

TASK FORCE ON RESEARCH & TEACHING BALANCE: HOW TO REWARD SUPERIOR TEACHING AND CONTINUE TO GROW RESEARCH FUNCTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The charge of this Task Force was to review issues associated with enhancing our research and scholarly activities function while ensuring teaching excellence, and to make specific recommendations in support of this goal. A strong consensus among the Task Force members was apparent in recognizing a) the value of research and scholarly activity in support of our predominant educational mission, b) the need for an effective plan to transition to a balanced mission, c) the importance of building on existing strengths, and d) the need to support and reward excellence in teaching.

TASK FORCE PROCESS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

- BREAKOUT GROUPS DISCUSSED ISSUES AND CHALLENGES, AND IDENTIFIED KEY AREAS FOR FACT-FINDING AND IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS
- FOUR SUBCOMMITTEES WERE ESTABLISHED AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT WERE DEFINED
- SUBCOMMITTEES:
 - SCHOLARSHIP/RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY
 - BALANCE BETWEEN TEACHING, RESEARCH/CREATIVE ACTIVITY AND SERVICE
 - EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING
 - PROMOTION & TENURE
- THE SUBCOMMITTEES WERE CHARGED WITH FINALIZING A REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS, AND DEVELOPING 5-10 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOCUSED DISCUSSIONS AT THE TASK FORCE RETREAT
- ALTHOUGH THE TASK FORCE CONSISTED OF FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR FROM A BROAD SPECTRUM OF DISCIPLINES, THERE WAS A STRIKING SENSE OF CONSENSUS THAT EMERGED THROUGH THE PROCESS

TOP ISSUES:

SUBCOMMITTEE I:

Moving to a research agenda is a paradigm shift and requires a culture change. Encompassed within this change is a redefinition of the full time faculty employment model. This change must be accomplished in a manner that considers effects upon student learning and faculty, staff and student welfare and morale.

SUBCOMMITTEE II:

All faculty and institutions must define the balance among teaching, scholarship/creative activities, service, and other duties (e.g., professional development, advising, program accreditation) critical to maintaining institutional effectiveness. Variability and flexibility in assignments should be available.

SUBCOMMITTEE III:

Teaching should hold the same level of esteem that research has historically held. Assessment of student learning should be integrated into the assessment of faculty teaching.

SUBCOMMITTEE IV:

The administration should be encouraged to allow departments the flexibility to set guidelines for PRT that fairly evaluate and reward faculty based on their assigned duties. Cross-disciplinary and inter-college cooperation should be encouraged, but is not well-defined as to how it is valued. This subcommittee felt that the way the “beans” are counted for research and service activities are well-defined. However, the procedures used to evaluate teaching excellence are not as well developed.

Two over-arching recommendations emerged from the Task Force discussions and reports:

- ASU must develop a Strategic Plan for transition to implement recommendations for moving into a balanced teaching and research agenda. This plan must value, assess, and reward all missions of the University; address the welfare of all entities involved; provide flexibility; and be effectively communicated at all levels.
- The transition to a greater research emphasis must build on existing strengths and recognize the contributions, past challenges and limitations, and intellectual capital that have brought ASU to its current status.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the area of **research and scholarly activity**:
 - Permanent teaching load relief must be achieved if scholarship will become an on-going, supported, productive activity.
 - Trans-college and inter-disciplinary research/scholarship must be fostered.
 - Centers of Excellence with strategic hires to strengthen our existing structure and capitalize on collaborative opportunities may be a way to facilitate this development.
- In the area of **academics and teaching excellence**:
 - A multifaceted assessment paradigm should be developed to ensure excellence and to raise the esteem, recognition, and incentive for superior teaching and innovation.
 - PRT guidelines must capture expectations and criteria for excellence in teaching.
 - Teaching and effectiveness in promoting student learning should be recognized as comprising activities outside of traditional classroom activities and these aspects should be incorporated into the reward systems
 - Cross-disciplinary, team teaching, community engagement, and experiential learning strategies, as well as excellence in conventional teaching, should be encouraged and rewarded.
 - Program accreditation and individual faculty certification/licensure requirements must be taken into consideration during the transition to the new paradigm.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- Changes required at the **University level**:
 - Teaching loads must be reduced to accommodate research/creative activity.
 - Additional faculty or sufficient resources to hire adjunct faculty must be made available to ensure educational goals, teaching excellence, and creative productivity are fostered.
 - Promotion, tenure and retention guidelines must fairly evaluate and reward faculty based on assigned duties that are negotiated in the academic unit, recognize that flexibility may be required during the transition, and that one size does not fit all. It is important that pre-tenure faculty participate in teaching, research, and service. This must be accompanied by effective communication of expectations at all levels.
 - A career ladder for instructors should be developed to promote excellence in teaching for non-tenure-track personnel who are in daily contact with our students.
 - Tangible/concrete rewards for excellence in all University missions must become greater, with primary emphasis on better salaries and reasonable merit raises.
 - Proposed changes should consider likely effects upon student learning, cost and financial implications, academic freedom, shared governance, and faculty/staff morale.
- Changes required at the **state level and beyond**:
 - The Administration must pursue a redefinition of the role of ASU in Arkansas' higher education mission at the state level that reflects our increased contributions to research and graduate education, and supports our new paradigm of balanced teaching and research/scholarly activity.
 - ASU must establish effective mechanisms for communicating our emerging paradigm that highlights current productivity and future productivity-related interests.