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Time Distribution of Faculty Workload at Boise State University

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Introduction

This project's first phase was to get a general idea of what the average work day looks like for a Boise State University faculty member; from this stage we developed activity definitions to use for the next phase. Thirty faculty members were interviewed by fourteen trained undergraduate research assistants over the course of two weeks on alternating days, April 9-21, 2013. These thirty faculty members represented all colleges of the Boise State University campus, including the Library, providing a total of 166 faculty days' worth of data. The positions held by each participant ranged between an Assistant Professor and a Department Chair. The time diary method enabled students to document the type and duration of activities, functions, locations, and presence or absence of other types of individuals. Data on general work patterns and activities of BSU faculty are presented and broken out by day of week, type of activity, function, and location. These findings indicate faculty work more than expected and in a wide range of activities and they work alone much of the time.

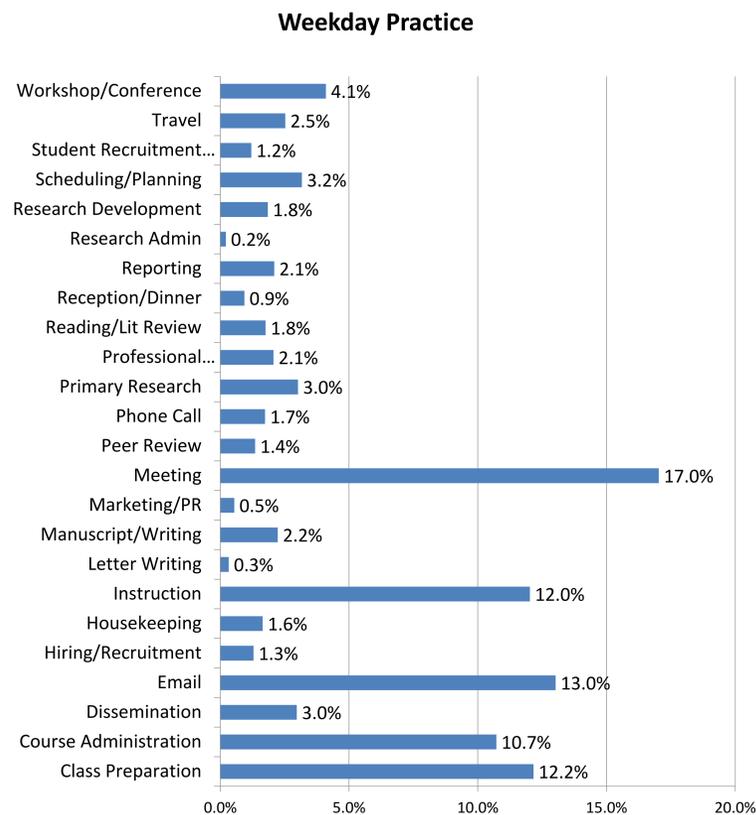
Methodology

Primary Investigators: John Ziker, David Nolin, Kathryn Demps, Matthew Genuchi | **Research Assistants:** 14 undergraduate student volunteers (anthropology and psychology departments) to collect recall data, 1 anthropology graduate student to code and create database of data.

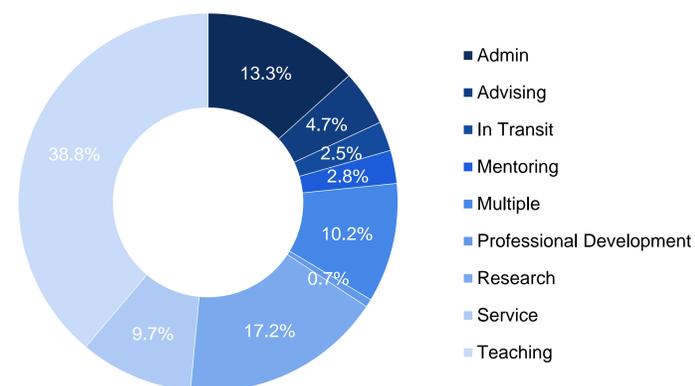
Sample: 30 volunteer faculty members (not random).

Training: One full day of training was conducted with the undergraduate volunteers under the supervision of the project managers. This training covered the entire recall method, the purposes of the study, how to schedule and conduct interviews in person and over the phone, how to code the data, and how and when to record the data.

Procedure: 24 hour recall method was conducted on alternating days of a two week period from April 9-23, 2013, as the subject's schedule would allow. This schedule allowed the recalls to represent each day of the week, and so the time involved in conducting the interviews would not be included in the data. Using the 24 hour recall method the research assistants asked participants to recall their day from 4 am of the previous day until 4 am of the current day. We asked about activities beginning at 4 am of the previous day, how long they lasted, what their function was, with whom they were conducting those activities, and where those activities occurred. Everything that was not work related was coded as personal time. Interviews that were scheduled to take place on weekends or when the faculty member was out of town were allowed over the phone.



Weekday (10.3 hrs/day)



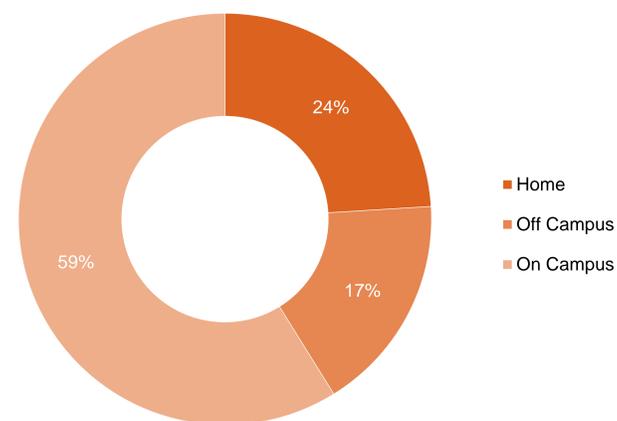
Results

Upon summarizing our data, we found the 30 faculty participants worked an average of 61 hours/week; over 10 hours/day during the workweek and under 10 hours during the weekend. Fourteen faculty participants provided the full seven days' worth of data. Sixteen faculty members provided from one to six days' worth of data. With our initial 30 subjects, we ended up with a 166-day sample with each day of the week well represented. Dr. Genuchi, along with Marielle Black, the graduate research assistant, made a first pass at coding that data. Then, Drs. Nolin and Ziker finished coding and created a database of the data. Actions of the participants were divided into 24 practice (type of action) categories and 9 function (purpose of action) categories. Some appropriate activities were combined into one category. There was a significant variation between the colleges. The results shows Health Sciences spending more than half their time teaching whereas the College of Business Education spends more than a third of their time doing research. Lastly, there was a substantial difference between ranks and functions. Assistant professors spend more than half their time teaching and less time doing administration work. On the other hand, Department Chairs spend the least amount of time teaching but most of their day doing administration work.

Conclusions

From the data collected, we can conclude Boise State University participants work significantly more than the 40 hours/week. Participants spend a major part of their time during the week on teaching-related activities and a minor part of their time on research. All of this information will help for Phase 2.

Proportion of Work Time by Place



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Complications

- The sample is not completely representative of the population of educators at BSU:
 - Participants were collected through volunteering, suggesting they are highly interested and motivated individuals
 - The COBE and the Library are underrepresented
- The categories for time intervals as stated by the interviewees were wide ranging:
 - Different answers for the same thing from different subjects (i.e. "answering" vs. "checking" email)
 - Different answers for the same thing from the same subject on the same or different days

Research Assistants Feedback

- What was the most surprising thing you learned while conducting your interviews?

"Just how many other extra positions and services the professors I interviewed contributed to for the university."

"I found that the subjects spent a lot more time in service and outreach than I initially had an impression of. Not only were they advising their students both inside and outside the classroom, but they were also deeply involved in activities that span the community. It was interesting to see what an impact one individual can have on creating a university that reaches farther than the immediate classes taught."
- What were the common issues (problems, dilemmas) that you found faculty face when allocating their time?

"They were unsure of how to categorize some activities because of the multi-task nature of these time slots."

"I found that the subjects had so many different places where they wanted to be involved that it often spread them thin as far as what they were capable of doing in comparison to what they wanted to achieve (this seems especially true for the amount of research that they wanted to be involved in but didn't have time for—although this could have to do with the time of year the survey was conducted). Being involved in not only teaching classes but also administrative duties, community outreach, service, advising, and research leaves little extra time. I was unaware of what exactly it takes to be a professor at the collegiate level, but now that I have a better idea I have a lot more respect for the individuals that do so."

Further Study

Phase 2 of this project, which uses a smart-phone application, sends out notifications to participants at random times of the day. In addition, we will ask about work satisfaction. By doing so, this will present us with a number of ideas about what makes for cheerful and productive faculty members.