

FULL-TIME FACULTY OBLIGATION WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION

3.2

ACTION

Presentation: Erik Skinner, Vice Chancellor for Fiscal Policy

Issue

At its November meeting, the Board of Governors requested that Chancellor's Office staff develop recommendations concerning the formation of a workgroup on the Full-Time Faculty Obligation (FTFO). This item provides a response to the Board's request.

Background

At its November 3, 2008 meeting, while deliberating over the Faculty Obligation Number (FON) for fall 2009, the Board of Governors voiced numerous questions and concerns regarding the FON mechanism and failure of the community college system as a whole to make meaningful progress toward achieving the 75/25 goal. Questions raised included:

1. Why is the FON process not leading to greater progress toward the 75 percent goal?
2. What does recent research tell us about the optimal balance of full-time and part-time faculty?
3. Does the current calculation appropriately measure all funding sources?
4. How should FTES growth that is funded at a reduced rate be treated in FON calculations?
5. Is there a better way to implement this requirement?
6. Should calculations be modified for small districts or other districts with unique characteristics?
7. What would be the systemwide cost of meeting the 75 percent goal?

Following these deliberations, the Board asked staff to develop a proposed scope and process for a working group to examine these issues. The Board asked to see such a working group proposal at later meeting.

At the November Consultation Council meeting, the matter of a FTFO workgroup was discussed. Many parties indicated that a report issued in 2005 entitled *Workgroup on 75/25 Issues: Report and Recommendations* addressed many of the issues that the Board had identified. Consultation Council members recommended using this report and the efforts of the prior working group as a foundation from which to begin any new review of this topic.

The FTFO Workgroup recommendation was agendized and discussed once again at the April Consultation Council meeting. At the meeting, Chancellor's Office staff presented a recommendation to form a workgroup to address a limited set of newly raised or unresolved issues. When this proposal was presented, there was a strong reaction by Consultation members that, given the current state budget crisis, it would not be advisable at this time to pursue a workgroup even if its scope was limited in nature. Consultation council members representing faculty, classified staff, and administrators voiced the need to remain united in our efforts to protect the colleges in the state budget process rather than to divert energies to engaging in a FTFO Workgroup at this time.

Analysis

Many of the questions raised by the Board of Governors at its November meeting were considered by the 2005 Workgroup and included in the *Workgroup on 75/25 Issues: Report and Recommendations* (June 1, 2005). The Workgroup engaged in thorough literature reviews, surveyed districts, and analyzed the 75/25 issue in both fiscal and policy terms. The Workgroup's findings and recommendations are provided below. The Workgroup's full report is provided as an attachment to this agenda item.

From *Workgroup on 75/25 Issues: Report and Recommendations* (June 1, 2005)

General Findings and Recommendations

1. *The longstanding goal of having 75% of instructional hours taught by full-time faculty was enacted as policy in AB 1725, the community college reform legislation that was passed in 1988. Funding was initially appropriated to assist community college districts in reaching this goal by increasing the number of full-time faculty positions. However, funding for this purpose was discontinued, followed by decades of underfunding and several years in which large state budget reductions negatively affected community college funding. As a result, the California community colleges as a system have not made progress in meeting the goal, although a successful effort has been made to avoid serious reductions in the present balance of full-time/part-time faculty by annual compliance with the Faculty Obligation Number (FON).*

2. *Reaching the 75% goal should remain a system priority. The system should make a concerted effort to provide the support, guidance and flexibility needed to reach the goal.*
3. *The present regulatory system employing a minimum annual full-time faculty hiring requirement (FON) that increases proportionally with funded credit FTES growth serves, at best, to maintain the status quo. Except when Program Improvement Funds are provided, these regulations do not result in progress toward the system's 75% goal.*
4. *Districts have shown a consistent ability to meet the FON over the years since passage of AB 1725; however, many districts report difficulties doing so and question the unreflective application of the requirement regardless of a district's individual circumstances. Other than contingent local circumstances, districts most often cited size, level of progress toward the 75% goal, and level of per FTES funding as factors relevant to a district's ability to meet the FON requirement. Districts did not comment on the effectiveness of recent regulatory reform that allows compliance by either meeting the FON requirement or maintaining the prior year's ratio.*
5. *The system has not provided a mechanism for tracking and evaluating progress and problems in meeting the 75% target as a system goal. The State Chancellor should make an annual report to the Board of Governors on system-wide data and progress regarding the 75% goal and compliance with the Faculty Obligation Number (FON).*
6. *Although local districts and colleges meet the compliance requirements of the FON, it is not clear how the 75% goal is addressed in their long-range and strategic planning processes. It is recommended that districts make a good faith effort to consider the FON a floor rather than a ceiling. It is recommended that local districts and colleges include the 75% goal as part of their participatory governance discussions and integrated planning processes so that it remains a visible and viable goal within their planning agendas. This planning information shall be made available to the State Chancellor.*
7. *Included are findings on two specific items that the Workgroup was asked to consider. The Workgroup's recommendations and rationale follow.*
 - a. *Faculty overload should continue to be a neutral factor in the 75% calculation.*

Existing law excludes overload classes taught by full-time instructors from both the numerator and the denominator of the ratio calculation. They are excluded from calculation of the FON. Overload is thus a neutral factor.

The Workgroup considered arguments in favor of counting such overload classes as part-time. First, these classes are not funded at the full-time salary rate and represent workload beyond full-time responsibilities. Second, since the fundamental purpose of the 75/25 regulations is to increase opportunities for contact between students and full-time faculty both inside and outside the classroom, overload teaching arrangements actually decrease the opportunities for such additional contact.

The Workgroup also considered arguments in favor of counting such classes as full-time. First, these classes are taught by faculty whose job classification is full-time. Second, since the fundamental purpose of the 75/25 regulations is to increase opportunities for contact between students and full-time faculty both inside and outside the classroom, overload teaching arrangements maintain the opportunities for such contact.

Given the self-contradictory nature of these arguments, the Workgroup concluded that maintaining the status quo in the treatment of full-time overload assignments provides the best solution.

- b. Occupational faculty assignments should continue to be included in the calculation along with faculty assignments in all other programs.*

At present, no distinction is made between occupational and other faculty assignments when the 75/25 ratio and FON are calculated. There have been suggestions, mainly external to the system, that the 75/25 regulations hamper the development of occupational programs. The committee found no such evidence and the majority of districts responded to this effect in their survey returns.

Since the regulations apply at the district level, districts already have the flexibility to hire part-time faculty in appropriate occupational programs and to hire full-time faculty in other areas to meet their 75/25 obligation.

Moreover, occupational programs have maintained over the years that it is harmful whenever they are targeted for treatment different from other programs. They also point out that the desired program and curriculum development are the very areas that need a core of full-time faculty in the program.

The Workgroup concluded that maintaining the status quo in occupational programs provides the best solution.

Recommendations Regarding Progress Toward The System Goal

- 1. The California Community Colleges should submit an annual system budget request (beginning with 2006-2007) for targeted state funding to assist districts in meeting the 75% goal. Funding support was the original intent of AB 1725 and is a necessary element for significant progress, especially in a system of community colleges that falls almost 50% below the national average for community college funding per full-time-equivalent student.*
 - a. A factor for support costs (e.g., travel, office, etc.) should be included in funding faculty positions beyond the FON or maintenance-of-effort level.*
 - b. Technical assistance should be provided to ensure that districts are able to make increases above the FON as a means of making progress toward the 75% goal.*

2. *The Workgroup discussed a number of ideas involving the Faculty Obligation Number and factors affecting districts' ability to make progress, as well as possible incentives for making progress toward reaching the 75% goal. A working group should be formed to explore criteria and mechanisms that would assist districts and result in more systematic progress toward the goal. Such mechanisms might include the following, as well as others.*
 - a. *Local shared governance processes to determine district strategies and to identify priorities and financial resources, including current and new streams of revenue.*
 - b. *Identification within the funding formula of incentives for making further progress.*
 - b) *Adjustments in the FON calculation to ensure progress, based on per FTES funding level, size, and degree of progress to the 75% goal.*
 - a. *Automatic annual increase in the FON (note: the Workgroup did not reach consensus regarding this item).*

The findings and recommendations recounted above address many of the issues raised by the Board. It is therefore staff's recommendation that the Board be provided with a full copy of the *Workgroup on 75/25 Issues: Report and Recommendations* for its review. Further, staff recommends that the consideration of the formation of a new workgroup on these issues be postponed until which time the imminent threat of budget cuts to the community colleges has subsided.

Recommended Action

That the Board of Governors refrains from establishing a Full-Time Faculty Obligation Workgroup at this time.