

Faculty Survey on increased faculty workload

Executive Summary

General Faculty Meeting

March 21, 2017

Background

- An issue of concern was presented to the Faculty Senate regarding increased faculty workload.
- Working with OIRP, the Governance and Personnel Policy Committee designed and distributed a survey on faculty burdens.
- The survey was done to try to quantify anecdotal concerns about increased faculty workload over the past 5 years.
- Faculty (here >5 years) were asked to offer estimates regarding increased number of hours for tasks extraneous (to our core mission) required.

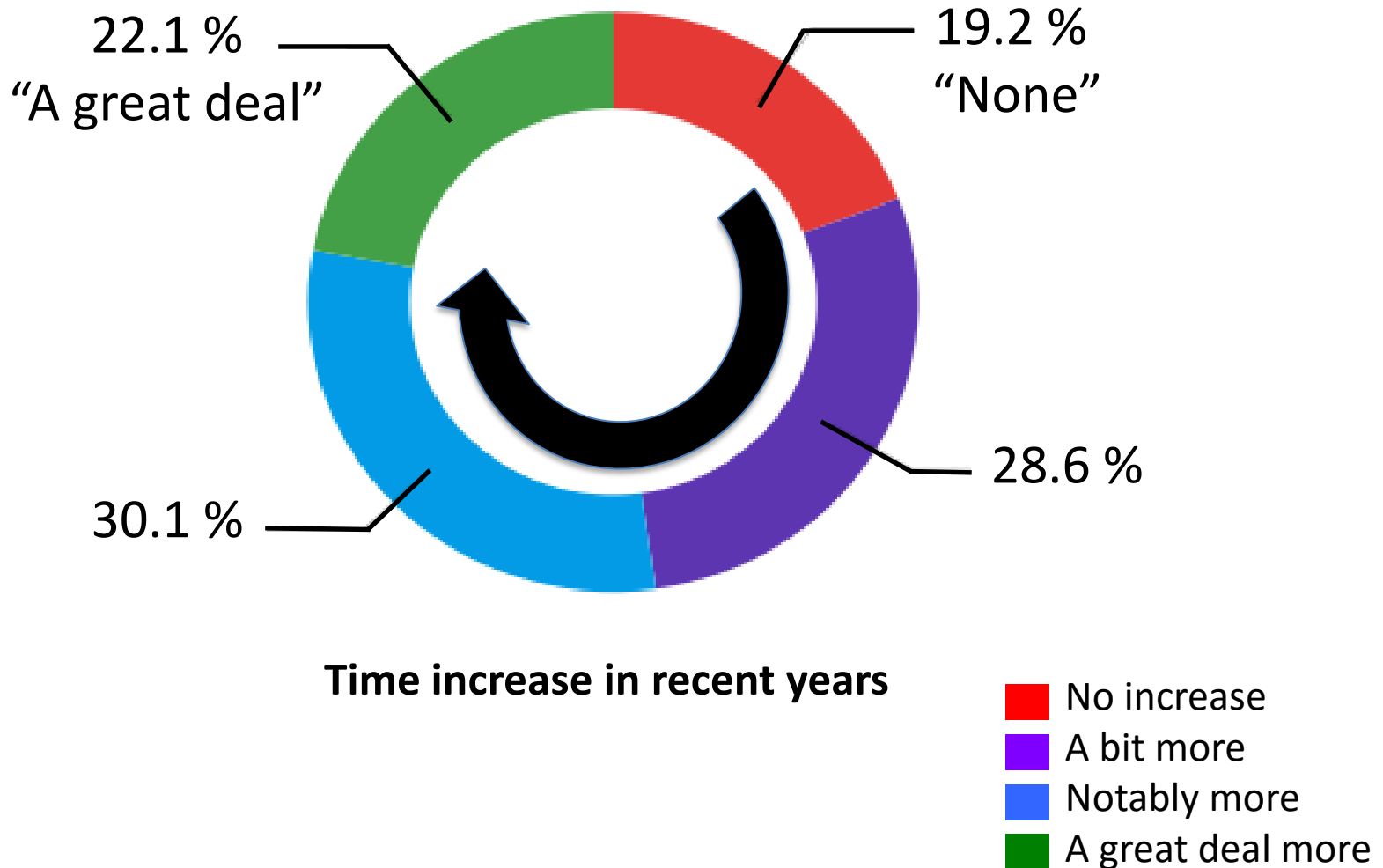
Response Summary

- More than 700 faculty responded, a substantial response rate of almost 50%. Every college had a significant response rate.
- Fewer than 20% of faculty reported “no” increased burden.
- More than 50% of the respondents reported they were spending “notably more” or a “great deal” more time on tasks.
- Top two areas of the source of increased workload:
 - Uncompensated administrative work
 - Assessment tasks

Response rate by College

Agriculture and Life Sciences		130	44.1%
Design		16	39.0%
Education		44	68.8%
Engineering		95	36.1%
Natural Resources		44	51.8%
Humanities and Social Science		150	52.3%
Sciences		110	45.6%
Textiles		23	47.9%
Veterinary Medicine		48	43.2%
Management		34	46.6%
DASA		20	47.6%
Total		714	

Has your time spent on non-core tasks increased?



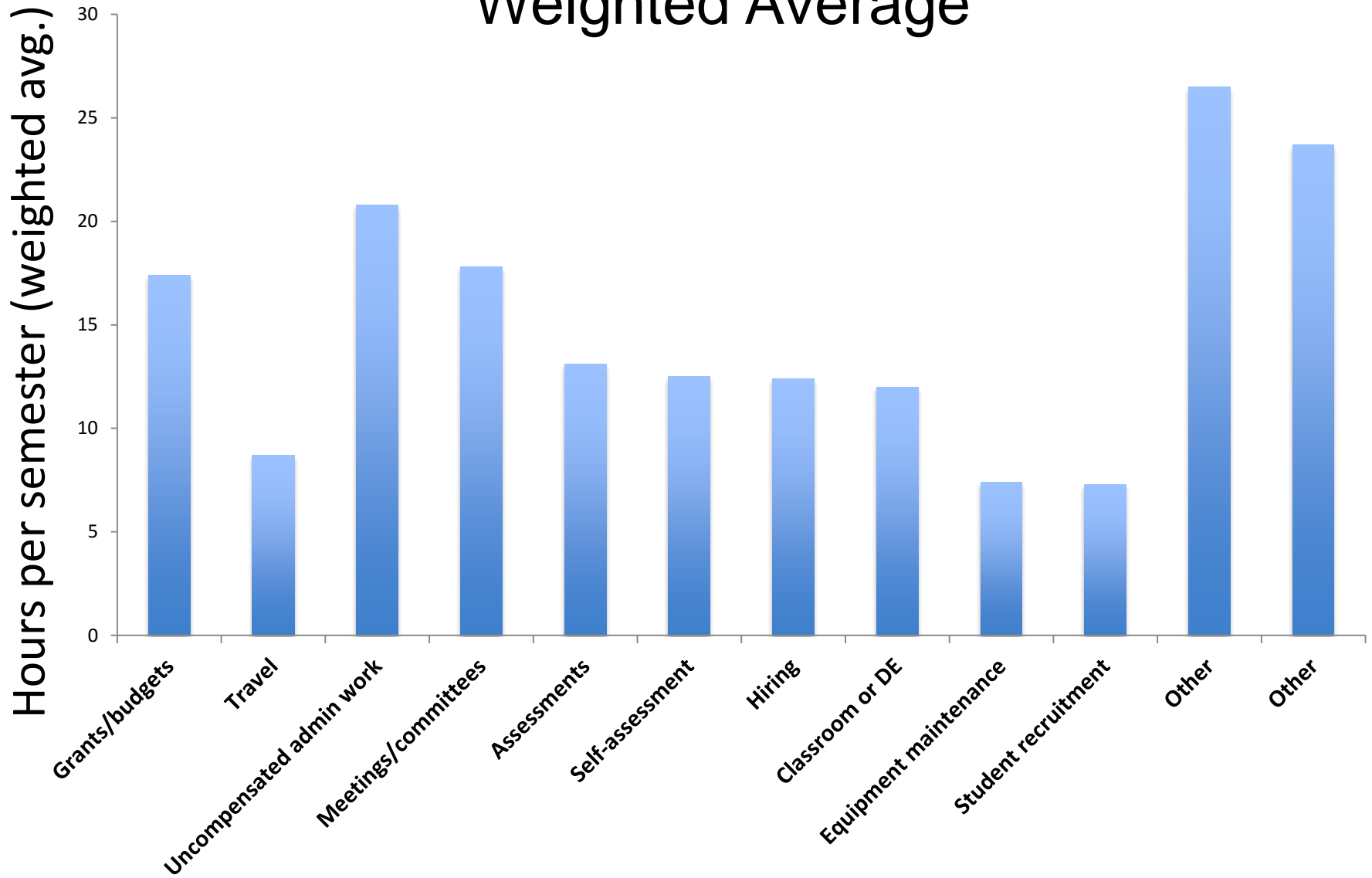
Has your time spent on non-core tasks increased?

Response	Percent	# Respondents
No – in recent years I have spent about the same amount of time on such tasks as I have in the past.	19.2	125
Yes – recently I have been spending a bit more time on such tasks than I have in the past	28.6	186
Yes – recently I have been spending notably more time on such tasks than I have in the past	30.1	196
Yes – recently I have been spending a great deal more time on such tasks than I have in the past	22.1	144
Total	100	

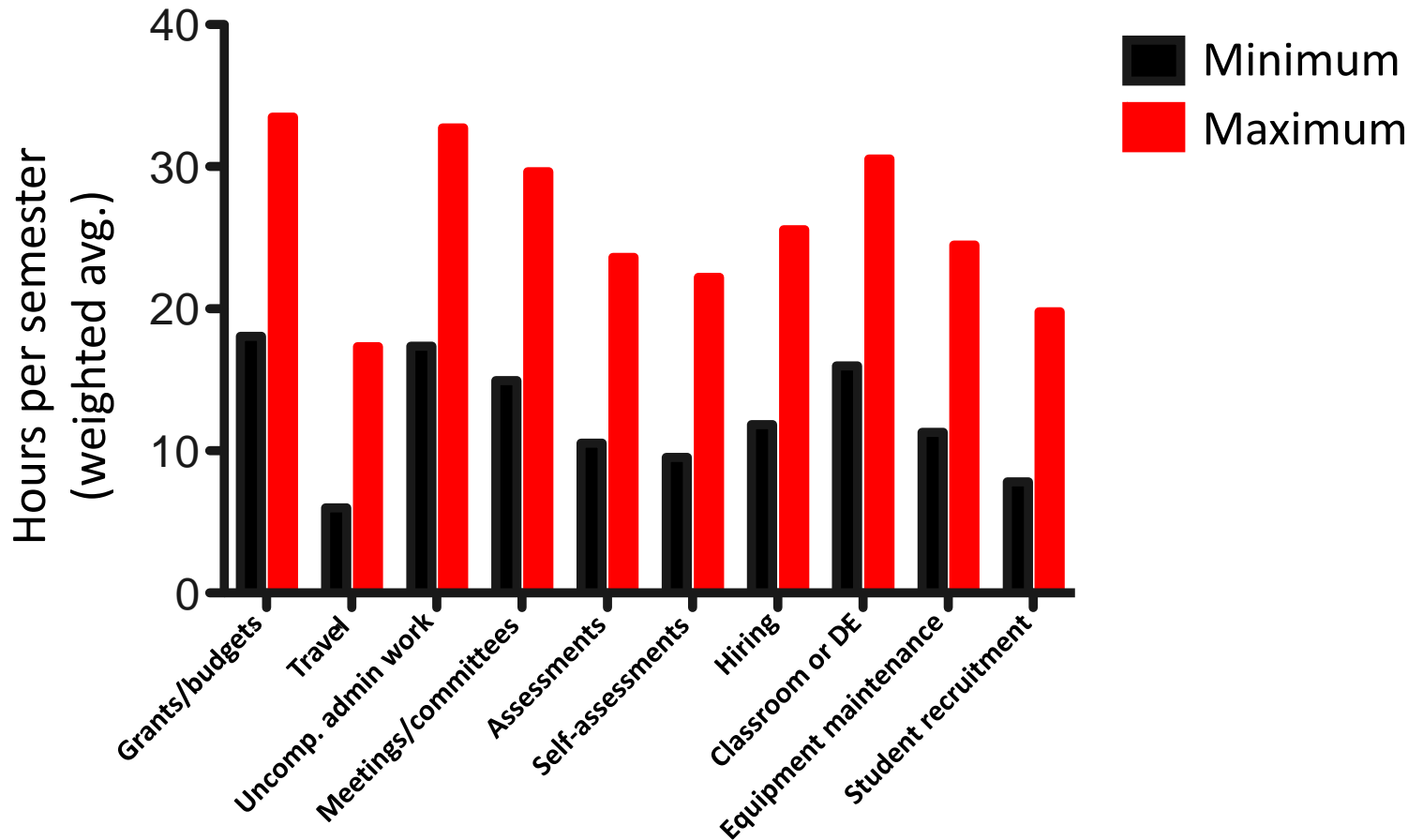
Estimates on increased time (hours) on non-core tasks

Category	No increase	1 - 10 hours more	11-25 hours more	26-50 hours more	51-75 hours more	> 75 additional hours	"Weighted" average increase
Other (please specify)	13.2%	26.5%	23.5%	14.7%	13.2%	8.8%	26.5
Other (please specify)	32.4%	20.6%	13.2%	13.2%	7.4%	13.2%	23.7
Uncompensated administrative work	14.4%	31.9%	26.8%	14.0%	7.2%	5.7%	20.8
Faculty meetings & committee work	17.4%	32.3%	29.5%	10.8%	7.0%	3.0%	17.8
Grant/budget management	30.1%	26.2%	21.1%	11.2%	6.0%	5.4%	17.4
Collection/reporting of assessment data	21.2%	41.6%	24.0%	7.9%	3.4%	1.9%	13.1
Filling out of forms or reports for self-assessment, scheduling, etc.	18.5%	48.0%	20.8%	7.9%	3.2%	1.7%	12.5
Hiring	33.1%	31.6%	20.9%	9.2%	3.4%	1.7%	12.4
Classroom or distance education (captioning, recording, video editing, course action formalities)	46.0%	25.5%	13.3%	8.0%	2.5%	4.6%	12.0
Travel authorizations	22.3%	55.7%	15.2%	4.9%	1.3%	0.6%	8.7
Maintenance and repair of equipment	57.1%	24.2%	10.3%	4.7%	2.1%	1.5%	7.4
Student recruitment paperwork	45.5%	36.4%	10.9%	4.7%	1.9%	0.6%	7.3

Increased time (hours) on non-core tasks: Weighted Average



Increased time (hours) on non-core tasks: Minimum and Maximum per semester



Minimum and maximum hours reported for each category divided by total faculty reporting for each.

(n= 318, 357, 397, 381, 366, 376, 308, 253, 198, 251, respectively)

Summary of long-form prose answers

- Centralization of support staff results in local expertise either being absent or residing with faculty whose time is spent on work that local staff used to do.
- Hiring has multiple HR roadblocks that don't respect principles of faculty governance.
- Administrative mandates introduce burdens without faculty buy-in. Those include assessment, but also business and grant transactions.
- Tying the above together is the sentiment that faculty time is regarded as free and infinitely expandable – the natural outcome of doing more with less.

Consistent Theme

- A consistent theme was “death by a thousand cuts” (expressed with that and similar metaphors), where the slow accretion of various forms of reporting turns into a mountain of work. Related problems:
 - clumsiness of the relevant software
 - remoteness (in both time and space) of the relevant support staff

Summary perceptions and thoughts

- Faculty perceive administration “externalizes costs” by imposing them on faculty
 - leads to faculty perceiving their time is devalued
- Faculty also believe that many of the tasks are unnecessary inventions
 - this perception is widespread, and the data are compelling

From symptoms and diagnosis to cure?

- The symptoms seem clear, the diagnosis seems to involve multiple problems (over-centralization, administrative expansion, distrust of faculty, erosion of shared governance, ...)
- Rather than have a piling-on gripe session, let's talk cures.

Cures?

- Cornell recently completed a similar survey and report, with similar results. Their recommendations are very thoughtful.
- <https://blogs.cornell.edu/deanoffaculty/files/2016/09/Streamlining-res-admin-11-24-2015-258wrgp.pdf>
- Our committee is developing some recommendations as well.

The Cornell summary cure (mildly edited)

- **Recommit to the idea that the highest university goal is excellence in research and teaching, and *make all decisions about policy and procedure through this lens.***
- **Create mechanisms to evaluate all procedures** to be consistent with the above.
- **Create an anti-red-tape Czar** with power and authority to oversee and implement streamlining efforts and to cut through bureaucratic red tape.
- **Limit, and in some cases reverse, the centralization of staff.**
- **Align the goals and incentives of central staff to the faculty/staff in the units** and to the larger mission of the university.

From our survey, broad categories of common issues (diagnoses) emerged:

- HR (& hiring)
- Assessment (& Accreditation & Compliance)
- Grant administration
- Purchasing
- Travel
- Loss of staff expertise/centralization

The NC State summary cure (still in clinical trials)

- Identify specific actions that could be taken in each of the broad diagnoses
- Develop a procedure for faculty and staff to report inefficiencies/redundancies and recommend changes in a non-onerous way so that tasks are eliminated or improved.
- Establish visits to departments by administration and support staff so they understand the systems and cultures better. Departments visit administration offices as well. (Cornell "mini sabbatical" idea)
- New procedures that impact faculty (and staff) time should include in their description, "How does this positively impact our primary missions of teaching and research (and outreach/extension too)?" Quantitative cost-benefit analysis of all new procedures should be a requirement for all new proposals. Results of the analysis should be made available.
- Faculty input on specific cures.

Experimental (possible) cures - HR

- 1) Many of the survey respondents were exasperated at HR's handling of faculty hires. The information requirements and delays seem excessive, e.g. requiring the high school diploma of someone who had held a tenured position at NCSU and who is being hired for a one-year appointment.

Action

Have a representative group of department heads (or hiring liaisons) meet with the head of HR to discuss their problems and attempt to streamline the hiring of faculty.

Cures - Travel

2) Many faculty find that the new travel authorization procedures increase the time needed to receive reimbursement. Faculty perceive there is an assumption that they will overstate their expenses, and receipts are not always accepted without additional documentation. For example, when faculty submit meal expenses for a conference, they must also provide evidence that meals were not included in the conference registration.

Action

The administration could explain why this is now imposed on NCSU. For example, provide evidence that faculty have consistently overstated expenses in the past and therefore documentation is required. Explaining the need to provide personal bank or credit card statements, in addition to valid receipts, would be helpful.

Cures – Grant administration

3) Faculty perceive that staff support for grant administration and other tasks has fallen in recent years, requiring faculty to spend less time on research and teaching. Centralization of services is perceived to lower the quantity and quality of services. The Cornell study cited a study by the National Science Board that **PIs of federally-funded research are spending 42% of their time on administrative tasks**. The number of SPA and EPA positions at NCSU has not fallen over the last decade.

Action

Can the administration show centralization has reduced costs in excess of the opportunity costs of less teaching and research?

Can we learn if these increased administration costs are forced on us by outside forces or are they administration decisions to minimize perceived risks?

Cures - Assessment

4) Many respondents mentioned the increase in assessment efforts, both assessments of individual faculty and of programs.

Action

Classify requirements into those externally required (e.g. SACS) and those internally required to avoid some perceived problem or risk? Faculty would like to see evidence of the costs (including faculty time) and the expected benefits of these activities.

Moving forward

- We are working on a mechanism to collect anonymous suggestions. In the interim, if you have any “cures” to share, please email beth_fath@ncsu.edu or auerbach@ncsu.edu
- Addressing multiple issues takes time. However, more transparent communication can guide us to improved processes for how we support one another on our campus.
- **We need to recommit to the idea that our highest university goal is excellence in research, teaching, and extension and make all decisions about policy and procedure through this lens.**

Thank you.

- Questions/comments