Report on Faculty Rewards Systems at Southern Oregon University

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Introduction and Overview

To discover what an institution truly values, look to the actions it rewards. In the case of Southern Oregon University (SOU), it is heartening that the Office of the Provost has gathered a group of faculty to review current rewards systems on campus and to recommend potential changes, additions, and improvements. This report represents the work of the Faculty Rewards Task Force of Summer 2019, one step in an ongoing process. It is important to note that some of these recommendations must be addressed to multiple audiences. While the administration may have the ability to act on some of these recommendations on its own authority, other recommendations may need to be addressed in collaboration with the Faculty Senate (via bylaws revisions) or through collective bargaining between SOU and APSOU.

Current faculty rewards systems at SOU involve multiple facets, including but not limited to: faculty salary, teaching awards, service awards, course release/ELU loading, promotion, tenure, grants through the Faculty Development Committee, and sabbatical leave. These rewards are meaningful and could be expanded to address two broad challenges identified by the committee below:

> A. Nationwide and on our own campus, there are **inequities in the visible and invisible work of faculty**.

> > 1. Faculty from marginalized, underrepresented identity groups (such as those defined by race, sexual orientation, gender performance, gender, and disability) are disproportionately called upon to do committee service, student mentorship, and community training/outreach. This work is often undervalued and draws faculty time away from other duties that are currently incentivized more heavily.

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2. As the academic workforce shifts to more contingent faculty with no service loads and professional-track faculty with light service loads, professorial faculty are asked to shoulder heavier service expectations. This risks burnout among the highest-performing faculty, who instead should be supported and recognized for their excellence in ways both large and small.

3. The faculty perceive an assumption among some administrators that faculty, especially post-tenure, are not doing enough. If the *different kinds* of work done by faculty were made visible and rewarded, this demoralizing miscommunication might be rectified.

4. Program chairs are currently compensated solely through course releases at SOU, giving faculty little inducement to serve in these demanding and vital positions.

B. SOU could increase the **job satisfaction** of its faculty by celebrating the achievements of its faculty both internally and externally.

1. Recognizing outstanding FPARs from the highest levels of administration, strengthening the Hannon Library's role in sharing faculty research/creative work, apportioning adequate resources for the equipment and tools needed to perform faculty duties, and creating the faculty scholarship/creative production award would be strong inward-facing messages of respect, empowerment, and encouragement to send to faculty. Because different faculty respond to different rewards (some would shun, while others would be touched to receive a plaque, or a hand-written note, or a small gift, or an honorarium, or ELU loading), the rewards system should include as much choice from a wide array of options as possible. These internally-focused initiatives might incentivize and reinvigorate some of those faculty who are currently underperforming.

2. While SOU's focus on our noteworthy students is appropriate, we also have an opportunity to publicize outstanding faculty to our external audiences. The local, state, and worldwide audiences for our promotional messages should know more about faculty achievements. Efforts to market the university based on the scholarly and pedagogical excellence of its faculty could boost student recruitment, faculty retention, and respect from our Board of Trustees. Likewise, at a time when public distrust of higher education is at an all-time high, publicizing faculty success could

strengthen town-gown relationships. At present, the marketing of faculty success is largely left to individual faculty and rolled up via divisions, with uneven results.

In the following sections, we will explore four potential sources of inequality and job dissatisfaction on campus and identify opportunities to address each stressor through improved faculty rewards. These include: 1. time-poverty and workload; 2. inadequate compensation and support; 3. poor recognition of faculty success; and 4. absence of community. Throughout this report, we will offer a summary of specific recommendations to consider. We invite our colleagues in administrative positions to add their own strategies and ideas to the conversation, and we look forward to further working on these initiatives together.

Stressor 1: Time-Poverty and Workload

There are three overarching themes the task force discussed in regards to SOU Faculty workload:

- Recognizing and categorizing all aspects of faculty workload.
- Ensuring parity of workload across faculty members and disciplines.
- Addressing issues of overload.

SOU faculty members report suffering from a lack of time. While most faculty members pride themselves in their ability to work 'above and beyond' the minimum requirements of their jobs, there is a limit to what we can be expected to accomplish. Faculty members talk of burnout, overwork, and exhaustion. Given the size of our faculty and staff, it is challenging to figure out how to support/recognize faculty pursuing worthy tasks when their work cannot be picked up by others (whose plates are already full).

There are significant amounts of work that faculty perform that often go either unreported or underreported. As such, SOU needs to transparently recognize the diversity of service that happens at SOU, acknowledging the varied ways faculty serve (mentoring, grants, retention, recruitment, managing special programs and performances, community outreach, interdisciplinary work, innovation, and support of the strategic plan, etc).

Some faculty are disproportionately called upon as student mentors and guides based on their identities, gender, race, or fields of practice. These activities should not be supplemental to more clearly established modes of service (committee work, program chair, etc.) but should be counted on an equal hour-per-hour basis. We believe SOU should celebrate the fact that not all faculty are "checking the same boxes."

We encourage transparency with program and division service assignments so that administration can see faculty workloads in real time. Perhaps a service "dashboard" could be integrated into an existing platform (e.g. Activity Insight) that could be viewed by divisions and administration. We offer this suggestion with an important caveat: We do not want to add yet another task to our workloads. If such a "dashboard" was utilized it would need to feed seamlessly into Activity Insight FPAR service reports so that we are not adding yet another service task to our loading.

Faculty and Academic programs have a diverse range of time commitments. Smaller programs may experience service requirements comparable to large programs, but spread over fewer faculty. A program's student to faculty ratio determines advising loads and mentorship needs. In some programs, there is only one professor in charge of a designated field--tasking that person with sometimes overwhelming student needs. This faculty, for example, needs additional support. Likewise, some programs have extensive public facing / community engagement activities not present in other disciplines. We need to work toward an understanding of these differences and reward faculty, with release, ELU, or additional pay, accordingly.

Workload: Detailed Recommendations

In addition to the ideas mentioned above, we make the following recommendations to help with faculty workload challenges:

- Develop a system and show willingness to manage service overloads (compensation, ELU, release, workload reassignment, additional staffing).
- Change language in FPARs, promotion applications, and bylaws as needed to recognize the diversity of service present on campus.
- Develop a transparent real-time system for documenting service assignments. Note that we do not recommend adding *additional* service to capture information *on* our service. The information can already be found in FPARs and any new "dashboard" should work seamlessly with Activity Insight and roll up to our FPAR Service report automatically each year.
- Develop a system of support for faculty with high advising and/or mentorship loads.
- Implement further automation in FPARs.
  - Auto-populate advising loads, PDA spending (information that has already been turned in by faculty to Service Center), teaching/service/scholarship activities reported in other Activity Insight categories that does not roll up to report.

- Consider limiting the frequency of required FPARs as faculty ascend ranks. This rewards Senior Faculty with more time for scholarship/creative work.
    - Every year for Assistant Professor / Instructor
    - Every two years for Associate Professor / Senior Instructor I
    - Every four years as Full Professor / Senior Instructor II
- Evaluate systems for redundancy and simplify.
    - Course budget planner, faculty loading documents, course scheduling
    - The number of disparate software platforms is inefficient (Activity Insight, Banner, Cognos, DegreeWorks, Navigate, S Drive, Google Drive, etc).
    - The Service Center does not seem to work as intended. Many new layers of paperwork have been added to faculty's workload since its inception, rather than streamlining processes.
    - All campus emails from administrative and staff offices and service center could be narrowed to those in need of the information (i.e. the time-sheet deadline email that goes out to all employees, IT emails to specific groups, Service Center announcements to certain groups).

Stressor 2: Inadequate Compensation and Support

We feel that faculty (tenure track, instructor, and adjunct), administrative, and staff compensation should be brought into a sense of parity with other similar institutions. We do not currently see equity in commensurate salary ranges shared between employee levels (administration, faculty, staff). According to the COPLAC Data Profile for 2016-17, SOU faculty salaries are lower than the median and the mean salary for all COPLAC Institutions.

There are other ways to motivate and reward faculty in addition to salary increases. Exceptional faculty should be incentivized and rewarded for their work to prevent burnout. SOU has a culture where more and more is asked of exceptional faculty without recognition or pay increases. Paying stipends for special assignments that go beyond the normal workload send a signal of appreciation. Special stipends also increase commitment to the task being requested, resulting in better quality performance. Other ideas for increasing commitment to better quality teaching, scholarship, and service include offering better sabbatical salary arrangements and rewards and monetary support for scholarship.

There are many stressors for new faculty coming to Ashland given it is a small community with limited options for the new faculty's family. More assistance in this area may improve SOU's ability to attract and retain highly qualified and diverse faculty.

Compensation: Detailed Recommendations

Some ideas for consideration include:

- Spousal/couple dual hire or employment assistance.
- Maternity and Paternity Leave - We understand this is being addressed by another committee, and we encourage them to consider how this fits within a quarter system for faculty.
- New Faculty Summer Bridge Stipend or ability to teach a summer course to provide monetary aid between the months of leaving another academic position and starting at SOU.
- Childcare Assistance – Childcare for children under 3 years of age is scarce in the Ashland area. In addition, SOU's onsite preschool has reduced their hours to half days. This creates additional barriers to faculty with young children. Opening and end of year celebrations are held at times when many faculty and staff do not have childcare options, might onsite childcare be offered? Consider offering onsite childcare during faculty social events.
- Mortgage program – Work with Rogue Credit Union, or other entity, to have a guaranteed low fixed mortgage rate available to new hires. Allow them 1-2 years from their hire date to utilize this rate.
- Offer and promote faculty housing options for the first year or two of employment. As Provost's office knows a year in advance which lines are being filled, could housing "save" a percentage of housing for those incoming faculty?
- Merit based pay increase - Apart from discipline specific pay scales, some faculty have consistently proven their worth at a distinguished level. We recommend salary increases as a way to reward and retain these outstanding faculty over time.

Efforts should be made to incentivize faculty to serve as program chairs. In many programs, it is difficult to find anyone willing to serve because the release time is insufficient for the amount of work required and/or the program can't afford to release anyone from courses. Chairs should receive extra compensation (in addition to release time) to encourage service. The question of chair compensation was recently asked on a Chronicle of Higher Education discussion forum. The responses included advice on compensating chairs through release time and additional salary. Other ideas included making the chair position a 10-month contract or providing a percentage of annual salary for serving.

Lastly, the committee recommends the review of the division structure and program workload. Since it has been in place for several years, now is the time to assess how

well it is working for programs and faculty. Some smaller programs may experience service requirements comparable to large programs, but spread over fewer faculty, with less compensation.

Stressor 3: Poor Recognition of Faculty Success

We believe efforts to promote and recognize faculty accomplishments offer low-hanging fruit that would greatly benefit SOU and all of its stakeholders. Our faculty are engaged in high-level scholarship, creative work, and innovative teaching that, if better publicized, would be greatly valued by both current and prospective students, as well as with the wider community. While Student Success is a great focus and strength of SOU, we believe that a focus on **Faculty Success** offers a great opportunity for SOU to contribute to faculty job satisfaction, to student retention, and to town-gown relationships with the Ashland and Rogue Valley community. A focus on faculty success would be great PR, and would help promote a culture of faculty recognition. We see this as a call for **outward facing promotion** of faculty service, teaching, and scholarship/professional/creative work.

Generally, **scholarship is undervalued and underfunded.** Faculty are hungry for administration to acknowledge their work and share it publicly. In particular, many of the past faculty recognition efforts have been at the faculty-to-faculty level. For example, the teaching and service awards were initiated by faculty. As well, they are faculty nominated, faculty selected, and faculty presented. We recommend an outward facing promotion of faculty accomplishments and work that originates from the administration. At this time the onus falls onto time-poor faculty to promote themselves. Currently, faculty feel a need to self-promote their scholarly and creative accomplishments. Given the time-poverty noted above, this is not ideal for faculty, the university, or its various constituents.

Recognition: Detailed Recommendations

At the level of the **lowest lying fruit, we encourage the administration to** *occasionally* **send out an all faculty email recognizing significant accomplishments.** For example, an email along the lines of "Dear colleagues, … please join me in congratulating Prof. X on the recent publication of their book… "…"… We think that this modest gesture will do much to build a culture of togetherness.

To better support and celebrate faculty, we recommend that the administration encourage and support the **SOU Marketing department to engage in more proactive campaigns to celebrate and promote the work of its faculty**. This would act as a recruitment and retention tool as well as improve our town-gown relationships.

Students and the public value scholarship and creative professional activity. When faculty do not engage in scholarship, students value their faculty and university less. To this end, the marketing department could work with student interns assigned to each division to highlight faculty accomplishments and maintain the currency of departmental websites. The critical component of this strategy is that the marketing team must seek out stories from faculty, rather than vice-versa. This could be accomplished by giving the marketing team five minutes on the agenda at the all-chairs meetings and asking the chairs for leads (i.e. if they have any notable accomplishments in their programs that they can follow up on). Stories may also highlight new faculty that are joining SOU, and may be in blog format.

In addition to a proactive marketing team dedicated to promotion of faculty accomplishments, we recommend that the **Provost's office sponsor a distinguished lecture series**. This lecture series could be a mix of current faculty and visiting scholar speakers. This will serve many purposes. To name a few of the benefits, a Provost-sponsored lecture series will promote a culture of togetherness between administration and faculty, improving town-gown relationships, provide fodder for the marketing team, and serve recruitment and retention efforts via outward recognition of faculty accomplishments. A monthly evening event like this will also increase SOU's social media presence.

The committee also supports and recognizes a campus-wide appetite for **SOU to add a scholarship award** to complement the current teaching and service awards. This will help to bring the recognition system into better alignment with the three categories of tenure and promotion criteria.

In addition to the recommendations detailed above, **the committee also recommends the following strategies** to promote the scholarship, creative work, and teaching accomplishments of the faculty:

- Regular summer research grant/award, like the President's grant for research or creative activity. Make sure it is not just more PDG but an "award."
- Opportunity to apply for loading for intensive grant proposals and other scholarly work. It takes time to write grants, to do research, to do professional activity.
- FPARs sometimes feel like they vanish into a void after they exit the program level and are not being responded to universally across divisions. Could the FPARs be a tool for the Provost's office to recognize and award exceptional faculty?
- "Fireside chat" highlighting faculty as whole persons (not just scholars/teachers), which can have positive effects for students.

- Library site to house and feature/showcase faculty papers, publications, articles about faculty creative work, and books (in house and online) - would just need to be maintained by the Hannon Library. Possibly adopt Digital Commons. https://www.bepress.com/products/digital-commons/.
  - *SOU currently has an Institutional Repository through the Southern Oregon Digital Archives of the Hannon Library, which makes publicly available the work of both faculty and students when copyright allows. https://soda.sou.edu/scholarship/faculty/index.html.*
  - *The online interface to find faculty and student scholarship archived in the Institutional Repository could use some work to increase publicity and use of this resource across campus.*

In addition to contributing to faculty success, **recognition** is also related to **transparency** as noted in the time-poverty category above. Transparency at the program level also facilitates recognition of each other's work, which is an important predictor of job satisfaction. **Recognition** also facilitates **community** because it honors faculty as scholars/artists/etc, which are integral to their identities.

Stressor 4: Absence of Community

For SOU to achieve its mission and strategic goals, having a strong campus community is essential. The fact that SOU is a small liberal arts public university, with a small teacher-student ratio, and highly qualified faculty does not guarantee a strong sense of community on the campus.

The current state of community highlights a network of faculty, staff, administrators, and students all seeking to achieve SOU's mission and goals via different outlets. However, communal goals, especially among faculty, staff and administrators, are limited due to several factors including fixed interests, long-standing ways of completing tasks, lack of diversity, curricular preferences and practices. Taken together, these factors and others weaken the campus's community spirit.

SOU has a reputation for being student-centered and intentionally recruiting faculty who are competent and effective teachers. However, faculty work within an institutional framework where they develop knowledge (typical of Research I universities), disseminate knowledge (typical of comprehensive universities) and apply knowledge (typical of community colleges). It is this framework of scholarship along with the emphasis on undergraduate education that should be encouraged.

As previously stated in this report, there is a sense of time-poverty affecting faculty's ability to execute service, teaching, and scholarship/creative responsibilities. The

cohesive faculty community is therefore under threat. While teaching workloads for the most part are standardized with clear expectations, class preparations (including maintaining currency in pedagogy), new course preparations, and student advising among other teaching responsibilities limit faculty-to-faculty interactions within and among programs.

The overall size and inequitable distribution of faculty service loads is another factor that impedes campus community spirit. Although there is a general sense of goodwill among SOU faculty to serve in various capacities, some faculty are overburdened while others need to be encouraged to take on additional responsibilities. However, what maintains and increases faculty goodwill is an equitable reward system (see stressor 1- Time Poverty and Workload).

The intellectual vitality of SOU faculty is critical to the overall spirit of campus community. What is true throughout the campus is that faculty are doing excellent research/creative work. These include but are not limited to the publishing of manuscripts and reports, attendance and presentations at workshops and conferences, memberships on advisory boards of regional and national discipline specific associations, submissions and receipt of grants, speaking at community events, exhibiting creative work in museums and festivals, and providing expert opinions to local community agencies and media outlets. Unfortunately, what is also true is that faculty feel siloed by service/workload thereby making inter-program faculty interactions about research initiatives very rare. There's simply "no time left." There is a general sense that faculty are only aware of colleagues' research within their own program. Similarly, faculty feel that while for the most part there is program recognition of scholarship, more needs to be done by the administration to promote and recognize the scholarly achievements of faculty (see stressor 3 - Poor Recognition of Faculty Success).

Community: Detailed Recommendations

The following are recommendations for improving a strong cohesive community spirit at SOU for faculty:
- Provide and promote invited lecture series or dialogues (possibly via Campus Theme):
    - The administration could support lectures given by scholars on various topics as a way to maintain the intellectual vitality of faculty.
- Create a Distinguished Lecture Series:
    - Faculty awarded a small stipend for their presentation given the current time-poverty dilemma currently faced.
- Create a Distinguished Professor Award:

- ○ Awarded by administration, rather than faculty. Could we have designation of "distinguished professor" for those who win the Teaching, Service, and/or Scholarship/Creative Works awards? Could it come with a slight pay increase? Maybe you have to win one of these and then Administration can look at the applications and choose one distinguished professor each year from ALL of those who have won these things in the past?
- Provide Professional Development Opportunities:
  - ○ Providing more meaningful professional development free of charge, or with reimbursement benefits. This can allow faculty to improve their pedagogical and research skill sets.
  - ○ With the hire of Clayton Austin, the Center for Instructional Support could expand to assist faculty in developing their pedagogical and research skill sets.
- Provide more support for new faculty:
  - ○ The current mentorship program is inadequate, and should be re-evaluated to take the onus off the new faculty members to seek out their mentors. It could be improved by taking into account the identities and skill-sets of both the faculty and mentor.
  - ○ Could distinguished teachers be given a stipend to mentor new teachers?
  - ○ Creating both on and off-site experiences for new faculty. For example, having new faculty speak with staff from HR, Payroll, IT, Security, Student Enrollment, Athletic Department, Disability Center and Hannon Library.
  - ○ Providing new faculty with off-site experiences in downtown Ashland, and specific attractions (e.g. wineries, hiking trails, lakes, etc). "My Oregon Trip" was previously provided for new faculty in 2011 and 2012 and was effective in growing community.
  - ○ Hosting of a dinner/lunch at the president's house home or a more intimate location. For example, the dinner at the president's house in 1997 was very valuable to faculty in attendance.

- Provide more social events during the academic year:
  - ○ Creating faculty and staff days (FSDs) where great discounts are provided to faculty at all dining facilities (at least twice per term preferably on Fridays).
  - ○ Creating university wide social hours within a specific time (preferably on Fridays) where the agenda is just enjoying each other's company.
  - ○ Providing faculty free-access to the recreational center as a way to motivate healthy lifestyle and community building.

- Could other (not restricted to new) faculty groups be put together for special events to increase community? What if there was a yearly trip for 12 faculty to travel for 2 days in southern Oregon region to speak on a topic? This promotes SOU while creating community amongst faculty.
- Could faculty who have won grants be given stipends to teach grant workshops to small groups?

Conclusion

Southern Oregon University is at an opportune moment to revise and improve our faculty rewards systems in better alignment with our strategic directions. During summer 2019, the Faculty Rewards Task Force convened and identified two key points when considering rewards. We attend to the inequities within the visible and invisible work of faculty, and to job satisfaction of faculty. The committee identified four stressors which impact faculty rewards and recommends means of addressing these: 1) time-poverty and workload; 2) inadequate compensation and support; 3) poor recognition of faculty success; and 4) absence of community.

SOU has a number of reward systems in place that the committee recommends continue. These include: faculty salary, teaching awards, service awards, course release/ELU loading, promotion, tenure, grants through the Faculty Development Committee, and sabbatical leave. In addition, the committee identified a number of areas within these existing systems that may be strengthened. In many cases, these entail greater transparency among faculty, clearer communication from administration, and cleaning up redundancies. One aspect of rewards that arose multiple times was greater acknowledgement, particularly from administrators, of faculty successes. Finally, within each of the four stressors, the committee has identified some new reward systems that would potentially booster faculty job satisfaction and address existing inequities.

The committee would like to call attention to two systems that are working well and have helped alleviate some of the time-poverty addressed above. These include the Student Success Coordinators and the IT Coordinators. We recommend that these serve as models for other types of systems, such as marketing coordinators. In addition, we strongly recommend a review of duties done by faculty that could be better managed by staff.

We encourage readers to carefully review the recommendations above for greater detail.