomes, such as students graduated, books and publications, and scientific impact, not just dollars raised. Accordingly, in assessing research productivity, we must look at quality of journals, numbers of publications, engagement with the field, and the other metrics identified as examples of excellence in scholarship listed in the new P&T guidelines. Moreover, one can imagine policies that measures dollars alone may actually incentivize *un*impactful work: a large industry grant that results in few or no publications, hasty publications in low-impact journals so as to not to delay the quest for ever new sources of funds, etc. At the end of the day, our assessments of research impact involve some measure of judgment; this is precisely the reason why our P&T guidelines do not rely on a few rigid metrics but instead on the professional judgment of experts and leadership.

**Acknowledge disciplinary diversity:** Quite obviously, again as our P&T guidelines emphasize, in some fields research dollars matter a great deal; in others it is high-impact journal articles; in still others, it is single-authored books, and so on. An assessment of workloads should respect this diversity, for ultimately it is excellence within a given field that will define our overall

reputation in that field. It may make more sense for each department to craft its own workload policy in the context of what makes sense for its disciplines. To guide this effort, the President, Dean and, ideally, a committee similar to the one that developed the P&T guidelines, should provide guiding principles with the advice and consent of the Senate.

**Incentivize excellence in teaching as well as research:** To the extent that CSM prioritizes a quality student experience, and to the extent we realize that we are falling short in some respects, we must be attentive to the need to enhance the quality of our faculty-student interactions. A workload policy that incentivizes excellence in meeting diverse instructional needs – such as delivering large SCR courses in a way that enhances student connections with the material or pursuing activities that promote meaningful faculty-student interaction (a constant indicator of student satisfaction) – will serve our broader institutional mission.

**Recognize that there are many ways faculty workload provides for a healthy financial environment:** While tuition revenue and funded research are significant revenue sources for the university, faculty can also contribute to the financial health of the university in other ways. Some faculty work closely with the Foundation in fundraising that contributes to CSM’s long-term fiscal health. Some have heavy involvement in outreach and SPACE. Others expend considerable effort in both tangible and intangible recruitment and retention efforts. Still others contribute to the functioning of the university by taking on extended service commitments. Expenditure of effort in one area likely results in less effort in another. A rigid policy that enumerates only specific workload targets surrounding funded research and teaching load is likely to overlook these other valuable areas and may even disincentivize these efforts.

**Utilize the Faculty Handbook:** The Faculty Handbook is the result of an extensive collaboration between the faculty of all departments, the staff, and the administration. It represents a contract between the institution and the faculty that enumerates expectations, responsibilities, rights, remedies, and processes. As such, it is continually evolving as the university’s mission and operating environment change. Any modifications to workload assignments should either be consistent with the existing handbook language or be vetted through the established process for changing the Handbook. In addition, we note that there is an existing process in the Faculty Handbook for faculty improvement, including avenues for additional support if a faculty member has fallen behind in his/her performance but has a realistic path for pursuing greater activity. There are also remedies in the Faculty Handbook when such improvement is not forthcoming. We encourage Department Heads to apply these standards and processes that we all collectively agree upon within their departments.

**Include institutional service in the workload formulation:** Mines is a small place, with fewer faculty than larger research universities to engage in service activities that are critical to our academic mission. These activities may be a burden and distraction from research and teaching; but they are no less important. Indeed, in some respects, dedicated service may be more important now than ever as we work to cultivate a more supportive culture, a more engaging curriculum, and a more rich student experience. All these things take time and

dedication; their value must be appreciated and recognized. A workload policy should acknowledge this; it should also seek to ensure equitable carrying of the service load.

**In short, we recognize the value of engaging in this conversation about workloads. We agree that some actions need to be taken.** Our biggest hope is that throughout this process we be mindful of those things that make Mines special and distinct from many of our peers: the opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration, the ability to develop close working relationships with our students, the greater flexibility to innovate and collaborate that comes from our size and our close-knit community, and the value we have long-placed on excellence in instruction as well as success in research. These are the things that have drawn faculty to Mines, and have helped us retain the excellent faculty who have made this their home. They are also critical to the Mines “brand.”

Sincerely,

The CSM Faculty Senate