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Report of the Academic Affairs Division Task Force on Faculty Roles and Rewards

I. Faculty Roles in a Changing University

As East Carolina University enters the new millennium, it confronts a variety of substantial challenges and great opportunities. In the wake of its recent recognition by the UNC Board of Governors as a Doctoral/Research-Intensive University, ECU has committed itself to a goal of increasing productivity in research and creative activity, seeking a 50% increase in grant and contract funding, over the next five years. The University is also planning for a 50% increase in on-campus enrollment to 27,000 students by 2008, without lowering academic standards. At the same time, faculty, staff, and administrators wish to preserve a small campus atmosphere. To maintain a small college atmosphere, students must have access to small or moderate class sizes taught by full-time, regular faculty and have access to high quality advising.

To achieve these diverse goals, ECU must carefully examine the roles and responsibilities of faculty. The University must find ways to enable faculty to devote time and effort to research and creative activity. For a growing number of students to have regular and significant interaction with faculty, a large number of faculty must also be devoted to teaching and advising.

To increase research and creative productivity and simultaneously educate more students, faculty numbers must increase. Using positions derived from Doctoral/Research-Intensive University status is one mechanism to improve student-faculty ratios. Other initiatives to improve student-faculty ratios should be explored and implemented.

The University must also explicitly recognize the diverse talents of faculty and work toward an optimal expression of these talents. Traditionally, academic roles range across a myriad of responsibilities, including research/creative activity, teaching, advising, and professional service. While some faculty excel in all areas, others are most productive in one of these activities. By allowing flexibility in roles of individual faculty, resources at the unit level can be allocated more effectively, with the net result of increased productivity overall.

Flexibility can be accommodated by evaluating expectations at the unit level. Some academic units have been asked to assume major responsibilities for research and graduate education. Other units have undergraduate education as their primary responsibility. Still other units have major responsibility for professional education and clinical care. Some units are expected to combine most or all of these responsibilities. Given the significant and growing diversity in the roles and expectations for different academic units, each unit should be asked to articulate specific goals consonant with the University's broader goals.

To achieve these specific goals most effectively, units should have significant flexibility in assigning different responsibilities to individual faculty. Some faculty may be asked to devote a large majority of their efforts to research, others to teaching, and others to clinical care or other professional services. To enable faculty to undertake these more specialized roles and responsibilities, traditional criteria for evaluation, merit, tenure, and promotion need to be revised. The notion that all faculty members should be held to an identical standard of excellence in teaching, research, and service is no longer realistic. Instead, demonstrated excellence and scholarship in one should merit

consideration for tenure, promotion, and other professional rewards. These determinations should be made according to specific unit goals and are anticipated to be different across units within East Carolina University.

To address these issues, the East Carolina University Task Force on Faculty Roles and Rewards offers the following recommendations:

1. East Carolina University should embrace the "Community of Scholars Concept" as drafted by the ECU SACS Education and Research Committee. This innovative concept complements the plan for flexibility in Faculty Workload assignments. Please see attachment #1.
2. The ECU Faculty Manual should be revised to reflect a new policy on the determination of teaching loads, research expectations and service obligations. This policy should embrace the concept of flexibility and differences among the units. It should not establish a fixed policy on teaching loads that applies throughout the University. Individual workloads should reflect the different missions of the academic units and be stated in the unit codes.

Unit administrators, in consultation with their faculty, will assign workloads at the unit level, distributing responsibilities based on the needs and objectives of that unit. The workload assignments and the results will be aggregated at the division level on an annual basis. Units will be held accountable for achieving their overall goals in teaching, research, and service.

II. Professional Support Requirements for Faculty

Faculty deserve to be rewarded for their dedicated service and for their noteworthy achievements. Prior to discussion of faculty rewards, however, the Task Force wishes to emphasize the necessity of providing adequate professional support for faculty. To maintain and increase their productivity as teachers, scholars, investigators, clinicians, and professional leaders in a changing university environment, East Carolina University faculty require substantial support for their activities. The Task Force offers the following recommendations regarding professional support services for faculty:

1. The University should insure that faculty have adequate access to staff in their department for assistance with secretarial tasks, including professional correspondence, professional travel documentation, teaching materials, and other related work.
2. The University should support faculty who have an active research program by providing graduate and research assistants. From the beginning of their employment, faculty members should have, laboratory space, computer research equipment, and technical support adequate to their needs.
3. The University should provide significant financial support for faculty participation in professional meetings, conferences, and other professional development.

III. Faculty Rewards

Just as faculty are concerned about maintaining a small college atmosphere for students, faculty members are also committed to maintaining an enthusiastic and collegial atmosphere for their work with other faculty. For a university growing at a rapid pace, this is a critical time to make significant choices about the culture and climate of the university. In an effort to encourage stability, growth, and productivity among faculty, the Task Force offers the following recommendations regarding rewards for faculty:

1. The university should acquire funds for merit salary increases as a priority reward.
2. The University should provide enhanced benefits for faculty (in addition to the basic benefits provided by the state). Among benefits worth considering are lower health insurance premiums, dental and vision care, computer access at home, tuition remission for family members, life insurance, and early retirement incentives. A general discount should be considered for all ECU employees at the Student Store, cultural events and athletic events. Initiation of a laboratory or charter school and/or a larger day-care center for the children of faculty are also possible benefits that could be considered.
3. The University should establish a tradition of recognition for faithful efforts. Faculty members' morale should become a priority, both at the unit level and at the campus level. Because different faculty respond to different kinds of recognition, it is impossible to recommend specific guidelines. An ECU

Faculty Club to promote interaction, goodwill, and a sense of belonging would likely appeal to a very large number of faculty.

4. The University should give priority attention to faculty recruiting and retention. Using signing bonuses, providing start-up funds, employing new faculty for one month of orientation to the campus, and assisting with moving costs can be used to attract new faculty. The University should add as a strategic goal the retention of faculty. It should establish a benchmarking program used to maintain competitive salaries.

COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS CONCEPT

Context

The fundamental charge of the SACS Education and Research Committee is to develop strategies to enhance the quality of undergraduate and graduate education while concurrently increasing research productivity, with particular emphasis on the role of faculty workloads, reward structures, and resource allocations to provide support where it is needed.

Goal

Growing enrollments create pressure on faculty to offer more and larger classes, whereas increased expectations for research/grant procurement/publication create additional pressures on faculty time. Hence, in order to simultaneously improve instructional quality and research productivity our goal must be to more effectively use faculty time.

Strategy

One possible strategy to achieve more effective use of faculty time is to increase flexibility in the assignment of duties, which implies an alternative approach to evaluating faculty performance. Currently, we expect each individual faculty member to excel in all aspects of scholarly endeavor (teaching, research, service) at all stages of her/his career. This expectation is not always realized, in which case individual faculty contributions are not maximized and resource allocation (in the form of faculty effort) is not efficiently utilized.

An alternative perspective from which to evaluate performance is to focus on the academic unit. Expectations of the unit cover the spectrum of scholarly activities, but each faculty member need not contribute equally in all three areas at all times. Hence, the tactic to implement this strategy is to allow faculty members for specified periods of time to concentrate work duties in one or two areas. For example, some faculty may be more research oriented, whereas others may wish to focus on teaching and/or service. By allowing faculty members to focus on activities for which they have a preference, the unit can actually become more efficient. Those who wish to emphasize teaching can carry heavier course loads, freeing those who wish to conduct research to do just that. In order for such a system to prosper, there must be true appreciation of all

contributions to the unit; that is, evaluations of individual faculty members must be based on the actual duties assigned.

The current expression of this flexibility concept allows each faculty member to negotiate (within limits set by the unit code) the relative weight of teaching, research and service to be used in her/his annual evaluation. The strategy proposed here differs in that it requires this principle to apply not only to annual evaluations and merit pay raises but reappointments, tenure and promotion, and post-tenure review. Under this "community of scholars" concept, the contributions of those who focus on teaching and service are appreciated equally with those who conduct research, procure grants funds and publish. That is, the avenues to tenure and promotion are equally accessible to those who select different areas of emphasis.

This "community of scholars" approach can be more efficient and productive than our current system. For example, providing reassigned time to faculty with no penchant for research as an inducement for them to conduct research often wastes resources. Currently, those who do not conduct research and publish may be assigned heavier teaching loads, but the process translates as punitive. Those who do not publish complain about heavy teaching assignments because the primacy of teaching, while stated as an official university policy, is not honored in long-term evaluations (e.g., promotion considerations). If individuals can focus on the area in which they can best contribute and then be properly rewarded for their effort, the unit becomes more efficient. Faculty morale improves and the energy invested by faculty increases. Researchers have more reassigned time to pursue research, teachers can focus on the classroom with the knowledge that they will be rewarded for doing so, and those who contribute outstanding service can be recognized for their efforts.

Caveats

Although attractive in principle, implementing the "community of scholars" concept will, for a number of reasons, require great care.

- 1) Greater responsibility is placed on unit administrators, who will be more directly accountable for unit quality and productivity. The well being of the unit is paramount, and individual assignments will be dictated to some extent by unit goals and resource availability. That is, the concept does not free every faculty member to do whatever she/he wishes.
- 2) Truly significant contributions must be required regardless of the area of focus. Traditionally, defining what constitutes excellence in teaching and service has been more difficult than evaluating research. However, meaningful measures must be developed if the concept is to succeed. For example, merely accepting heavy teaching loads and meeting classes cannot be acceptable criteria for favorable tenure and/or promotion decisions if one chooses to focus on teaching. Convincing demonstration of the quality of the product is needed.

- 3) Better defining some types of endeavors will be necessary (e.g., the distinctions between service and applied research can be cloudy).
- 4) Better long-range planning within units will be required. For example, filling every faculty vacancy will require careful thought about desired focus as well as subdisciplinary specialty.
- 5) The concept might be construed as an affront to the scholar/teacher model currently promoted by the university. However, that is not the case because the concept provides for flexibility in the balance between teaching and research. It recognizes that those who excel in research may also be excellent teachers, and that these two endeavors can be virtually indistinguishable and mutually beneficial.
- 6) There must be institutional commitment to the concept. If everyone in the university administration, from chancellor to department chair, is not on the same page, it will not work.

Summary

The "community of scholars" concept, wherein flexibility is provided to individuals in order to maximize performance of the unit, has the potential to improve quality of instruction and service and to increase research productivity because we can get the most from each faculty member. The success or failure of the concept will depend upon how it is implemented. Many innovative tactics are available for implementing the concept. Although a lengthy discussion is not in order here, an example may be helpful. Because of unit goals and limited faculty resources, some research-oriented faculty may have significant teaching loads even though others within the unit are teaching heavier loads. As an alternative to reassigned time, some universities now allow those who carry significant teaching loads and conduct high-quality research to earn up to 150% of their base salary through supplements from external grants. Equally innovative ways may be developed to reward exceptional efforts in other focus areas, but it will require energy and imagination to identify them and institutional commitment to implement them.