DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
TENURE TRACK FACULTY TEACHING LOAD POLICY

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Motivation

Biology tenure-track faculty have traditionally had a reduced teaching load compared to other departments because biology faculty are expected to maintain an active research program. As the principal investigator of a research lab, biology faculty must spend significant effort doing research, mentoring students, pursuing grant funds and writing scientific papers. However, faculty may at some point in their career choose to de-emphasize research and place a greater emphasis on teaching, a choice that could significantly and positively impact our teaching mission. The overall effort of faculty with greatly reduced research activities will be much less than that of research active faculty, if both maintain identical teaching loads. Research inactive faculty could maintain an equivalent effort with research active faculty in the department and university by increasing their teaching or service to the department. Such increases in teaching or service would then replace research contributions when evaluating post-tenure promotion cases. At the same time, it is important that we also have mechanisms to assist a faculty member who seeks to re-establish a vigorous research program after a period of research inactivity.

Mechanism

Tenure-track faculty who anticipate a reduced effort on research can meet with the department head, personnel committee, and institute director to make plans for a transition to an increased teaching and/or service load. In addition, the Personnel Committee will continue to evaluate faculty effort in teaching, research and service during the 3-year reviews. The personnel committee will look at the record of graduate student training, postdoctoral fellow mentoring, grant applications and paper submissions during the past 3 years. Faculty that have significantly reduced total effort towards these activities, but have not contacted the department head about adjusting their teaching levels, will be asked to meet with the personnel committee, department head and research unit director to determine an appropriate level of teaching to compensate for the reduced research activities without damaging a plan to re-establish research if that is the desire of the faculty. The assignment of teaching and teaching loads is ultimately the responsibility of the department head.

If one were to replace all research activity with teaching, the course load per year would be increased over time until a level of five courses is reached. For a research-inactive department head, the annual course load expected would be 3 courses. These increased teaching loads would be reached by giving one course credit to the preparation of new courses, until the agreed upon increased teaching load is reached (see below for an example). Lastly, research inactive faculty who take on an increased teaching load but later wish to revive their research program can meet with the department head to request relief from the increased teaching load so that they can devote more time to writing and submitting grant proposals.
Example

A full load of effort during the academic year could be divided into 5 units, with a typical distribution being 2 units of teaching, 1 unit of service and 2 units of research. A faculty member who no longer trains lab members or submits grants, but maintains some collaborative article output and has excellent service might be asked to devote a term to prepare a new class and the next term to teach that class, switching the unit distribution to 3 units of teaching (1 prep unit, 2 classes taught), 1 of research and 1 of service. Over time, further preparation time would not be needed, ultimately resulting in a 3 class teaching load, along with 1 unit of research and 1 of service.