

Faculty Instructional Responsibilities: Guidelines for Departmental Policies

**Report of the Task Force on Faculty Instructional Activities
University of California**

July 2003

I. Genesis of the Task Force and Purpose of the Report

In Fall 2002, in consultation with the Academic Council chair, President Atkinson appointed a Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Instructional Activities, chaired by Provost King, asking it to examine the adequacy and equity of instructional responsibilities in the University and consider improving the ways we report those activities. Its membership consists of 14 faculty members, several of whom are also executive vice chancellors, undergraduate or college deans, and members of the key systemwide Academic Senate committees with purview over educational policy and academic personnel.¹

In addition to addressing questions about how the University of California describes and reports faculty instructional activities,² the Task Force examined UC's comparability with other universities in faculty instructional effort, equity among UC's own campuses in similar disciplines, and campus oversight of departmental teaching policies. This report expresses our considered opinions on these latter subjects and highlights the importance of ensuring that departments have and conform to meaningful policies about instructional responsibilities that clearly explain expectations to faculty and guide departments in their deployment of faculty resources.

Background for the Task Force Analysis

Since 1981 there has been a University requirement that every academic department have a written policy about faculty instructional responsibilities.³ Each chancellor is responsible for ensuring that such policies exist, although on many campuses, over time, responsibility for those policies devolved to deans and then to department chairs. Department chairs are responsible for making teaching assignments in accord with policy. While the Office of the President has asked formally each year for a report of changes in instructional activities policies, as part of preparing the annual report to the Legislature, *Undergraduate Instruction and Faculty Teaching Activities*, few changes have ever been reported, and a highly diffuse system of oversight has emerged.

On September 9, 2002, and October 24, 2002, as a result of the Bureau of State Audit's review of that annual report to the Legislature and its findings questioning some of the University's reporting practices, President Atkinson wrote to the chancellors asking them to take a number of specific actions with regard to faculty instructional activity. These requests included the following:

- Per existing policy, the campus should keep on file in the chancellor's office copies of each department's instructional activities policies. A copy of each department's current policy should also be submitted to the Provost and Senior Vice President – Academic Affairs. Each chancellor shall also ensure that the executive vice chancellors review and approve all department policies about instructional responsibilities and any future

¹ The membership of the Task Force is listed in Appendix A and the full charge is included as Appendix B.

² See "Describing and Reporting Faculty Instructional Activities," Report of the Task Force on Faculty Instructional Activities, University of California, July 2003.

³ Letter from President Saxon to the Chancellors, February 3, 1981. See Appendix C.

changes in them, and report those changes to the Provost and Senior Vice President – Academic Affairs.

- Each executive vice chancellor annually review, by department, the instructional activities reported in the Legislative report; review the campus's recent experience with average class size and, if appropriate, take steps to reverse increases in class size; develop or review campus policy with regard to instructional release time, submit the policy to the Provost and Senior Vice President – Academic Affairs for review, and implement it; and require that departments must, to justify each new faculty position, submit for the Deans' and EVC's review, an analysis of the value of that position not only for research, but also for meeting instructional needs.

President Atkinson also explicitly asked the Task Force to

- determine the facts about the instructional activities policies and practices, by discipline, at the eight research universities UC uses for faculty salary comparisons
- compare campus instructional activities policies and practices with those of our comparison universities
- recommend what systemwide instructional activities guidelines by disciplinary area might be appropriate.

The Task Force has met monthly since November 2002 and has gathered and analyzed as complete a set of information as possible about faculty instructional activities in the University of California and in other comparable universities. In this report we recommend ways in which campuses should improve instructional activities policies, ensure that they reflect disciplinary, departmental, and campuswide values in instruction, and use the policies together with data on actual practice to assess and reward departmental instructional contributions.

While we fully recognize the important contributions to instruction of many different types of faculty, especially lecturers with security of employment, Unit 18 lecturers, health sciences faculty who teach general campus classes, recalled emeriti, and academic administrators, this report focuses solely on the instructional responsibilities of regular-rank faculty because of Legislative interest in that group.

II. The Challenges of Creating and Interpreting Instructional Activities Policies

Although every department in the University of California is expected to have a written policy about faculty instructional responsibilities, there are no guidelines or templates for such policies. As a consequence, they vary greatly in style, from simple statements of the number of classes a faculty member is normally expected to teach, to quite elaborate formulas incorporating many different aspects of faculty instructional responsibilities.

Despite these differences in approach, nearly every statement begins with the number of classes a faculty member, on average, is expected to teach to enable the department to mount its curricula, and there tends to be an understanding within each department about what those essential classes are. In many departments, policies also describe instructional responsibilities beyond classroom teaching. These may include honors seminars, dissertation mentoring, field studies, internship programs, meetings of student-faculty research teams, and other credit-bearing activities. Usually expectations about these additional activities are only partially quantified or not quantified at all in the policies, since they are typically varied and individuals' engagement in them is often dependent on the nature of their research activities or on students' choices of mentors. Department policies describe each department's particular configuration of expected activities and form a starting point from which department chairs work out with the faculty the department's teaching program to ensure that it meets student needs.

It is important to understand that there will always be a difference between policies about instructional activities and actual practice. In translating these policies into practice, department chairs have to consider not only the classes it is essential or desirable to offer during the coming year, but also the number of students who will enroll, special administrative or research assignments assumed for that year by individual faculty members,⁴ and the number of faculty on leave. With this information, a chair begins a complicated process of matching individual faculty members' subject area knowledge, skills in different teaching settings, and level of instructional responsibilities beyond formal classes to the class schedule that must be delivered. The result is a complex deployment of resources that is more an art than a precise science, a fact it is important to understand in comparing written policies to actual practice and assessing results. And each department must accomplish this task in the context of its role in campus instruction and with an eye toward the comparability of its faculty's instructional effort with that expected of faculty at similar universities.

The Task Force recognized that disciplines vary greatly in their traditions about instructional responsibilities and the ways these intersect with research. For example, in the humanities individual research and creative activity are the norm, while in the sciences substantial time may be spent managing teams of student and professional researchers and securing grants to support their work. We knew that national norms about teaching play an important role in recruiting faculty, and we rapidly became aware of the ways that variations in campuses' practices with regard to release time for administrative and research responsibilities can affect cross-campus comparisons. As a consequence, the Task Force decided to look as closely as possible at 15 core disciplines, and in depth at 5 of them,⁵ working to understand the expectations expressed in policies, the facts of actual practice, and the way the University of California's policies and practices compare to those of other universities with whom we compete for the nation's best faculty.

⁴ Faculty who assume special responsibilities as department chairs or directors of major organized research units are often granted reduced teaching responsibilities. This is also sometimes granted to vice-chairs, graduate or undergraduate advisers in large departments, journal editors, and those who hold major positions in the Academic Senate.

⁵ These disciplines are listed in Appendix D.

III. Findings About Instructional Policies, Expectations, and Practices

Although the University of California requires every department to have a written policy about faculty instructional activities, most other universities do not. In most cases, expectations have developed informally over the years based on the amount of teaching needed to mount curricula, an intuitive sense of fairness among faculty, and perceptions about disciplinary norms gleaned from colleagues across the country.

Given the general lack of written policy at other institutions, the Task Force conducted 140 interviews of faculty and department chairs to gather as much information as possible about expected instructional responsibilities.

Members of the Task Force placed telephone calls to 60 UC faculty, full and associate professors hired in the core 15 disciplines during the past 7 years from the 8 universities used for salary comparisons (Harvard, Yale, MIT, Stanford, Michigan, Illinois, Virginia, SUNY-Buffalo), and 7 other research universities that are often competitors in faculty recruitment (Northwestern, Cornell, Chicago, Wisconsin, Princeton, Washington, and Cal Tech). Each respondent was asked about the typical number and type of classes ladder-rank faculty were expected to teach at their former institution, about the prevalence of class reductions because of extramural grants or other responsibilities, and about how their previous experience compared to their experience at UC. Where there were multiple respondents who had come from the same university and department, they reported consistent information.

Every respondent indicated that their former institution and UC both expect every faculty member to teach a mix of types of classes, lecture and seminar, and a mix of different student levels, graduate and undergraduate. All of the universities seem to reward the same activities, paying particular attention to the number of classes taught, and distinguishing between classes that are an expected part of faculty responsibilities because of the curriculum and others that are taught as enhancements. Almost without exception, respondents reported that meetings of student-faculty research teams, though required or encouraged, were not counted toward achievement of normal assigned responsibilities in their former institutions, even when students received credit for them.

Most remarkably, 60% of the respondents said they were teaching more at UC than they had been at the former institution (30% said “about the same”; 10% said “less”), and there was no important difference in the responses between faculty who had come from private vs. public universities. However, the difference in effort required seemed to be due less to the number of classes taught, which seemed comparable, than to the number of students in those classes. Many respondents remarked about the much larger number of students they were teaching, grading, advising, meeting outside of class, and assisting through e-mail messages at UC. When asked a general question about how they would describe the difference in instructional experiences between the their former institutions and UC, 35% of the respondents volunteered larger class size as an unprompted answer.⁶

⁶ By comparison, there was no consistent, interpretable response at all related to the ease or difficulty in teaching on the quarter vs. semester systems.

To verify the faculty members' responses and increase our understanding of the practices in other universities, several committee members and UC department chairs called 40 chairs of departments in the 8 salary comparison institutions in 5 disciplines (History, Psychology, Chemistry, English, and Political Science). Results were quite similar to the responses provided by our faculty. Table 1 shows the number of classes expected on average at these comparison institutions according to these interviews. Note that these figures do not include student-faculty research team meetings.

Table 1

**Faculty Instructional Expectations
Stated by Department Chairs from Other Comparable Universities
and by University of California Faculty Who Have Taught There**

	Classes per Academic Year at Comparable Universities	
	<u>Universities on</u>	
	<u>Semester</u> <u>System</u>	<u>Quarter</u> <u>System</u>
Social Sciences	3.0-4.0	3.0-4.0
Humanities	4.0	5.0
Mathematics	3.0	3.0-4.0
Sciences	2.0	2.0-3.0
Engineering	2.0-3.0	2.0-3.0

Staff also conducted the same interview with UC's own department chairs in History, Psychology, Chemistry, English, and Political Science. Their responses were similar, and in some instances a bit higher than expectations in other universities. This is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

**Faculty Instructional Expectations
Stated by Department Chairs in the University of California**

	Classes per Academic Year at UC Campuses on	
	Semester System	Quarter System
Social Sciences		
History	4.0	4.0-5.0
Political Science	3.3	4.0-5.0
Psychology*	4.0	3.0-5.0
Humanities		
English	4.0	4.0-5.0
Sciences		
Chemistry**	2.0	3.0

*Note: Psychology can vary considerably in nature depending on a particular department's emphasis on the social or biological aspects of the field.

**Note: In some UC departments biochemistry and chemistry are combined.

The issue of how to compare campuses on a semester calendar to those on a quarter calendar remains a conundrum. The difference nationally is clearly less than would be produced by the 1.5 weighting scheme employed in UC's traditional translation method (which reflects 15 weeks of instruction compared to 10), but semesters in other institutions are also of varying lengths (between 12 and 15 weeks), and other factors like student numbers and leave policies unduly complicate any interpretation. It seems more useful simply to present the two systems separately for the reader's interpretation as we have done here.

The Task Force also tried to determine actual teaching activity at other universities as accurately as possible. Unfortunately, good comparisons to other universities are very difficult to obtain. There is no federal reporting about faculty instructional activities and no common set of definitions for doing so. The University of Delaware does survey a number of institutions about faculty instructional activities, but it uses a significantly different definition of regular-rank faculty than UC's, requires the submission of extensive, detailed expenditure data for any institution that participates, classifies departments differently, and provides no useful comparative results for us because few of the participants in its survey are universities with whom UC competes. In fact, few research universities anywhere in the country collect information about actual annual faculty teaching in any detail; of those that do, very few are willing to make the data public, and the variety of measures used—e.g., actual contact hours,

student credit hours, instructional units, instructor apportioned distributed hours—make comparisons across institutions precarious and suspect.⁷

We could identify only one top-ranked research university that makes data publicly available, and we were able to acquire data only from the College of Letters and Science at another major research university on the agreement of confidentiality. Both are public institutions. In both cases the data were difficult to interpret because of definitional differences. One institution's data included in its class count any secondary laboratory or discussion sections taught by regular-rank faculty, which UC's data exclude, making the class count for that institution higher by definition by an indeterminate amount. The other university, though its data set matched UC's definitions fairly closely, organizes its course work in 5-unit classes rather than the 4-unit pattern typical on most UC campuses, which means its faculty teach fewer classes than do comparable faculty at UC.

It is reassuring, however, that when we compared the number of classes, independent study enrollments, and student credit hours taught per regular-rank faculty member in the 15 core disciplines at UC with these other two universities, and took into consideration the caveats noted above, we found that the results were in line with one of the institutions, while UC looks a little low compared to the other in the number of classes taught per regular-rank faculty member, probably because that university counts secondary sections and UC does not. UC is in the middle with regard to student credit hours per faculty FTE, and higher in independent study enrollments per faculty FTE compared to both of these highly regarded public universities.

While the data and interview information the Task Force gathered about other universities teaching efforts are not complete or perfect, they are the best available. Having reviewed the results, we are reasonably confident that the number of classes UC faculty are expected to teach on average is similar to the number expected of faculty at comparable research universities and may in some instances be a bit higher.

However, the Task Force believes UC should make greater efforts to understand the differences between UC's policies and those of other universities, take more aggressive steps to ensure that good instructional policies are in place for each of our departments, and develop more consistent agreement among UC campuses about the circumstances in which reduced expectations should be granted.

It is also important to ensure that policies are structured in ways that make departments the responsible entity. While every member of a department is expected to contribute to its instructional program, the results ought to be viewed, measured, and rewarded collectively as departmental teamwork.

⁷ Contact hours reflect instructional input, measuring the number of hours faculty spend with students formally in instructional settings. Student credit hours are a measure of output, created by multiplying the number of students enrolled in a class by the units awarded for that class. Instructional units are calculated by weighting student credit hours in each course according to the level of the course. Instructor apportioned distributed hours are calculated by allocating course credit units to the various activities that are included in each course to reflect the time students spend proportionately in, for example, lectures vs. laboratory sections.

IV. Recommendations About Departmental Policies and Expectations

The Task Force recommends that the Executive Vice Chancellors ask every department on their campus to review and revise its instructional activities policies to state clearly the following principles and translate them into effective, specific expectations for regular-rank faculty in that department:

- The department, through its regular-rank faculty, is the unit responsible for delivery of the instructional program. Instructional activities goals are set and achieved, not by individual faculty, but by the department as a whole working collaboratively. However, every member of the department is expected to contribute to the achievement of those goals.
- The purpose of instructional activities and the policies that guide them is not only to ensure an adequate number and variety of educational opportunities for students, but to keep clearly in front of every faculty member the importance of achieving excellence in teaching and mentoring students.
- Instructional policies should reflect the “Total Instructional Effort” approach recommended by this Task Force in its previous report, expressing in each of the two categories of instruction (Faculty-Designed and Faculty-Supervised⁸) departmental expectations about the amount of instruction that regular-rank faculty members are expected to teach on average. Departments may wish, in addition to this, to develop their own valuation systems, reflecting the extent and importance of different kinds of instructional activity within the department. These schemes could be valuable in achieving equity among faculty within a department, but their grounding in discipline-specific approaches to instruction make them difficult to translate across departmental boundaries.
- No department policy should fall outside the range of policies in effect at the research universities with which UC competes for faculty and both policy and practice should not stray too far from the UC workload expectation in their discipline. The Office of the President should periodically gather the best information possible from comparable universities and all of the UC campuses, analyzing in depth perhaps five disciplines each year on a rolling basis, in order to provide that contextual information to the Executive Vice Chancellors and to update some information each year in the annual report to the Legislature.

⁸ “Total Instructional Effort” consists of three categories—Faculty-Designed Instruction, which is curriculum-driven; Faculty-Supervised Group Instruction, which is small-group, inquiry-based learning; and Faculty-Supervised Tutorial Instruction, which is individualized study. See this Task Force’s previous report, “Describing and Reporting Faculty Instructional Activities,” July 2003, for further information about this reporting approach.

The Task Force also recommends that:

- Campus Executive Vice Chancellors should exercise active oversight not only by reviewing and approving all department workload policies and any future changes in them, but also by comparing the various measures of actual instructional activity for each department with that department's stated policies and with measures for similar departments throughout the University. The comparative data should be compiled by the Office of the President and provided annually to each Executive Vice Chancellor.
- Objectives for the amount of actual annual instructional activity (classes and SCH) to be delivered by the department, and in particular by regular-rank faculty, should be developed by department chairs and deans and approved by the Executive Vice Chancellor. Those objectives should be expressed in the same "Total Instructional Effort" terminology, of Faculty-Designed Instruction and Faculty-Supervised Instruction, and should reflect both the number of classes to be conducted and student credit hours delivered by regular-rank faculty. They should reflect an appropriate balance of undergraduate and graduate instruction. When a campus has received full State-funding for the summer term, the department's objectives for classes and student credit hours in summer instruction should be included as well.
- Care must also be taken by the Executive Vice Chancellor and deans to reward instructional activities accomplished by faculty outside of their own departments by giving credit for student credit hours and classes to the faculty member's home department.
- Each campus should have an explicitly written policy about the circumstances under which faculty may and may not have departmental expectations about their instructional activities reduced. This should include a listing of administrative positions and Academic Senate responsibilities for which reductions are allowed and a reiteration of the University's policy on modified duties for accommodating child-rearing responsibilities (APM 760-28). In addition, each campus should have a clear policy about the extent to which reduced teaching obligations for a limited period may be a subject of negotiation in recruitments. As President Atkinson has requested, each campus's policy should be submitted to the Provost and Senior Vice President–Academic Affairs for review. All actual release time should be reported to the Executive Vice Chancellor.
- Each Executive Vice Chancellor should require an analysis of a department's instructional needs, including interdepartmental instructional activities, as part of the justification of each new faculty position, examining the record of the existing faculty (e.g., SCH, classes, majors) and assessing how the new position would help meet those needs. The allocation of faculty recruitment authorizations is a vital control point for influencing departmental instructional activity.
- Finally, department chairs must clearly understand that they are responsible for ensuring that their department achieves its annual goals and adheres to all the policies

related to faculty instructional activities. A review of their success in this should be included as part of their performance assessment.

V. Conclusions

Without doubt, the University of California, currently provides the opportunity for a superlative education to each of its students. It is imperative that, despite budgetary roller coasters and countervailing pressures, our faculty sustain that goal among UC's highest priorities. We believe that the issues identified in the State audit and by the information we have gathered about UC and comparable universities do point out the necessity for new, assertive actions to attend to that goal, and we believe that the recommendations identified here will ensure that UC continues to achieve it.

Appendix A
Systemwide Task Force on Faculty Instructional Activities
Membership

Lisa Alvarez-Cohen, Vice Chair, UCEP, Professor, Civil/Environmental Engineering, Berkeley

Mark Appelbaum, Associate Vice Chancellor, Undergraduate Education, Professor of Psychology, San Diego

Peter Berck, Chair, UC Merced Task Force, Professor, Agricultural and Resource Economics and Policy, Berkeley

David Brant, Professor of Chemistry, Irvine

J. T. Gerig, Member, UCAP, Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Santa Barbara

Andrew Grosovsky, Chair, UCEP, Professor of Cell Biology and Toxicology, Riverside

C. Judson King (Chair), Provost and Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs, UCOP, Professor of Chemical Engineering, Berkeley

Charles Li, Dean, Graduate Division, Professor of Linguistics, Santa Barbara

Daniel Neuman, Executive Vice Chancellor, Professor of Ethnomusicology, Los Angeles

Patricia O'Brien, Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, Professor of History, Riverside

Michael Parrish, Member, UCPB, Professor of History, San Diego

John Simpson, Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, Professor of Psychology, Santa Cruz

Patricia Turner, Vice-Provost Undergraduate Studies, Professor, American Studies/African American/African Studies, Davis

William Webster, Vice Provost, Academic Planning & Facilities, Professor, Civil/Environmental Engineering, Berkeley

Staff:

Linda Guerra, Director of Policy Analysis, UCOP

Dennis Hengstler, Executive Director, Planning and Analysis, Berkeley

John Keilch, Principal Policy Analyst, Planning and Analysis, UCOP

Paula Lutomirski, Associate Vice Chancellor, Los Angeles

Anne Machung, Principal Policy Analyst, Planning and Analysis, UCOP

Meredith Michaels, Vice Chancellor, Planning and Budget, Santa Cruz

Myron Okada, Director, Academic Personnel, UCOP

Sandra Smith, Assistant Vice President, Planning and Analysis, UCOP

Ellen Switkes, Assistant Vice President, Academic Advancement, UCOP

Other advisers:

Larry Hershman, Vice President, Budget, UCOP

Jerry Kissler, Assistant Vice President, Budgetary Planning and Fiscal Analysis, UCOP

Richard Santee, Coordinator, Budget Office, UCOP

Appendix B
Charge to the Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Instructional Activities

In July 2002, the Bureau of State Audit issued a report that, in part, examined the University of California's annual reports to the Legislature on Undergraduate Instruction and Faculty Teaching Activities. Their findings, particularly with regard to the vagueness of our distinctions between independent study and small primary classes, necessitate a thoughtful reconsideration of the way in which we define faculty instructional activities and describe them both publicly and to our faculty. In addition, concerns have been expressed in various quarters, including state government, about the adequacy and equity of instructional responsibilities among campuses and within disciplines. Thus those issues need to be addressed as well, and can be assisted by a better understanding of the practices of our comparison institutions and competitors in relation to those of our own campuses.

Therefore, I am requesting that this Task Force, by July 1, 2003:

- examine the guidelines for distinctions between classes and independent studies, and recommend how they should be clarified and sharpened
- develop effective and transparent ways to express and measure faculty instructional efforts that will be understandable to constituencies outside the University and reassure them that faculty instructional efforts are appropriate. As well, these statements should communicate expectations and results clearly to faculty
- consider the effects of technology-assisted instruction on these measures
- determine the facts about the instructional activities policies and practices, by discipline, of UC's eight comparison research universities
- compare campus instructional activities policies and practices with those of our comparison universities
- recommend what systemwide instructional activities guidelines by disciplinary area might be appropriate
- consider the value of re-instituting or affirming minimum course enrollment guidelines
- identify and examine any other issues the task force believes are important

We shall seek comments on a draft version of this report, working through the Executive/Academic Vice Chancellors and Academic Council, and will ask that the Task Force consider these before filing its final report. Substantial staff support will be provided by Office of the President as well as campus staff.

Appendix C
1981 Letter from President Saxon to the Chancellors:
University Requirement That Every Academic Department Have a Written Policy About
Faculty Instructional Responsibilities

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SYSTEMWIDE ADMINISTRATION

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Office of the President

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

February 3, 1981

CHANCELLORS

Dear Colleagues:

Pursuant to my letter of October 1, 1980, and to our recent Council of Chancellors discussion, I ask that you obtain from each academic department or equivalent unit a written statement of current practices concerning faculty teaching workload and of the rationale for these practices. In making this request, I am assuming that virtually all departments already have policies on such matters. Where this is not the case, please take steps to assure that written statements are developed and that they cover all major teaching activities in those departments or equivalent units. Consultation with the Academic Senate concerning this process is essential at the campus level.

I expect workload statements to be obtained from all academic departments or equivalent units by June 15, 1981. Please inform me when this has been accomplished on your campus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David S. Saxon".

David S. Saxon
President

cc: Vice President Swain
Special Assistant Paige
Professor Benjamin Aaron

Appendix D
The 15 Core General Campus Disciplines Examined by the Task Force

Anthropology
Economics
History*
Political Science*
Psychology*
Sociology
English*
Philosophy
Spanish
Biological Sciences
Chemistry & Biochemistry*
Mathematics
Physics
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science
Mechanical Engineering

*Asterisked disciplines were examined in greater depth.