

# COLLEGE SERVICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

By KC Boylan

Inevitably, contract negotiations become an economics lesson on the Pareto Principle: the 80/20 rule. LRCFT argues that the majority of faculty are hardworking, conscientious professionals, dedicated to their students and committed to providing a quality educational experience, and LRCCD focuses on the minority who are prone to making poor decisions, to canceling office hours, to ending class early, to no-showing at department meetings or to skipping convocation. We know who they are talking about, and by “we” I’m talking about the 80%, or more likely 90%.

As a result of this unbalanced approach to faculty workload issues, union negotiators spend too much time crafting language to control the behaviors of those who cause problems, and run out of time to develop language that rewards those who do their very best every day. Sometimes, however, we get it right. We manage to convince our district counterparts that faculty should be recognized for all the good they do, and the contract captures it. Such is the case with the inclusion of the definition for “College Service.”

In response to cries from faculty about workload creep, LRCFT sought to paint the picture for our counterparts of a day-in-the-life of the average faculty member. We argued that the practice of emphasizing committee membership was insufficient in describing the actual work week of faculty. It was clear that faculty deserved recognition for all of their professional efforts beyond governance assignments. They wanted to receive work week credit for all they did outside of shared governance, including but not limited to SLO development, advisory board meetings, community presentations/workshops, accreditation activities, club advising, mentoring, and so much more.

Through emails, phone calls, campus forums, and more, faculty members expressed frustration over not receiving credit for the full scope of their professional contributions to their respective colleges, to the district, and to the communities we serve. Additionally, the implementation of the compressed calendar created blocked schedules for many disciplines that prohibited faculty from serving on governance committees, leaving them little opportunity to fulfill their contractual obligations. The definition of “college service” recognizes all of the contributions of these faculty members, not just those contributions that fall within the scope of shared governance and the Academic Senate.



The inclusion of the definition of “College Service” meant that serving on a governance committee is but one way that a faculty member demonstrates service to his or her college. The change in many ways accommodates the cultural differences between the four colleges. For example, one college may discourage a new faculty member from serving on a high workload committee, but encourage that same faculty member to take advantage of professional development workshops to enhance instructional skills. At the smallest college, however, the opposite is more likely the case. New or tenure-track faculty are often found in leadership roles on the largest governance committees because the college simply does not have the numbers necessary to make the governance committees viable without tapping into the newest faculty.

One hundred percent of the faculty have a contractual and professional obligation to provide service to their college/district/community for an average of five hours per week. How they meet that obligation is left to their professional judgment. Accountability for meeting our professional obligations comes in many forms, none as effective as when we are held accountable by our peers. As a component of the performance review process, all faculty engage in a regular cycle of self-assessment, culminating in a comprehensive professional self-study which includes a reflection on contributions to college service.

While some may question the value of the self-study, the union views it as a critical component in a complicated conversation about professional standards.

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The self-study is not intended to be a cumulative time clock where faculty like factory workers log their hours for the review and approval of management. While the contract identifies the basic structure of the self-study, it does not dictate content, which can be and often is a personal narrative chronicling the faculty member's contributions on many levels.

We all know that quantity does not equal quality, and counting the hours that someone spends on college service activities is no more an indication of engagement than minutes from a governance meeting indicating that someone showed up.

On a final note, union leaders often hear from faculty and administration alike that the performance review process has no teeth, and that absentee faculty are allowed to dodge their responsibilities without fear of consequence. If true, we need only look at ourselves to place blame. A "peer review" process puts the responsibility on all of us. While conversations about professional standards between colleagues may not be easy or without conflict, if faculty want to preserve autonomy in decisions related to professional growth and development, the 80% had better learn how to engage the 20%. The actions of the few should not dictate the working conditions of the many. ■