

COURSE REDUCTION TASK FORCE REPORT

December, 2006

The Faculty Course Reduction Task Force met numerous times to review the existing practice of course reductions and to devise possible alternatives. The recommendations below are unanimously agreed upon by the task force members.

In recent years, college-wide course reductions have increased rapidly and significantly. Currently (2006-07) there are 110.99 course reductions amounting to 22.2 FTEs, up from 91.65 in 2002-03. It seems that it has become part of the institutional culture for the faculty to bargain routinely for course reductions for different reasons including performing academic administrative tasks. This outcome has had several effects. First and most important this forces the institution to hire adjunct faculty to teach for tenured/tenure track faculty, who are the primary beneficiaries of course reductions. At an institution priding itself with high teaching quality, the pedagogical costs of this policy are substantial. Second, students typically prefer to take classes with tenured/tenure track faculty, so class sizes for long-term faculty swell, along with the number of exams and papers to grade, and independent studies to supervise. The morale and time cost of this overload is also considerable. The following two-part proposal aims to reduce the number of course reductions without jeopardizing the quality of academic administrative services provided.

The task force recommends the following number of course reductions for Chairs and Program Directors, Endowed Chairs and Chairs of Faculty Committees (PART I), and further suggests that policy recommendations in PART II be the guiding principles for the College Administration in the future.

PART I: Course Reductions For Department Chairs and Program Directors, Endowed Chairs, and Faculty Committees:

Department Chairs

Three course (nine contact hours) reduction:

English
Foreign Language
Art/Art History
Music
Management & Business

Two course (six-seven contact hour) reduction:

Math/Comp Sci
Government
Psychology
Exercise Science
Philosophy/Religion
Biology
Chemistry
Economics
History
Soc/Anthro/Social Work
Theater
Dance

One course (three-four contact hours) reduction :

Education
Physics
American Studies
Geosciences
Classics

Program Directors

One course (three contact hours) reduction :

International Affairs
Environmental Studies
Women's Studies
Neuroscience

Endowed Chairs

One course (three contact hours) reduction for each of the twelve endowed chairs

Committee Chairs

One course (three contact hours) reduction for the chairs of CAPT, CEPP, and FEC

Rationale:

As outlined in the faculty handbook under “Obligations Pertaining to Department Chairs” and “Obligations Pertaining to Program Directors” [Part VII, Section XV, Article D and Part VII, Section XVI, Article D, respectively], the most time-intensive responsibilities of department chairs and program directors are personnel related tasks, especially hiring and mentoring. Therefore, we have ranked departments according to their faculty size,

specifically the TEACHING STRENGTH calculated by the Registrar for each department. The number of course reductions were then distributed as follows:

Teaching Strength	Course Reductions
10 or more	3
6-9	2
5 or less	1

Over the years 2002-2005, the classifications of most departments according to this system did not change. In two cases, a change occurred, and the number of reductions was guided by their ranking in terms of their “Number of 1st Majors.”

There was a consensus among task force members that chairs should not be allowed more than three course reductions, and that the position of Associate Chair should be eliminated.

Course reductions for these program chairs are based on rankings according to the “Number of 1st Majors.” The taskforce recommends course reductions for the four largest interdisciplinary programs only.

There was a consensus on the committee that Endowed Chairs should not be allowed more than one course reduction, in order to make course reductions uniform.

PART II: Additional Policy Recommendations:

- The current ethos among Skidmore Faculty is that service, including chairing and directing, is dependent on a person’s “willingness” and is not a faculty obligation. As a result, course reductions have become a routine bargaining chip. The Faculty Handbook needs to be revisited to emphasize the fact that faculty are expected to serve as department chairs and program directors.

- We need to standardize the procedures for granting course reductions to make them equitable and transparent. Individual bargaining should be strictly limited. The DOF should attempt to keep course reductions within a college wide cap. Our goal for 2007-08 should be 95 course reductions and the number of course reductions should decrease over time, with a long-term target of 60.

- We recommend that the maximum number of course reductions to which a faculty member may be eligible be three courses.

- The task force also proposes the following non-course-reduction-oriented incentives:

- * Allow chairs/directors to substitute course reductions with at least \$3,400 payment per course reduction (not into the base);

* Directors of interdisciplinary programs should also be allowed to substitute at least \$3400 per course reduction for directing (not into the base)

* Allow chairs/directors additional travel to read and faculty development funds if needed and provide 'banking' opportunities for these funds.

* Provide chairs/directors funds for leadership and development training.

- There should be rules regarding grant-related and other buy-outs. For example, we recommend the 20% salary plus benefits rule for this group. This means that the source of the grant or buy-out is responsible for 20% of the salary plus benefits of the receiver. This rule should also apply to anyone who has been granted a buyout due to personal reasons, with the restriction that this be allowed for a maximum of three years.

- The chairs' duties in the Faculty Handbook should be revisited to make the position more attractive. For instance, Part I, Section XA, 2c of the Faculty Handbook might read as follows : "... as well as concomitant achievement attesting to further growth in scholarship, creative or professional work; and significant involvement in the affairs of the college including, but not limited to, serving as department chair and/or program director." In any case, the task force recommends that service as a department chair/program director be taken as a serious criterion in personnel decisions.

- We recommend the contracts for chairs correlate with department size: a 9 month appointment for departments with less than five tenure track lines, and a 10 month appointment for departments with 5 or more.

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The above members of the task force also wish to express their appreciation to Sarah Goodwin for her contributions to our work.