

MORE THAN A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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The University of Michigan is a large, complex research university with a strong commitment to teaching. The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT), which is part of the Provost's Office, is charged with providing support to UM faculty in their teaching. In order to effectively support this commitment, CRLT tries to understand and communicate faculty perceptions and preferences regarding their roles as teachers. *The UM Faculty Work-Life Study* is particularly helpful in offering insights on this topic.

Conducted in 1996, the *UM Faculty Work-Life Study* was directed by the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education (CSHPE) and the Center for the Education of Women (CEW), with support from the Office of the Provost.¹ The *Study* sought to determine the conditions that lead to satisfactory careers for instructional faculty, including issues of workload, productivity, institutional and unit climate, career satisfaction, and the balance between family and work.

This *Occasional Paper* presents the *Faculty Work-Life* survey data on teaching. The *Study* polled UM professors on a variety of topics, including the following: What are the challenges that UM faculty encounter in managing their heavy workload? What kinds of support do faculty prefer in order to fulfill their instructional goals? How central a role does teaching play in faculty career satisfaction and perceptions of the tenure process? The answers to these questions are presented here.

Mean Hours Faculty Report Working per Week in Primary Academic Roles

UM faculty members are extraordinarily busy and productive. As the *UM Faculty Work-Life Study* reports, "On average, over a two-year period, University of Michigan faculty members submitted six articles and published five articles in refereed journals.

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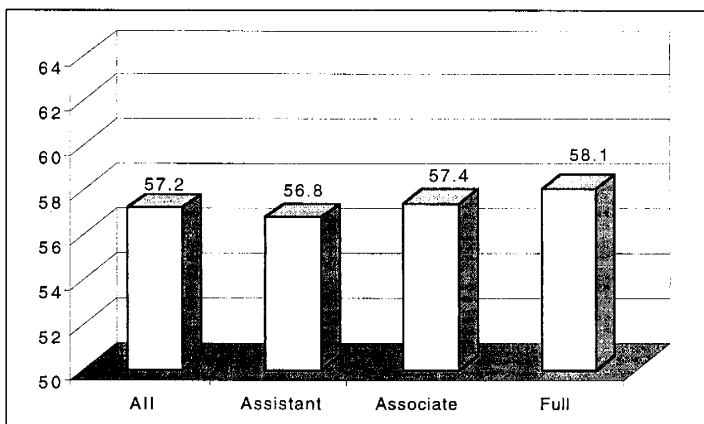
The University of Michigan

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They reviewed eleven articles for professional journals, presented five conference papers, submitted three external grant proposals, chaired two dissertation committees, served on five additional dissertation committees, and served on four departmental/unit and two college/university committees” (p. 12).²

Faculty work much more than the forty-hour standard; in fact, they report spending an average of 57.2 hours per week on their professorial responsibilities (Figure One). About two-fifths of this time is devoted to teaching and advising students, with assistant professors spending a little more time than associate and full professors (Table One). Notably, professors of all ranks spend a slightly greater proportion of time teaching and advising students than on their own scholarship, professional growth and creative work. For the most part, allocation of time to teaching and advising is fairly similar across ranks.

Figure One: Mean Hours Faculty Report Working per Week in Primary Academic Roles (excludes Medical School)



The Role of Good Teaching in Faculty Career Goals

Over two-fifths of all faculty members agree that to secure tenure at UM, one must be a good teacher (Table Two). As rank increases, so does recognition of the role of good teaching in the University’s tenure process, with nearly half of all full professors affirming its centrality.

Most UM faculty indicate that peer respect for teaching plays a significant role in their job satisfaction. Student affirmation of instructional skills is also important to faculty’s sense of fulfillment. For exam-

Table One: Percentage of Hours Faculty Report Working per Week in Primary Academic Roles (excludes Medical School)³

	ASSISTANT PROFESSORS	ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS	FULL PROFESSORS
Teaching and Advising Students	44%	40%	40%
Scholarship, Professional Growth, and Creative Work	40%	33%	35%
Clinical Responsibilities	1%	2%	1%
Service	15%*	24%*	24%*

*Denotes a significant difference of at least $p \leq .05$.

ple, nine out of ten assistant professors, and an even higher proportion of associate and full professors, indicate that sparking student interest is a meaningful factor in their career satisfaction.

Given that most UM faculty want to feel valued by their students and peers, how much appreciation do they think they get for their teaching? A considerable percentage of faculty feel valued for teaching by other members of their academic units, and an even higher number sense appreciation by students. However, assistant professors are significantly less satisfied with their sense of being valued for teaching by students, and they are even less likely to feel highly regarded by colleagues.

A majority of faculty think that students or peers assess their teaching highly, but how do UM professors rate themselves? Almost all UM professors judge themselves to be effective teachers, with associate professors evaluating their teaching most highly.

Needs Expressed by Faculty

About one-third of UM professors in this survey find it difficult to master effective teaching, and one-quarter indicate that it is difficult to work well with students (Table Three). In particular, lecturing skills elicit much concern, as nearly two-fifths indicate that it is hard to lecture effectively. This concern is magnified for assistant professors, with nearly half reporting that excellent lecturing is difficult, but more than a third of associate and full professors also share this belief.

Faculty indicate that collegial respect for teaching has a significant impact on their career satisfaction, yet many respondents to this survey note that they do not

Table Two: The Role of Good Teaching in Faculty Career Goals

Percentage of Faculty that:	ALL FACULTY	ASSISTANT PROFESSORS	ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS	FULL PROFESSORS
Agrees or strongly agrees that to secure tenure, one must be a good teacher	43	34*	42*	49*
Finds it somewhat or very important to gain the respect of peers for their teaching in order to feel career satisfaction	84	80	84	86
Finds it somewhat or very important to spark students' interest in order to feel career satisfaction	94	90*	96*	96*
Is somewhat or very satisfied with their sense of being valued for teaching by other members of their units	63	49*	67*	69*
Is somewhat or very satisfied with their sense of being valued for teaching by students	82	72*	83*	87*
Considers self an effective teacher	92	86*	96*	94*

*Denotes a significant difference of at least $p \leq .05$.

Table Three: Needs Expressed by Faculty

Percentage of Faculty that:	ALL FACULTY	ASSISTANT PROFESSORS	ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS	FULL PROFESSORS
Finds effective teaching to be difficult	34	38	34	32
Finds excellent lecturing to be difficult	38	46*	34*	37*
Finds working skillfully with students to be difficult	26	27	26	25
Agrees or strongly agrees that they have adequate opportunity to consult with members of their units regarding teaching	61	56	63	63

*Denotes a significant difference of at least $p \leq .05$.

have much chance to discuss teaching with colleagues. Nearly two-fifths find they do not have adequate opportunity to consult with other members of their units on matters of instruction.

CRLT's Role in Supporting Effective Teaching

UM faculty are hard-working, spending much more than the standard forty-hour week on their academic roles. They devote a significant proportion of this time to the promotion of student learning. Teaching

plays a large part in professors' workloads, and they say that effective teaching plays an integral role in their career success and fulfillment. Faculty want to spark students' interest, and most note the satisfaction they feel from students' positive feedback. Additionally, many faculty, especially those in the tenured ranks, believe that it is necessary to be a good teacher in order to secure tenure.

However, *UM Faculty Work-Life Study* respondents note that there still are some gaps that need to be filled in order for them to achieve their career and teaching goals. Specifically, some faculty find effective teaching to be difficult, particularly lecturing, and others indicate that they need additional skills to work well with students. Finally, while most faculty want to feel recognized for their teaching by colleagues, many desire more discussion around instructional issues, which may be a necessary step to generating this recognition.

CRLT is uniquely positioned to help busy faculty members with these needs. The Center partners with faculty to enhance their teaching, to offer resources on instructional issues, and to foster discussions on pedagogical concerns. CRLT provides the following services:

Programs and Seminars

CRLT offers programs and seminars on topics such as speaking skills, interactive lecturing, leading controversial discussions, and fostering critical thinking. At these programs, faculty from schools and colleges across the University share expertise with colleagues, as in the following examples:

- At the request of the Provost, CRLT organizes Provost's Seminars on Teaching, which are gatherings of small groups of faculty from UM's many schools and colleges, on topics such as multicultural education and writing across the curriculum. The Provost hosts these Seminars.
- CRLT's Interdisciplinary Faculty Associates Program funds faculty to team teach undergraduate interdisciplinary courses and to meet regularly to discuss interdisciplinary teaching strategies and student learning with faculty colleagues who are teaching similar courses.

Consultations and Resources on Teaching

CRLT professional staff are available to consult with UM faculty members on all teaching-related con-

cerns. These consultations can include midterm student feedback for faculty who wish to solicit student opinion to improve their teaching. Also, CRLT houses the latest research on teaching and learning, such as a website with teaching strategies (<http://www.crlt.umich.edu>), a video lending library, books and articles, and *Occasional Papers* on various aspects of teaching and learning at the University of Michigan.

Instructional Grants

CRLT funds faculty who want to try new initiatives, assess their current techniques, or widen the application of effective instructional practices. On the Ann Arbor campus, tenured faculty, tenure-track faculty, and faculty with Lecturer III appointments are eligible to apply for CRLT's seven instructional grant competitions. Some competitions are geared to faculty creating or revising a specific course, while others are for groups of faculty fostering curricular change in their academic units.

Nancy Cantor, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, recognizes that teaching at UM can be extraordinarily demanding, especially as faculty are asked to expand the scope of their research university roles through added emphasis on teaching and service. At the November 1998 retreat on "The Future of the Faculty and the University," she talked about faculty responsibilities and challenges:

We are not just a research university, we are not just a public university, and we are not just a great university. We have, perhaps, a unique burden in that there are very few other institutions that strive to combine those three aspects in one identity....But we need to recognize that creating that...is not going to be easy, in part because we are asking our faculty to do so much more. Additional pressures arise from our desire to relate to an increasingly

diverse student body, to teach more and to be better teachers, to connect to industry and produce intellectual property, to impart practical as well as theoretical skills, to work at the interdisciplinary interface of emerging fields, to be technologically sophisticated in instruction as well as in research, to teach at long distance to new groups of community members, to be open to the media. We could go on and on, and there is probably nothing on that list that a great public research university can afford not to be doing.

To respond to the many new demands on faculty, CRLT offers a flexible and responsive array of services that help them manage the challenges and reap the rewards of teaching at the University of Michigan.

¹This *Occasional Paper* focuses on faculty experiences and how they differ by rank. For more information about differences by gender or race, see the full text of the *UM Faculty Work-Life Study Report* at <http://www.umich.edu/~cew> or contact CEW. For a description of the survey's respondents, see page five.

²This particular finding excludes the Medical School faculty. Consult the *Faculty Work-Life Study Report* for specific information about various aspects of the work lives of Medical School faculty.

³The "Teaching and Advising Students" category combines respondents' reported time on the "Teaching" and "Advising Students" activities. While there are no significant differences by rank in teaching, assistant professors report that they devote 2% fewer hours to advising than do associate and full professors. The "Scholarship, Professional Growth, and Creative Work Category" combines respondents' reported time on "Scholarship/Professional Growth" and "Research/Creative Work" questions. There are no significant differences by rank. The "Service" category combines respondents' reported time on "Service (Internal)" and "Service (External)" questions. Associate and full professors indicate they devote 17% of their time to internal service and 11% to external service, significantly more than assistant professors' 11% (internal) and 4% (external).

BACKGROUND OF THE UM FACULTY WORK-LIFE STUDY

The *UM Faculty Work-Life Study* was conducted in 1996 by the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education and the Center for the Education of Women, with support from the Office of the Provost. Principal investigators were Robert T. Blackburn and Carol Hollenshead, and other members of the research team were Patrick Coen, Gloria Thomas, Jean Waltman and Stacy Wenzel.

Questionnaires for the *UM Faculty Work-Life Study* were mailed to all UM-Ann Arbor faculty who held at least half-time appointments, had been at UM for at least a year, and were in tenured, tenure track, clinical II or lecturer positions. The respondents number 1,167, a return rate of 44%. Full professors are 41% of the sample, associate and assistant professors are 21% each, and 18% are lecturers or clinical faculty. The representation of fields is fairly evenly divided (18% biological/health sciences, 15% physical sciences/engineering, 21% social sciences, 14% humanities/fine arts), with slightly more faculty representation from the Medical School (32%). A small proportion (11%) are faculty of color, while most (90%) are white faculty members. A majority (68%) of the respondents are men, and almost a third (32%) are women.

The *CRLT Occasional Papers* series is published on a variable schedule by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan. Information about extra copies or back issues can be obtained by writing to Publications, CRLT, 3300 School of Education Building, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259.

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CRLT Occasional Paper No. 14

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