

IU Bloomington Care Caucus

Recommended Steps for Reducing, Distributing, and Recognizing Work

October 20, 2020

The Care Caucus members welcome the opportunity to identify practical ways in which IUB administrators could reduce workload for faculty and staff, distribute workloads more strategically and equitably, and better recognize work being done. During the crisis, even protecting the core missions of teaching and service is proving excessive and entails overwork at all levels. Moving classes effectively online, and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students through contexts of unemployment, illness and death - to take only the most obvious examples - entail massive labor. Most of what we usually do is "essential". Therefore, structural and immediate action is needed to make work reductions possible. Work needs to be deliberately removed from department chairs, faculty and staff, by questioning usual bureaucratic expectations and constraints, as well as by recognizing the disproportionate service contributions routinely made by women and BIPOC faculty and staff to campus life. In other words, the challenge is to address not just what work we do, but how. We offer here a list of suggested starting points for further deliberation and action.

1. Eliminate letters of recommendation for small internal funding and awards applications; just list faculty members instead of requiring letters. This should apply to both student and faculty applications.
2. Grant a course release without a reduction in pay or benefits to temporarily reduce teaching loads to 2-1 for example; with the understanding that reduced course loads will require increased class sizes.
3. Reduce and/or eliminate reporting requirements for merit reviews and DMAI; if there are any funds available for salary increases, distribute those increases equitably to faculty instead. If DMAI information is needed to satisfy some external reporting requirements outside the university, then consider providing paid hourly staff support for faculty in entering information from CVs and narrative reports into the DMAI system.
4. Reduce and/or eliminate requirements for GenEd reporting (student benchmarks and course standards). If GenEd reporting is needed to satisfy some external reporting requirements outside the university, then how can we do better?
5. Expand the definition of research (can it be work that is in support of research goals and demonstrates scholarly expertise); instead of just counting publications, books, and creative works.
6. Expand the definition of service to recognize the invisible labor of faculty to the university; give full credit for service activities (allowing more balanced cases for Research & Teaching as well as Research & Service), and find ways to more equitably distribute service across faculty members

7. Find ways to allow departments to fill positions, especially positions that would reduce the workload on current staff and faculty members. The hiring freeze is creating untenable workloads for many staff and faculty members.
8. Consider developing a permanent employment program that hires a large group of workers who can be trained and mentored to do administrative work remotely and within the IU system (i.e., financial processing, website maintenance, marketing, note-taking, answering phones and forwarding calls, etc.). Guarantee these people full-time work, benefits, and career advancement without eliminating and/or centralizing existing staff positions. And then let departments utilize this pool as needed, to cover busy times of year, fill in for people who are taking PTO, cover gaps temporarily until jobs can be filled, etc. Permanently move all full-time staff to a 35-hour work week without reducing salaries or benefits (this is supported by productivity research).
9. Revise job descriptions and classifications to accurately reflect the additional work staff are doing - working remotely, effectively supporting the remote work of others, taking on additional work when employees are using PTO or positions are not filled.
10. Give staff the choice between overtime hours being paid or rewarded with comp time. Pay should be the default. In many units, staff members are currently being pressured to use PTO gradually rather than wait until the end of the year; however, many of those same workers cannot currently take time off without disrupting the essential operations of the university, placing them in an untenable position.
11. Encourage Department Chairs, other leaders in all departments, and Deans to minimize the frequency of Department and committee meetings that could otherwise be handled via email communications. In short, examine whether certain meetings are absolutely needed now through the pandemic or simply continued out of habit/office culture.
12. Strongly urge Department Chairs or schedulers of classes in departments to grant time of day teaching preferences to instructors who are in caretaking roles.
13. Implore University Athletics to find new ways to support student athletes and meet their NCAA reporting requirements, while also reducing the labor of instructors involved in completing separate evaluations of students on IU Athletics teams multiple times during the semester
14. Consider ways to pause, reduce and/or even eliminate the undergraduate curriculum and assessment mapping initiative, which has created a tremendous amount of departmental labor for unclear potential gains.
15. Take a tough look at the RCM (Responsibility Centered Management) model and the way it incentivizes units to reduce their own costs by creating costs and work for other units. For example, in an effort to save money, various units that had their own classrooms decided to make their classrooms general inventory so that UITTS would have to cover the costs associated with maintaining those classrooms, creating more work and costs for UITTS while reducing costs for other units. Similarly, to stay within budget in the face of rising costs, UITTS eliminated Box, which then created large amounts of work and cost for individual departments, faculty members, and staff in changing their file storage systems. Moving to a

more centralized funding/management system would reduce the incentives for units to “save” money by making additional costs and work for other units

16. Create incentives for departments and units to work together to offer common/cross-listed courses rather than to fragment and offer smaller classes on similar topics, and to enable students to take more courses outside their home major and/or school . For example, if Kelley students could get Kelley credit for taking College courses, and if the College got even a small percentage of the money for those enrollments, it would expand College enrollments while saving Kelley money, because they would not have to hire instructors to teach classes similar to those being offered in the College. This would also facilitate the 2-1 course reduction outlined above.
17. Reduce or eliminate procedures that require cross-unit approvals. While those requirements may be waived in many cases, the waiver process generally requires an application or coordinated communication that creates extra work for faculty and staff. For example, the University Graduate School requires that all PhD students have an advisory committee within one year of starting the PhD program, and that advisory committee is required to have one member from the student’s minor area. If the student’s minor is in another unit, that requirement may be waived, but that waiver process (and the process of having to coordinate across units if the requirement is not waived) takes time and effort on the part of faculty and staff in both units.