

**A motion to adopt this approach to departmental loading was approved by a vote of the General Faculty on April 7, 2015.**

### **Discussion of the Departmental Loading Reform Proposal, March 12, 2015**

The AAC is proposing to address issues raised in the Report of the Subcouncil on Faculty Loading (2013), hereafter the SFL and the Loading Report, by instituting a policy by which departments may tailor existing loading models to their needs. Proposed changes to department loading models will be sent to interested members of the campus community for comment and then to the AAC for approval. This brief note outlines some of the thinking behind this approach to loading reform rather than, say, developing a new college-wide loading model.

The AAC decided to revisit the issue of faculty loading after a letter to the AAC from the Chairs and Directors, May 12, 2012, that raised several issues. First, there was no single document that described current loading practices and, in the absence of such information, there was concern over potential inequities regarding the allocation of teaching credit. And, second, both educational practice and priorities at Union had changed significantly since the last comprehensive assessment of loading nearly 20 years ago. This raises the question of whether we allocate teaching credit in a manner consistent with our educational priorities.

On Jan. 17, 2013, the AAC formed the Sub-council on Faculty Loading. The Report of the Subcouncil on Faculty Loading, Sept. 26, 2013, documents current loading practices and their differences across departments. While significant differences do exist, the SFL found that these differences generally reflect differences in educational priorities and that all departments have high teaching loads. The Report also discusses the merits of comprehensive and limited approaches to loading reform. In the opinion of the AAC, the existence of significant interdependencies across courses argues for a comprehensive approach to loading reform, as advocated by the SFL (page 6), but the diversity of the educational values and priorities across the college makes finding a set of loading rules that is appropriate for the entire college community a potentially daunting task. After discussing the Report at length, the AAC is proposing a departmental approach to loading reform. The AAC hopes that permitting departments to propose their own loading model will empower them to think creatively about their educational mission and how best to achieve it. Both the rationale for this approach and some potential drawbacks are discussed further below.

First, from Visual Arts to Electrical Engineering, the college is involved in an extremely diverse set of educational missions that encompass an equally diverse set of priorities, practices and values. Because of this, it is highly unlikely that any one loading model would fit the needs of the entire campus community.

Second, the AAC believes that departments are best suited to undertake the challenges of loading reform. With a few important exceptions that are discussed below, most of the interdependencies noted in the Loading Report occur within departments, and departments are

also in the best position to understand how changes in loading criteria will affect the education of their majors and minors. In addition, more than any other administrative unit, departments are in a good position to 1) articulate a unique educational vision and 2) understand and evaluate the trade-offs involved in different methods of allocating teaching credit.

Third, dissatisfaction with loading is uneven across campus, and many individuals and departments are happy with how teaching credit is currently allocated. This proposal allows reform to be permissive rather than compulsive. Departments that like their current model of loading may keep it as is, unless requested to reconsider it by the AAC.

Fourth, under the previous system, there were no formal guidelines for altering loading criteria. Instead, exceptions to existing loading models were reviewed and approved by the Dean of Academic Departments and Programs. As proposed here, the loading reform process is designed to be a transparent and regular function of faculty governance. Under the new process, proposed changes would go to the AAC for discussion and approval. Furthermore, approved department loading models will be available to the campus community on the Academic Affairs website. It is hoped that this will increase the flow of ideas for addressing loading issues across departments.

Finally, the AAC has attempted to recognize and address potential drawbacks of a departmental approach to loading reform. First, problems might arise as departments design their own loading models in that they might undervalue their contributions to key college missions, including Interdisciplinary Studies and the Common Curriculum. To avoid this, the AAC expects that departmental loading proposals go to the Directors of any Interdisciplinary Studies Programs that may be affected and then to the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies and Director of General Education for formal comments. Second, while departments are probably best suited to tackle loading reform, some department members may disagree with the proposed reform. Because of this, when a proposal does not have unanimous support, the proposal form asks for comments from the dissenting faculty. It also asks the department to anticipate how the proposed changes will affect teaching for non-tenure track, non-tenured and tenured faculty. Third, some loading issues fall outside the purview of individual departments and will need to be addressed separately. Key among these are compensation for Scholar's Research Projects and teaching credit for IS theses. On February 2, 2015, the AAC formally requested that the Administration consider reinstating the stipend for Scholars Research Projects. The AAC is currently working with Jennifer Matsue, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies, to develop a policy regarding teaching credit for IS theses.

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