

Expectations of Faculty Workloads

Sheb True, Associate Professor of Marketing,
Thomas Pritchett, Professor of Marketing,
Dana Hermanson, Professor of Accounting,
Kennesaw State University

Issue

Business faculty make contributions through their teaching, research, and service, and they serve a variety of customers, including students, journal editors and administrators. The academic literature contains numerous studies documenting the ever-increasing research standards for faculty at U.S. universities. In addition, many universities have stated publicly that teaching excellence is being emphasized to a much greater extent than in the past.

In situations where parties are accountable to multiple, demanding customer groups, there is the potential for role conflict. In the university setting, faculty may feel torn between the demand for performing quality research and the demand for spending adequate time advising students. If faculty perceive that they face role conflict, the result may be increased stress and reduced productivity.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore whether business faculty at a large, Southeastern university perceive significant differences between the demands (i.e., desired workload time allocations) of two key customers - students and administrators. Additionally, we compare the faculty perceptions of customer expectations to (a) students' actual expectations of faculty and (b) faculty's self-reported actual workload time allocations. The results provide insight into the perceived role conflict faced by faculty.

Method

Student Survey: An exploratory survey was developed to gather students' expectations of faculty time commitment allocations for teaching, research, and service activities. Items in the questionnaire addressed the percentage of time students thought a full-time faculty member should spend on each activity. To provide for a consistent benchmark of comparison, the required activities of faculty were explained to the student participants as follows: Teaching- e.g., course preparation, class time, office hours; Research- e.g., conducting research, writing for publication; and Service- e.g., advising, administrative work, committees. Equal numbers of three versions of the questionnaire were created (i.e., the activities were presented in random order: a) Teaching, Research, Service; b) Service, Research, Teaching; and c) Research, Teaching, Service) to minimize the effect of order bias.

Student Sample: The survey was randomly distributed to several classes in an AACSB accredited

college of business at one university (a non-doctoral degree granting institution). This preliminary data gathering process yielded 197 usable questionnaires from student participants - 105 undergraduates and 92 graduates. *Table 1* presents a demographic profile of the sample. The characteristics of the survey participants approximately represent those of the population of students at the sampled business school and therefore should provide for a valid basis of investigation.

Table 1 - Demographic Information

	All	Undergraduate	Graduate
Sample Size	197	105	92
Average Size	28.5	25.5	31.3
Gender			
Male	45%	35%	55%
Female	55%	65%	45%
University Status			
Part-time student	39%	22%	53%
Full-time student	61%	78%	47%
University Classification			
Freshman	1%	2%	
Sophomore	6%	7%	
Junior	22%	44%	
Senior	24%	47%	
Graduate Student	47%		100%
Average G.P.A. (4.0 scale)	3.33	3.14	3.56
Avg. of Hours Worked/Week	33.8	31.5	36.2

Faculty Survey: Similar to the student survey, a questionnaire was developed to gather faculty perceptions of students' and administrators' expectations of faculty time commitment allocations for teaching, research, and service activities. Faculty were also asked to indicate their actual allocations of time for teaching, research, and service activities. Equal numbers of three versions of the questionnaire were created (i.e., the activities were presented in random order: a) Teaching, Research, Service; b) Service, Research, Teaching; and c) Research, Teaching, Service) to minimize the effect of order bias.

Faculty Sample: The survey was distributed to 55 faculty at the same college of business from which the student sample was drawn. This process yielded 28 usable questionnaires from faculty participants. One characteristic of this sample frame is that faculty choose one of three emphases (i.e., tracks) that have different teaching, research, and service objectives/requirements:

[Track A] - an emphasis on Teaching and Service; [Track B] - balanced emphasis on Teaching, Research, and Service; and [Track C] - an emphasis on Teaching and Research. The distribution of responses from these tracks among the survey participants was 7, 12, and 9, respectively.

Discussion of Results and Implications

No significant differences in responses were found among the three order variations of the questionnaires for students and faculty, thus minimizing the presence of bias in the results due to the order of faculty activities presented. *Table 2* presents the data obtained on students' expectations of faculty workloads. As one might hypothesize, students expect their professors to allocate the majority of their time toward teaching. Also, the graduate students noted an expectation of more emphasis on research than did the undergraduate students.

Table 2 - Students' Expectations of Faculty Workload Time Allocations (Means)

	Teaching	Research	Service
All	54.2%	24.9%	20.9%
Undergraduates	56.0%	20.0%	24.0%
Graduates	51.7%	29.3%	19.0%

Table 3 reports the results regarding faculty perceptions of students' expectations of faculty workload time allocations. Two points seem of value here: [1] there is no difference in faculty perceptions among the three tracks; and [2] the faculty perceptions of students' expectations of time allocated to teaching were much greater than the percentage reported by students (74% vs 54%). Likewise, faculty perceptions of students' expectations of faculty research and service activities were lower than what the students actually expect.

Table 4 provides insight into faculty perceptions what they think administrators expect in regard to their - track specific - workload time allocations. A few notations are important to the context of this study. First, the distribution of time allocations shows very little variance across all three tracks thus implying faculty do not perceive that administrators acknowledge (i.e., base their evaluations on) workload differences among the tracks, even though this is the published system and it is officially endorsed by the college of business administrators. Second, faculty perceive that students' and administrators' expectations for the faculty members' workload are quite diverse thus indicating a likelihood of role ambiguity. Third, Track A's (i.e., Teaching and Service focus) perception of

administrator's expectations of service is approximately equal to that of Track C's (i.e., Research and Teaching focus) perception, and Track C's perception is higher than Track B's (Teaching/Research/Service focus).

Table 3 - Faculty Perceptions of Students' Expectations of Faculty Workload Time Allocations (Means)

	Teaching	Research	Service
All	73.7%	12.4%	13.4%
Track A- Teaching/Service Focus	73.3%	12.3%	14.4%
Track B- Teaching/Research/Service Focus	72.9%	12.9%	14.2%
Track C- Research/Teaching Focus	75.0%	13.3%	11.7%

Table 5 details the faculty self-reports of amount of time they actually spend on teaching, research, and service activities. In regard to the responsibilities for each track, the teaching and research functions seem to be in order with respect to the prioritization of time allocation; however, the service function reveals the opposite of what is intuitive for track responsibilities. This finding supports the possibility of role ambiguity. This proposition is reinforced when these findings are viewed in contrast to the previous results because the actual faculty workload time allocations differ from what faculty think students and administrators expect of them. Also, it is interesting to note that overall, Track B, and to some degree Track A, actually distribute their teaching workload in a manner equal to what the students in general reported they expect. When the expectations of undergraduates are singled out, faculty overall, Track A, and to some degree Track B, expectations are also congruent with actual faculty workloads for research and service activities. Track C meets the students' expectations in regard to research, particularly for the graduate students in the sample.

Table 5- Actual Faculty Workload Time Allocations

	Teaching	Research	Service
All	53.8%	18.0%	28.2%
Track A- Teaching/Service Focus	79.3%	6.4%	24.3%
Track B- Teaching/Research/Service Focus	57.1%	15.4%	27.5%
Track C- Research/Teaching Focus	37.2%	30.6%	32.2%

What seems to be most apparent from this study is that there is a presence of perceived role ambiguity by faculty, but because the actual faculty workloads are not that different from what students want there is little evidence to suggest that there is actual role ambiguity. Therefore, the underlying issue is "the extent to which workload time allocations are related to performance in regard to teaching, research, and service." That is, efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, the results from this exploratory study provide a basis for a continued stream of research that will address the issue of role ambiguity and role conflict for instructors at institutions of higher education. First, this type of study needs to be expanded to include a more representative sample of educational institutions. Next, a series of research questions that needs to be answered include: 1) Is there a change in the student's expectations of faculty roles

throughout their academic career?; 2) Are there time allocation differences in what students, administrators, and faculty expect, and do these differences, if any, have an effect on the student-teacher evaluations?; and 3) Are there conflicts in how faculty think they should allocate their time versus a) what they think students expect, b) what they think administrators expect, and c) what administrators actually want, as well as, d) to how faculty actually allocate their time? Third, if role ambiguity and/or conflict actually exist among these parties and if it does affect student-teacher evaluations, what strategies for correcting this situation can be implemented regarding redesigning faculty workloads and performance evaluations, and/or educating all parties on the actual role responsibilities of faculty workloads?