

A New Model for Faculty Workloads

College of Science

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Preamble

Weber State University is an evolving institution that has been transformed from a community college to a baccalaureate-granting college in 1962, and then to a master's-granting university in 1991. At the same time it has grown significantly in size, now serving more than 23,000 students from northern Utah and throughout the world. However, during this time of significant change, high-quality education has remained the hallmark of Weber State University and the College of Science.

Over the course of the nearly fifty years since this institution moved from Weber College to Weber State University, not only has the student population grown, but best practices in undergraduate education have also evolved. It is now recognized that engaged, active learning is a critical component of strong teaching and learning. This goes well beyond the traditional classroom setting and highly-structured laboratory experiences, to include discovery-based laboratories and undergraduate research. Acceptance into many types of professional schools and many graduate schools now requires that the successful applicant have a strong record of undergraduate research experiences, including presentations at meetings and even publications in peer-reviewed journals in collaboration with faculty mentors.

Students going into teaching careers also need to have the opportunity to experience the real process of doing science and mathematics, rather than simply reading about it in a textbook. Textbooks and traditional, well-defined laboratory experiments with predetermined outcomes, generally describe the end product of a particular branch of study, without the experience of the true human enterprise that is scientific and mathematical research, including its many successes and failures. How can teachers convey the excitement and humanity of scientific and mathematical research without experiencing it for themselves?

Of course it has always been true that the heart of science and mathematics is found in research and the discovery of new knowledge. With the rapidly-accelerating rate at which new discoveries are being made, and the supporting theoretical underpinnings that are being developed, supported, or potentially challenged, it is critical that faculty remain active scholars. Not only does this allow science and mathematics faculty to remain current in their disciplines, but faculty who are engaged in research also model the fundamental importance of exploration for our undergraduate students. In addition, pedagogical research is critically important as we

continue to explore ways in which we can improve upon the educational experiences for our students; the foundation of Weber State University.

In 2008 a new mission statement was approved by the Board of Regents, which reiterated the role of research at Weber State University that was first introduced in the mission statement of 1986. Our present mission statement reads:

Weber State University offers associate, baccalaureate and master degree programs in a broad variety of liberal arts, sciences, technical and professional fields. The university provides excellent educational experiences for its students through extensive personal contact among faculty, staff and students in and out of the classroom. To accomplish its mission, the university, in partnership with the broader community, engages in research, artistic expression, public service, economic development and community-based learning experiences in an environment that encourages freedom of expression while valuing diversity.

Weber State's new vision statement, "Looking Forward: Planning Strategically for Weber State University in 2030", was also approved in 2008, after two years of development and vetting with a variety of stake holders. Two of the seven vision statements contained in the document are:

- WSU is distinguished by outstanding academic programs that recruit motivated students to work with faculty to create and share knowledge.
- Substantial external funds support a vibrant level of scholarly pursuits that engage faculty, staff, students and community partners, including traditional research, applied and community-based research, and artistic endeavors.

Among the many "Directions" that were identified in the Vision 2030 document, a number of them pertain directly to this proposed workload model:

Teaching Excellence

- Hiring, developing and evaluating faculty will continue to reflect WSU's focus on teaching excellence.
- Faculty recognition and rewards for excellence in teaching will be expanded.
- WSU will continue to develop programs for undergraduate research and service learning as well as other activities that foster meaningful student engagement.

Research

- WSU will develop research centers that create opportunities to integrate scholarship and learning for faculty and students. The centers will attract faculty that are interested in exploring new knowledge through research and engaging

students in discovery. These centers will be a driving force in attracting external funding.

- WSU faculty and students will continue to play a leadership role in traditional, applied and community-based research.
- WSU will actively foster research related to pedagogy and improving student learning.
- WSU's importance as an economic engine for the regional economy will increase.

The challenges associated with implementing Weber State University's vision for 2030 are many, but they must be met and overcome. Chief among the challenges that the College of Science faces in implementing the mission and vision statements are limits on faculty time and resources, including financial and space limitations (for arguments associated with space limitations, please refer to the document, "Need for a New Science and Engineering Laboratory Building", 2 June 2008). Efforts to provide financial resources, excluding the critical need for traditional external funding through competitive grants, is being addressed with strong support from the College of Science's Development Director, the Development Office, and WSU's central administration. Enhanced support for external grant applications are being provided by the Office of Sponsored Projects. It is the goal of the Dean to also provide college-specific support for grant writing and administrative support with a future staff position dedicated to that important process.

The present document is meant to address the very real, and extremely challenging, issues associated with the faculty time required to support research, scholarship, external grant funding, and most importantly, undergraduate research. Despite the dramatic evolution of Weber State University, the current allocation of faculty time as described in our Policies and Procedures Manual appears to date back to 1979 and perhaps earlier, and has not kept pace with the growing expectations placed on College of Science faculty to meet the needs of WSU today and in 2030.

Certainly 2009 – 2010 has been a lean academic year financially, and 2010 – 2011 promises to be even more challenging. Although this new workload model has implications for exchanging some contact teaching hours for reassigned time to support faculty research and scholarship, as well as undergraduate research, it is likely that the model will not be fully implemented until additional faculty lines also become available (however, it is important to begin partial implementation as soon as possible; for some suggested ways to start a phased implementation immediately, see the strategies section below). Despite current challenges, it is critical that we plan for the future while incorporating the best instructional paradigms and faculty productivity models currently available. The present proposal provides a framework that can be used as the College of Science continues to address ongoing workload issues and works toward meeting the goals established in *Looking Forward: Planning Strategically for Weber State University in 2030*.

Criteria:

The new model should:

- Maintain, and ideally improve upon, the tradition of educational excellence provided by the faculty in the College of Science.
- Encourage more student-faculty interaction among College of Science faculty and declared science or mathematics majors.
- Increase recognition regionally for the outstanding programs offered by the College of Science.
- Increase recognition regionally for the high level of research and scholarship conducted by College of Science faculty and students.
- Provide a sustainable teaching load model that encourages and rewards mentoring of undergraduate research for all interested faculty.
- Enhance faculty morale and enthusiasm for working at Weber State University.
- Result in a measureable increase in the number of peer-reviewed publications and presentations at regional, national, and international meetings, including an increase in papers that involve undergraduate co-authors.
- Result in increased grant writing and awards of external funding for research, scholarship, and instructional needs (e.g., summer salary, buy-out time during the academic year, travel funding, and necessary equipment for instruction and/or research).
- Measurably enhance faculty participation in all areas of scholarship as defined in the current College of Science Tenure Policy so that faculty can remain current and active in their disciplines.
- Provide incentives for recruiting future faculty to the College of Science.
- Not increase E&G budgetary implications for the College of Science during a challenging budgetary climate.
- Serve as a model for other colleges at WSU and for other predominately undergraduate institutions.

Model Parameters:

- Any revisions in existing faculty workload allocation models should not negatively impact student progress toward a chosen degree.
- Overload teaching is governed by PPM 4-6.B. Overload teaching cannot have a negative impact on the expected workload outcomes for faculty, including research and scholarship, and service to the department, college, institution, or discipline, since those areas are contractual commitments on the part of all tenure-track and tenured faculty in the College of Science.
- Tenure-track faculty “must teach a minimum of 12 hours [per year] or its equivalent as determined by the department chair and the dean” (PPM 8-11.IV.E) in order “to have the year count towards the probationary period.” Faculty, department chairs, and the dean must be aware of this requirement when approving reassigned time under this policy.
- Existing policies that affect faculty workload allocations:

A. Utah State Board of Regents Policy R485: At the present time, R485 states that:

4.1. Average Teaching Workload – The institutional average teaching workload for full-time faculty shall be as follows:

4.1.2. At Metropolitan/Regional universities, 24 credit hour equivalents each year, or 12 credits per semester. Recognizing the diverse mix of teaching assignments, faculty contact hours in credit-bearing teaching activities at Metropolitan/Regional universities shall average approximately 13 hours per week.

4.3. Institutional Faculty Workload Policies

4.3.1. Institutional workload policies should take into account non-instructional activities that may be essential to the work of the faculty in particular disciplines, departments, and institutions.

4.3.2. Institutional policies are to provide for equitable recognition for extra contact hours that faculty spend with students in courses that involve studios, laboratories, clinics, independent study, thesis and dissertation, internships, and similar activities

B. Weber State University PPM 4-6 states:

A. Teaching Load

The normal teaching load for Weber State University faculty is 24 semester credit hours per academic year. The credit-hour base for the teaching load is computed using the following considerations:

1. Courses that Require Regularly Scheduled Instruction: The instructor accrues the same number of credit hours of instructional load that the course generates for students taking the course.
2. Activity Courses and Supervision of Laboratory Experiences: Instructors accrue one-half of the time spent in class as part of the instructional load assignment.
3. Shared Course Responsibilities: For courses that are team taught, or for which there are components beyond the scheduled instructional times, the instructor receives credit for that component directly taught or supervised.
4. Directed Readings, Special Problems, Individual Studies and Research Studies: The instructor accrues one-fourth credit hour of teaching load for each student credit hour supervised. During any semester of the academic year, no more than three credit hours of teaching load may accrue in this area.

C. Other Professional Activities

In addition to the normal 24-semester hours of teaching, faculty members are expected to assume other professional responsibilities such as advising students, maintaining office hours, performing public service, engaging in research and other scholarly activities and serving on committees. At the discretion of the departments and colleges, teaching time may be reassigned. Reassigned activities may include specific courses (e.g., student teaching supervision), specific program requirements (e.g., nursing, graduate programs, etc.), specific tasks in faculty governance (e.g., chairing a department or program, chairing major Faculty Senate committees, directing programs initiated by the President or Provost, etc.). The amount of time to be assigned is to be made in accordance with existing policies of the university.

C. Weber State University PPM 3-50 is also relevant to faculty workload issues:

I. Policy

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A one-course reduction in a tenure-track faculty member's contracted workload for one semester is available for the purpose of promoting scholarly activity before tenure is granted (See Section VI).

VI. One-Course Reduction for Tenure-Track Faculty

If the review of a tenure-track faculty member shows satisfactory progress towards tenure, he or she is eligible for a one-course reduction of his or her contracted workload for one semester. This course reduction must be awarded before the faculty member is granted tenure and is for the purpose of promoting scholarly activity. In order to be granted this course reduction, the faculty member must submit to his or her department chair and dean an application describing plans for the research or creative activities he or she plans to pursue during the semester in question. Such applications must be submitted six months in advance and approved by both the faculty member's chair and dean. Before the start of the semester in which the workload reduction is to occur, the dean will forward a list of the names of all faculty members who have been approved for such a reduction to the provost who will in turn forward the list to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

D. It is noted in the policies above that:

- i. Regents policy R485.4.1.2 specifically indicated that "faculty contact hours" are to be the unit of measure considered in determining teaching loads. This is inconsistent with PPM 4-6.A. which uses credit hours as the unit of measure. In addition, PPM 4-6.A diminishes the value of the TCH unit when compared with the course credit for instructional pedagogies such as activity courses, laboratory supervision, directed readings, special problems, individual studies, and research studies (R485.4.3.2 does "provide for equitable recognition for extra contact hours" for such activities).
- ii. PPM 4-6.C does indicate that "At the discretion of the departments and colleges, teaching time may be reassigned."

Arguments in Support of the Proposed New Teaching-Load Model:

- The current model used at Weber State University is based on outdated teaching pedagogies that did not include active, discovery-based laboratories. Furthermore, the current model did not anticipate the time-intensive nature of undergraduate research activities in the sciences and mathematics.
- Recruitment of new faculty who were trained in new pedagogies and research models is much more challenging with the current excessive teaching loads at WSU.
- Scientific research is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, requiring faculty collaborations across traditional departmental boundaries. Such collaboration requires the time necessary to explore and implement new collaborative research models.
- The revised criteria (Spring 2008) for the American Chemical Society certified bachelor's degree states that:

The number of *contact hours* [emphasis added] in classroom and in laboratory instruction for faculty and instructional staff *must not exceed 15 total hours per week*. To accommodate occasional fluctuations in instructional responsibilities, up to two individuals may have as many as 17 contact hours in one semester or quarter, provided that the average for each individual during the academic year does not exceed 15 contact hours per week. ***Fifteen contact hours is an upper limit, and a significantly smaller number should be the normal teaching obligation*** [emphasis added]. Faculty and instructional staff in the most effective programs usually have substantially fewer contact hours, particularly when they supervise undergraduate research.

- A 2001 survey conducted by Dr. Thomas J. Wenzel (former president of the Council for Undergraduate Research) on behalf of CUR asked respondents to report the number of contractually-obligated *contact hours* for faculty at predominately undergraduate institutions and the impact the number of hours has on research activities. Several observations and conclusions were reached by Dr. Wenzel:
 - “The majority of respondents with fewer than twelve contact hours felt they had enough time for research. Just under fifty percent of those with twelve contact hours thought such a teaching load was acceptable. An overwhelming majority of those with over twelve contact hours said their teaching load was too high and significantly impacted their ability to be research-active.”

- “Institutions ...ought to strive for less than twelve weekly contact hours, with a target of nine.”
- “CUR needs to advocate that instructional laboratory time be counted the same as class time, especially in courses in which more labor-intensive, investigative approaches are used.”

Updated Workload Model:

This new workload model is based on the measure of actual *contact hours* associated with instruction for those departments and faculty that choose to participate, rather than teaching credit hours (TCHs) that are currently used in Weber State University's Policies and Procedures Manual. This is in keeping with the Utah State Board of Regents Policy, R485.4.1.2 and R485.4.3.2. The exception is made for non-face-to-face instruction, such as online teaching that is done as a part of load; that form of instruction will continue to be measured as traditional TCHs, which are generally equivalent to contact hours for face-to-face classroom instruction.

- The ultimate goal of this workload model is to have faculty actively engaged in research and scholarship, as defined in the current version of the College of Science Tenure Policy. This will be accomplished by scheduling a nine contact hour per semester teaching load with three additional reassigned hours provided for research and scholarship activities. This will be accomplished over time by providing three contact hours of reassigned time for each approved semester as resources become available.
- Until resources become available, such as additional faculty lines, faculty approved to participate in the new workload model during a given semester should average between nine and eleven contact hours per semester, with the ultimate goal of reducing that number to nine contact hours.
- Departments wishing to participate in the new workload model must agree to release all prior reassigned time for tenure-track and tenured faculty except for department chair assignments and formally-approved reassigned time, such as university-level directorships or contractually-established reassigned time.
- Departments wishing to participate in the new workload model must formally agree to participate by a majority vote of the departmental faculty. The decision may be reviewed annually by the program faculty. A department may by a majority vote modify parts of this policy (as applied to their department), subject to approval by the department chair and dean.
- Untenured, tenure-track faculty wishing to apply for a one-time, one course reduction in teaching as provided by PPM 3-50.IV will, instead, be able to apply for the three contact hour reassignment for research and scholarship via this workload model on an ongoing basis. The faculty member cannot count both forms of course reduction in the same semester. This approach is fully consistent with, and effectively extends, the policy cited in PPM 3-50.IV.

- All faculty receiving nine to eleven contact-hour teaching loads per semester must submit a formal application, be recommended by the department chair or a departmental committee, and be approved by the dean. Mentorship of undergraduates in research is strongly encouraged but not required. Justification must be provided indicating how the requested reassignment will benefit students and/or the faculty member, the department, and the College of Science. Expected outcomes of the proposed project must also be included in the application.
- Activity associated with the approved reassignment will be reported in detail on annual faculty reviews. Reports should address the progress made in addressing the stated goals of the faculty member's application for three contact hours of reassignment in each semester. Future consideration of requests for reassignment will be based in part on demonstrated productivity in previous reassigned time allocations.
- Student credit hours associated with individual research and readings courses, such as 2800, 2830, 4800, 4830, and 4970 (directed readings, special problems, individual studies, and research studies) are not to be counted in the contact-hour total for faculty with approved reassignment for research or scholarship. This is in keeping with existing policy (see PPM 4-6.A.4) in which a maximum number of three credit hours is allowed for such instruction per semester. (This policy explicitly provides for the maximum number of allowed credit hours through reassignment of workload.) Effectively, this new model assigns the maximum number of allowed hours to each participating faculty member regardless of the number of student credit hours associated with these courses. This generally implies more reassigned time for the faculty member than the existing policy allows.
- New faculty hires will automatically be given nine contact-hour teaching loads, with three hours of reassigned time per semester for the first and second years of employment at Weber State University. This establishes an expectation of, and opportunity for, scholarship throughout that faculty member's career at Weber State University. This policy will also help with recruitment of new faculty. After the first two years, the faculty member must apply for continued reassigned time as described in this policy. This provision is also consistent with the extension of the policy that allows all untenured, tenure-track faculty the opportunity to apply for a one-time, one course reduction in teaching as provided by PPM 3-50.IV.
- All credit-bearing laboratory instruction will be counted as contact hours for all participating tenured and tenure-track faculty in departments that elect to participate in the new model. Credit-bearing laboratory instruction by adjunct, visiting, and term faculty will be paid for according to existing university policy.

- Faculty who receive three contact hours of reassigned time under this new workload model will not be eligible to teach on an overload basis during the semester(s) in which the reassigned time is awarded. The purpose of the new workload model is to create opportunities to have additional time available to mentor undergraduate researchers as well as produce a research or other scholarly product from the faculty member's work (potentially with student collaboration) as defined in the College of Science Tenure Policy.
- Tenure-track or tenured faculty not actively engaged in research or scholarship as defined in the current version of the College of Science Tenure Policy will have a twelve to fifteen contact-hour teaching load each semester. Greater contact hours will be given to those faculty who do not participate significantly in research, scholarship, or service activities. As additional resources become available, the goal should be to have a twelve contact-hour per semester average teaching load for all tenure-track or tenured faculty not accepted for reassigned time under this new model. (This provision is in keeping with Weber State University's Policies and Procedures Manual and Utah State Board of Regents policy.)
- The new model will be phased in as resources become available according the following sequence (note that reassigned time may need to be rotated among faculty until a sufficient number of hours becomes available to accommodate all faculty who wish to participate):
 - First and second-year tenure-track faculty will automatically receive a nine contact hour teaching load with three additional hours of reassignment each semester for research, scholarship, and/or mentoring of undergraduate research. Credit-bearing laboratory instruction will be recorded as actual contact hours during the first two years of employment at Weber State University. This is to insure the opportunity to establish a research and scholarship program prior to final tenure review. First- and second-year tenure-track faculty may opt out of this opportunity with the approval of the Chair and Dean if they prefer to teach compensated overload beyond 12 TCHs according to current policy as described in the Policies and Procedures Manual.
 - Tenured or tenure-track undergraduate research mentors and/or faculty researchers and scholars may apply for three hours of reassigned time as the next priority following first- and second-year faculty in those departments that elect to participate in the new workload model.
- Additional reassignment for research and scholarship requires buy-out through internal or external grant funding or buy-out provided by contractual agreements with external organizations. These reassignments require approval by the department chair and the

dean at the time of grant submission or preparation of a contractual agreement. Current university policy requires five business days for advanced notification prior to submission of applications for external funding through the Office of Sponsored Projects.

- Sabbatical applications will continue to be considered as per existing university policy (PPM 3-50). Sabbaticals are not to be considered as entitlements, but rather as opportunities for further research or other scholarly work, free from additional activities associated with a typical faculty workload. Sabbaticals, like the reassigned time discussed in this new workload model, are approved based on expected benefit to the faculty member and the College of Science. It is generally expected that sabbatical activities will lead to scholarly products as identified on the current College of Science Tenure Policy. As with the reassigned time addressed in this proposal, faculty on sabbaticals will not be eligible to teach on an overload basis during the semester(s) when the sabbatical is taken.

Strategies for Achieving the New Teaching-Load Model:

In order to provide additional opportunities for research and scholarship without adding additional faculty lines during challenging budgetary times, and without negatively impacting student credit hour production in the College of Science, it is necessary that we rethink the delivery of instruction and look for efficiencies where available. In essence the change represents a paradigm shift that asks departments and programs to rethink how course offerings can best support student learning, while also supporting research and scholarship. The new model provides an opportunity to meet student need and support a high level of student learning without the additional restriction of all faculty having 12 TCH teaching loads each semester.

The Advisory Board Company (2008) has conducted a study of 16 institutions that have undergone a workload reduction effort, and the study revealed seven strategies that can be pursued without increasing the number of faculty. It is noted that not all of the strategies may be appropriate for the College of Science at Weber State University. The strategies identified in the study are:

- Eliminating unnecessary, low-enrollment classes.
- Offering certain courses less often, such as elective courses. This may be done by offering elective courses on an every-other-year basis. [Do faculty want to offer their “pet” courses annually rather than have that time available for reassignment? Can some electives be eliminated to more effectively focus a student’s education?]
- Offering fewer sections of some courses (most likely general education), while increasing class sizes in remaining sections.
- Creating new courses that combine essential material in two or more existing courses.
- Reducing time devoted to instruction (this approach may be more appropriate for 4-4-1 calendars at other institutions).
- Students may be required to take more interdisciplinary offerings, such as courses that serve multiple departments or programs. [For example, team-teaching interdisciplinary general education or other introductory courses (e.g., evolution, ecology, general biology, planetary science, or other possibilities).]
- Consolidate and reorganize reassigned time currently being allocated [a requirement of this new workload model].

Other possible strategies not identified in the study could include, but are not restricted to:

- Reducing the number of major, or stand-alone minor, programs in departments with multiple offerings. At the present time WSU has a very large number of separate degree programs relative to other, similar, institutions. This may no longer be a strategic advantage for the College of Science or the University.
- Consolidating departments with similar missions and overlapping content.
- Limit offerings of very low-enrollment courses whenever possible.
- Make effective use of technologies to enhance student learning while reducing the number of faculty contact hours (e.g., hybrid courses, increased use of computer labs, computer-based assignments and grading, adjusting pedagogy for an active-learning environment rather than pure lecture format; for example, see <http://www.theNCAT.org/>).
- Increasing the number of faculty lines when funding becomes available, and if other, cost neutral, approaches are not viable.
- Hire additional support staff to alleviate faculty time spent on peripheral functions such as grant writing/administration, equipment maintenance, etc.

Summary of the New Workload Model:

- Departments must agree to opt in to the new workload model by majority vote of the faculty tenure-track and tenured faculty.
- First and second-year tenure-track faculty will automatically receive three hours of reassigned time per semester for research, scholarship, and/or undergraduate research mentoring unless they choose to teach additional courses during a particular semester on overload with chair and dean approval.
- After the second year of employment at Weber State University faculty must apply to the department chair using an established form to receive three contact hours of reassignment for scholarship in either or both on-load semesters during the upcoming academic year. There will be one submission deadline each year, early in Spring semester, so that approvals or denials of the applications can be considered in developing teaching schedules.
- Dean approval is required for all faculty receiving three contact hours of reassigned time per semester. The department chair, or alternatively a departmental committee established for the purpose, is also required to approve the request prior to submission to the dean for consideration. Chair or departmental approvals should also be recorded in departmental meeting minutes.
- Faculty who are accepted to receive three contact hours of reassignment will also have any teaching laboratory hours counted on a contact hour basis. The full load for the approved semester(s) will be between nine and eleven contact hours of instruction plus three hours of reassignment for research, scholarship, and/or undergraduate research mentoring. (The target should be nine contact hours of instruction whenever possible.)
- Overload teaching is not allowed during the semester(s) in which reassigned time is approved for the participating faculty member.
- Faculty not participating in this model during any given semester will have assignments based on existing Policies and Procedures at Weber State University (PPM 4-6).
- It is expected that faculty approved to participate in this program during a given semester will be actively engaged in undergraduate research mentorship and/or faculty research or scholarship, with the goal that the project will ultimately result in a scholarly product as specified in the current College of Science Tenure Document.
- A full report of the activities associated with the approved reassignment must be included in the faculty member's annual report to the department chair.

- The ultimate goal of the proposed model is to count all teaching activity in contact hours, with a teaching load of nine contact hours per semester for all faculty actively engaged in research, scholarship, and/or undergraduate research mentoring as specified in the College of Science Tenure Policy. This goal will be realized as necessary resources become available.

References:

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- Weber State University Policy and Procedures Manual:
 - PPM 3-25: *Faculty Sabbatical Leave*
 - PPM 4-6: *Statement: Faculty Work Load*
 - PPM 8-11: *Evaluation of Faculty Members*
- Wenzel, Thomas J., “What is an Appropriate Teaching Load for a Research-active Faculty Member at a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution?” *CUR Quarterly*, March 2001, pp. 104 – 107.