

Planned Teaching Time Rotations – Handout #8

THE PROBLEM

The Westros Department had a problem. To meet student needs, the department offered a wide variety of class times. Most faculty members viewed some of these times as undesirable (e.g., 8:00 a.m. on Monday mornings) and others as more desirable (e.g., Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 a.m. classes). In conversations with new faculty, the department chair discovered that they did not know how to request teaching slots at more desirable times. Moreover, in reviewing past course schedules, the chair realized that some senior faculty held onto more desirable teaching slots from year to year.

A SOLUTION

The Westros Department decided to do three things. First, they decided to write a department statement of mutual expectations related to teaching assignments and the rotation of preferred class times (Table 1). In this statement, they reiterated department teaching expectations for faculty by rank. Then, they added a section to note expectations around class times (Table 2). Here, they identified the five main class times the department is required to offer: Monday and Wednesday at 8:00 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday at 11:00 a.m., Monday and Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday at 2:00 p.m. and Friday at 11:10 a.m.. The workload team outlined how many courses per year faculty should expect to teach at each day/time, depending on their rank. The survey also asked for special circumstances, such as child-care drop-off and pickup.

Second, the department chair and area coordinators sent out a five-minute survey, asking for faculty interest in teaching at each of these days/times. The survey was intended to gauge faculty interest in class rotations and attempt to match faculty members with their desired schedules, while also being mindful of faculty rank.

Finally, the department adopted a credit system, wherein faculty members who were more interested in teaching at “undesirable” times could get credit for teaching Monday/Wednesday 8:00 a.m. classes. Those credits could then be “cashed in” and exchanged the following year for preferred teaching times, like 11:00 a.m. Tuesday/Thursday classes. The credit system allowed faculty members to be rewarded for teaching at challenging times, encouraged rotation of preferred and challenging times, and accommodated differences in preference for times.

Table 1. Statement of Mutual Expectations for Teaching

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| Assistant Pre-Tenure Faculty | • teach 7 courses per year (1 at “undesirable times”) |
| Tenured Associate/Full Professors | • teach 8 courses per year (2 at “undesirable times”) |
| Instructional Faculty | • teach 9 courses per year (3 at “undesirable times”) |

Table 2. Course Expectations

| | Desirable Times | Undesirable Times |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Assistant Pre-Tenure Faculty | 6 courses per year | 1 course per year |
| Tenured Associate/ Full Professors | 6 courses per year | 2 courses per year |
| Instructional Faculty | 6 courses per year | 3 courses per year |

*This table represents an approximation of course expectations, which may vary on sabbaticals, parental leaves, course times, and course enrollments.