

2013 AcAB FACULTY SURVEY: PRELIMINARY REPORT

Hope College Faculty Meeting
October 22, 2013

Survey Questions

1. Recognition of faculty workload
2. Student Assessment of Learning and Teaching (SALT)
3. Academic scheduling (e.g., course conflicts)
4. Feedback to students (e.g., grading practices, grade reporting)
5. Global learning and diversity education, including off-campus opportunities
6. Online instruction
7. Other topics

Survey Scale

Please rate how strongly you feel discussion or action is needed on each of the following items using the following scale:

- A. The present situation works well and needs no change
- B. The present situation is not ideal but is acceptable
- C. Discussion is needed and change is possibly warranted
- D. Change from the present situation is definitely needed
- E. No opinion

Survey Results: 136 Responses

- 1. Recognition of faculty workload: C+D=**57%**
- 2. Student Assessment of Learning and Teaching (SALT): C+D=**46%**
- 3. Academic scheduling (e.g., course conflicts): C+D=**38%**
- 4. Feedback to students (e.g., grading practices, grade reporting): C+D=**16%**
- 5. Global learning and diversity education, including off-campus opportunities: C+D=**43%**
- 6. Online instruction: C+D=**30%**

Recognition of Faculty Workload

Many departments feel that they are under-staffed. This has led to overloads and scheduling problems semester after semester. The current situation does not seem sustainable.

With increased enrollment in some areas and increased expectations of other faculty activity, such as being more pastoral with our students, and no decreases in expectations in other areas such as performance or scholarship and service, workloads for many faculty are reaching the breaking point.

We currently operate with scholarship expectations more akin to a research university, teaching expectations of a liberal arts college, and a great many additional distractions (e.g., recruitment, committees, reporting) that prevent us from focusing on either.

I feel as if the workload is consistently increasing. Demands on our time for service, for scholarship, for teaching, and for participating in community activities are higher and higher. I'm exhausted all the time, and I'm not making the kind of progress in any of my efforts that I feel is expected of me. It's discouraging.

Recognition of Faculty Workload - con't

It seems as though strengths of faculty should be tapped into instead of spreading people too thin and burning them out. Mile-wide, inch-deep isn't very effective, nor efficient for the end result, which is enhancing student success.

The current 3-3 teaching load is not compatible with increased workload (e.g., increased student-faculty ratio, increased expectations for out-of-classroom interaction with students, increased time due to technology changes) and changes in scholarly expectations. It is not consistent with practices at highly-rated institutions where scholarship with students is an expectation. It would be acceptable if we wanted to become a teaching-only college, which is unfortunately where we are headed if we keep this load.

My concern is that faculty are stretched too thin and have too few resources to do much within the current system. We slide into the comfortable - repeating courses (and assignments) over and over - because we are not provided opportunities, encouragement or support to change things.

Student Assessment of Learning and Teaching

Everyone wants to survey everyone else about everything. Result = survey fatigue

There are few aspects of the current tool that are applicable to my course. I'd appreciate a tool that would be an assistance in improving my course and my teaching.

Reliance on only students who will fill out on-line surveys is potentially very biased. Offering carrots, points, and other rewards insures that the system will be biased.

SALT is an institutional-level assessment being used as a course-level assessment. Faculty report that it doesn't ask what they need to know.

Academic Scheduling

We need to be able to schedule 4 credit courses for four hours a week!

There are many 4 contact-hour courses, with the 4th hour being scheduled in a random fashion on our 3 contact-hour schedule. This unnecessarily causes schedule conflicts for students, and it wastes time slots.

Schedule is approaching total grid lock with vast numbers of classes not fitting into the schedule. Too many classes schedule across time blocks or have a unique pattern of meeting that disrupts the remainder of a student schedule.

Chapel, community, and athletic timeblocks should be better respected.

There has got to be an a better way to do this! And faculty should have less power in determining their schedule. This should be focused on students.

Feedback to Students

Problems with rigor and grade inflation continue.

Grade inflation is still an issue and we can't seem to tackle the problem.

Grade inflation is a problem, as it devalues grades and it results in poor feedback to students.

Grade inflation generates conflicts between departments, such as when a program sets GPA cut-offs for entrance, which filter out students from Departments whose grades reflect less inflation. This is a problem that has affected the career trajectory of students.

Modest grade inflation is troublesome, but within national norms, and historic evidence is that we cannot come to consensus on addressing this despite many attempts by AcAB over the past few decades! Apparently we are willing to live with things the way they are.

Global Learning and Diversity Education

We have a long ways to go to becoming global and have a healthy, informed view of diversity in the student body.

Events on campus indicated that much work needs to be done.

If this is a central part of our mission, then we need to do more to engage more faculty on campus. That means putting more resources into these efforts.

There is little incentive or reward given to faculty who teach such courses.

How are we doing with the new Global Learning flags? We should probably assess the results of the last change before we move on and change other things.

It is hard to fully educate students on diversity without having a more diverse student body.

Diversity education for faculty, staff and students is problematic, starting with diversity practices. Until we actually mean diversity when we say diversity, instead of meaning "just that diversity that is acceptable to us" and NOT including religion and sexual orientation, the whole thing is hypocritical.

Online Instruction

While I can see the value of using on-line assignments for in-class courses, I am unalterably opposed to on-line courses; they lack the "value added" that a residential, liberal arts college has to offer.

Like it or not, online instruction is a big part of the marketplace. We absolutely need to know as much about it as possible and to at least carefully consider how we might use it at Hope College.

Are we engaging in increased online instruction because we consider it a "best practice" and because it is consistent with our mission and core values -- or because "everyone else is doing it?" We need to do some more careful institutional discernment.

Other Topics

The increasing number and impact of extra-curricular activities on scheduled academic classes (i.e. "mandatory" extra-curricular meetings that conflict with published class times).

Students missing classes for sports events.

I see the stress in my student/athletes when there are conflicts.