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Evaluating Workload: A Collaborative Approach between Dean and Department Chair

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Proposal for the 33rd Academic Chairperson's Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 8-10, 2017

Submitted by: Melissa J. Marcucci, PhD, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Biology, University of Saint Joseph, West Hartford, CT 06117

- 1. Title of presentation:** Evaluating Workload: A Collaborative Approach between Dean and Department Chair
- 2. Authors:** Melissa J. Marcucci, Ph.D. and Sandra G. Affenito, Ph.D., R.D. FAND
- 3. Presentation summary:** Presentation of the strategies and best practices used in a collaboration between faculty and administration to revise the workload policy at a small, private institution.
- 4. Themes:** workload trends in higher education at private institutions, best practice in laboratory course instruction, collaboration between administration and faculty, leadership and management
- 5. Target Audience:** Chairpersons, Deans, administrators and faculty in higher education
- 6. Foci of presentation:**
 - a) summarize strategies explored in defining faculty workload in general and in sciences at a private liberal arts institution
 - b) provide an overview of best practices utilized in determining faculty workload, implemented by academic leaders
 - c) discuss specific strategies to consider/implement when defining faculty workload within their own academic institutions, schools and departments
- 7. Full Proposal:** Faculty workload calculations can be complex in order to systematically and fairly represent a faculty member's time committed to teaching, scholarship/research and service. Typically, an institution's mission directs the level of faculty participation in each area and the actual workload calculation primarily centers in teaching responsibilities. Recently, the University of Saint Joseph (USJ; West Hartford, Connecticut) transitioned from a college to a university, which necessitated reexamination of faculty workload policy over a multi-year period. One variable that underwent significant review was the allocation of credits/contact hours to laboratory course instruction. This review was conducted by the Dean of the School of Health and Natural Sciences and the Chair of Biology (also Faculty Affairs Committee representative) to collaboratively understand best practices in calculating workload for laboratory-based courses and science workload allocations. Due diligence involved a review of the literature for best practice, evaluation of workload policies at a defined set of peer institutions, and an internal investigation of the types of USJ faculty teaching lecture and laboratory sections along with the pedagogy utilized for such courses. Internal review of science faculty at USJ, an institution centered in teaching excellence, demonstrated that across science disciplines, less than 30% of laboratory sections are taught by adjunct professors and laboratory coordinators, with assistant/associate/full professors serving to teach laboratory sections, a practice that has historical significance and which aligns with the mission of the institution. Results of the peer institution analysis revealed that 73% of peer institutions (n=15) utilize a one-to-one formula of credit for inquiry-based and upper-level laboratories. The overall results of this study were integral in the establishment of current policy for laboratory course workload, in light of the pedagogy, level of lab, and accreditation guidelines. Moreover, this study has general significance in how to conduct an evaluation of peer school workload policies in order to understand and implement evidence-based change internally.