

RESEARCH BRIEF

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An Analysis of Faculty Workload Policies and Practices of North Carolina Community Colleges

The North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents formed a committee in 1999 to study faculty workload policies and practices of the 58 North Carolina community colleges. The committee, chaired by Dr. Ron Champion of Beaufort County Community College, gathered and examined available information on workload policies and practices across North Carolina and the nation. Finding insufficient information to draw any conclusions concerning faculty workload and practices, the committee went about the task of developing and administering a faculty workload policies and practices survey.

In June 2000, a two-part survey was sent to the presidents of the 58 North Carolina community colleges. Part one of the survey requested information on the colleges' policies related to faculty office hours, credit hour loads and contact hour loads. Part two of the survey requested specific workload information on each full-time faculty employed in the Fall 1999 who, by the colleges' definition, was teaching a full-time load and was not involved in either team-teaching or cooperative education teaching. It was requested that the college's Chief Instructional Officer or his/her designee complete both parts of the survey.

Of the 58 colleges, 47 returned valid surveys. The surveys from the remaining 11 colleges were either not returned or were returned in a format not compatible for this analysis. An examination of the 11 colleges not included in the survey reveals no systematic factor that would compromise the generalizability of the results presented below.

Part One: Survey of Policies and Practices

The purpose of Part One was to determine the official policies and practices of the 58 community colleges relative to faculty workload. The survey focused on the issues of faculty office hours, required hours on campus or assigned worksite, credit hour load, contact hour load, and provisions for granting reduced workload.

The majority of colleges that responded to the survey have official policies on faculty office hours and required hours on campus or assigned worksite. Forty (40) colleges, representing 85 percent of the responding colleges, have a policy on the minimum number of office hours faculty must hold each week. When asked about policies related to minimum number of office hours per day, only 13 colleges (28 percent) responded to having such a policy.

As with office hours, a majority of the colleges have policies on the minimum number of hours and days faculty must be on campus or at an assigned worksite per week. Thirty-three (33) colleges (70 percent) were found to have policies on minimum number of hours full-time faculty were required to be on campus or at an assigned worksite per week, while 23 colleges (49 percent) had a policy on minimum number of days required to be on campus or at an assigned worksite per week.

When asked about policies for granting a reduced teaching load to full-time faculty, 30 colleges (64 percent) responded to having such a policy. The three most common reasons cited by the colleges for granting a reduced load were number of preparations, number of students taught, and the nature of the subject being taught.

Table 1: Number of Community Colleges with Workload Policies

Policy Area	Yes	No	Missing Data
Minimum number of office hours per week	40	6	1
Minimum number of office hours per day	13	33	1
Minimum number of hours on campus or assigned worksite per week	33	13	1
Minimum number of days on campus or assigned worksite per week	23	22	2
Reduced workload for factors related to teaching assignment	30	16	1

In addition to examining whether or not the colleges had policies in the areas listed in Table 1, the survey collected data from the colleges on the minimum requirements of the policies. A summary of the information can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Average Minimum Time Requirements of Workload Policies

Policy Area	Number of Colleges Responding	Average Minimum Requirement	Range	
			Low	High
Minimum number of office hours per week	35	5 hours	4 hrs	10 hrs
Minimum number of office hours per day	13	1 hour	1 hr	2 hrs
Minimum number of hours on campus or assigned worksite per week	32	30 hours	10 hrs	40 hrs
Minimum number of days on campus or assigned worksite per week	22	5 days	4 days	5 days

Finally, the colleges' official policies on the range of credit hours and contact hours colleges assigned to regular full-time curriculum instructors were requested. In reporting the information, colleges were instructed to exclude team teaching, cooperative education, and extra pay courses.

There was tremendous variability in the colleges' responses to the range in credit hours and contact hours assigned per week. The minimum number of credit hours listed ranged from four (4) to 18, while the maximum number of credit hours ranged from 16 to 35. Similar results were found when looking at the range for contact hours, with the minimum ranging from six (6) to 25 and the maximum ranging from 16 to 72.

In an attempt to draw some conclusions from the data, the median value of the minimum and maximum hours listed in the range of credit hours and contact hours were calculated. The median value is that point at which half the colleges fall below and half the colleges fall above. Table 3 gives the results of that analysis.

Table 3: Median Value of Minimum and Maximum Assigned Hours Cited by Colleges' Policies on Range of Hours Assigned

	Median Minimum Hours	Median Maximum Hours
Credit Hours	14	22
Contact Hours	16	25

Part Two: Analysis of Faculty Workloads, Fall 1999

A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that listed the name, social security number, and area of teaching responsibility of each full-time curriculum faculty employed as of October 1, 1999 was sent to each community college. The full-time curriculum faculty were identified using the Staff Information file colleges are required annually to submit to the North Carolina Community College System Office.

The instructions that accompanied the spreadsheet requested that colleges review the information, delete anyone on the list who was not, by the college's definition, teaching a full instructional load and to delete any faculty involved in team-teaching or cooperative education. The purpose of deleting these individuals was to gather data that reflected what might be called a "normal, individual full-time instructional load." Whereas omitting these individuals limits the full picture of faculty workload assignments, it does provide the most consistent data across faculty.

Once the above review had been completed, colleges were asked to provide data on each individual's workload for fall 1999. Specifically, colleges were asked to provide the following for each individual: number of credit hours assigned, number of contact hours assigned, number of sections assigned, number of different preparations assigned and number of students taught. Only data on "normal" assignment were requested. That is to say, colleges were asked to exclude any "overload" or "extra pay" assignments.

Originally, information on 4,390 faculty were sent to the colleges. Data on 2,709 (62 percent) faculty from 47 colleges were returned in a valid format. When the numbers are restricted to those 47 colleges with valid surveys, data were returned on 77 percent of the faculty identified from the Staff Information files.

In examining the data, questions arose as to the consistency of colleges in providing the requested information. Several colleges listed credit hour and contact hour assignments of less than 6, which may indicate that data on full-time faculty teaching a reduced teaching load were included. For this reason, in providing the results, both the mean (average) and median are listed. It is believed that the median is the best indicator, since the median, unlike the mean, is less affected by "extreme" observations. In addition, three colleges provided contact hour information incorrectly, listing total contact hours for the semester rather than total contact hours assigned. In the analysis of contact hours, these three colleges were omitted.

Table 4 presents the analysis of the data submitted by the community colleges.

Table 4: Analysis of Faculty Workload, Fall 1999

	Mean (Average)	Median
CreditHoursAssigned	14.4 hours	15 hours
ContactHoursAssigned	19.5 hours	19 hours
Number of Different Preparations	3.5	3
Number of Sections Assigned	4.8	5
Number of Students Taught	77	71

An interesting result from this analysis was found when using the range constructed in Table 3 based on the median “minimum” and “maximum” hours assigned. By using these constructed ranges, it was found that 58 percent of the faculty taught in the 14-22 credit hour range. Thirty-nine percent (39%) were assigned fewer than 14 credit hours and three percent (3%) were assigned more than 22 credit hours. When a similar analysis was conducted for contact hours, it was found that 67 percent were assigned 16-25 contact hours, with 22 percent being assigned less than 16 contact hours and 11 percent being assigned more than 25 contact hours.

The data on assigned workload were further analyzed by area of instruction. Based on information provided by the colleges in the Staff Information file, faculty were divided into eight areas of instruction. Table 5 presents the analysis of workload by area of instruction.

Table 5: Analysis of Faculty Workload by Area of Instruction, Fall 1999

Area of Instruction	Median Credit Hours	Median Contact Hours	Median Number of Different Preparations	Median Number of Sections Taught	Median Number of Students Taught
Academic, General & Related	16	18	3	5	99
Agriculture	13	20	4.5	5	50.5
Distribution & Marketing	16	19	4.5	6	80
Health Occupations	10	19	2	3	33
Home Economics	15	19	5	6	76
Office	15	20	4	5	79
Engineering & Science	14	20	4	4	42
Trades	13	24	4	4	45

Caution should be used when interpreting Table 5 since some areas of instruction, such as Health Occupations, involve more team teaching and cooperative education and thus their numbers are not truly represented in this analysis.

Summary

The information provided by this study is useful in that it presents the “cleanest” snapshot of faculty workload policies and practices in the North Carolina Community College System. The finding of this study shows that the majority of community colleges in North Carolina have policies governing faculty workload and that actual credit hours and contact hours assigned to faculty are consistent with those policies.

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