

Faculty Responsibilities Paper Tidewater Community College Faculty Senate

Preface

This document has a long history. It began with a number of faculty members who were serving as Chairs of various committees of the Tidewater Community College Governance System, and perceived their service as Chairs on certain committees as going far beyond their normal duties as faculty members. They requested reassigned time from the administration to compensate for this perceived extra work. The administration pointed out that before individuals could be compensated for performing “above and beyond the call of duty” a standard for faculty responsibilities had to be established. Since there is little information in either the VCCS Policy Manual or the TCC Faculty Handbook that addresses a standard for faculty responsibilities in any concrete fashion, the Faculty Senate, as the elected representatives of the faculty, took on the task of creating a document to define faculty responsibilities. An Ad Hoc committee on Faculty Responsibilities was formed and charged with producing a Faculty Responsibilities Paper to present to the Faculty Senate for approval.

In 2001 (and again later), faculty members were sent an email survey, and similar documents from other institutions were researched. The Ad Hoc committee created over a dozen drafts, and this final document was well over three years in the making. A number of people, both within and outside the Senate, have helped in editing the paper both for substance and style, and the writing committee owes all those individuals a large measure of thanks.

The final document was formally presented to the TCC Faculty Senate on Oct. 6, 2005, where it was approved unanimously. It was presented to the President at a luncheon with the Faculty Senate at the Town Point Club on Oct. 12, 2005. At her request, the Chair of the Faculty Senate presented the document at the Executive Staff Meeting held at the Portsmouth campus on Oct. 28, 2005, where it was again approved unanimously.

The committee, despite the innumerable hours and the intense debate that went into this project, recognizes that no document such as this is ever going to be completely acceptable to all parties. This is a living document, and as such will be subject to periodic revision, as the faculty members of TCC live with the results, and the Faculty Senate receives feedback from the rest of the faculty members. An electronic forum will be made available for comments on the paper, either signed or anonymous, as part of the ongoing process to refine the definition of what it means to be a faculty member at a national exemplar of a comprehensive community college.

Faculty Responsibilities Paper

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Approved by the College Senate 6 Oct. 2005

With the encouragement of President Deborah M. DiCroce, this “Faculty Responsibilities Paper” was written by a group of faculty senators from across the four campuses of Tidewater Community College (TCC). The Faculty Senate’s goals in writing this paper are to define and provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities shared by TCC faculty members across all divisions and campuses. Specific responsibilities may vary because of discipline or departmental needs; however, the responsibilities addressed in this paper will be common to all. In addition, this document will delineate ways in which faculty members can participate in future changes to policies and procedures as well as in college and community life. Finally, the document will describe any impediments that obstruct the ability to meet the responsibilities set forth in this paper.

Introduction

What does it mean to be a faculty member at Tidewater Community College (TCC), a community college that aspires to be “a national exemplar of a comprehensive community college in the 21st century” (Bearings on the Future Aug. 2003)? What roles must faculty members play to attain this mission? How can faculty members ensure that teaching and learning remain the focus at TCC (Dateline 2009), a member of the Virginia Community College System, and how can TCC’s faculty members “keep education moving in the Commonwealth” (DuBois 2003)?

At TCC, the faculty members are the public face of education for at least 22,668 students annually (TCC Institutional Brief Feb. 2003). TCC’s mission states:

Tidewater Community College provides collegiate education and training to adults of all ages and backgrounds, helping them achieve their individual goals and contribute as citizens and workers to the vitality of an increasingly global community.

Tidewater Community College, 2004

Clearly, the primary responsibility of faculty members is to meet the academic and professional needs of the students. As part of a larger academic community, it is equally important that TCC faculty members promote the standards of their disciplines, ethical behaviors, and academic freedom in their courses.

However, faculty members also represent the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), TCC, and the various disciplines that they teach. Therefore, faculty members are also responsible for imparting the mission of higher education and the values and philosophies of their disciplines. Furthermore, faculty members are asked to help “advance the vision of TCC as a national exemplar of a comprehensive community college in the 21st century” and participate as an essential component in the academic governance and decision-making processes of Tidewater Community College (Strategic Plan 2001).

Finally, TCC also values civic engagement and encourages community service in order to enhance the vitality of the communities the College serves.

Responsibilities to Students

General: Teaching faculty at TCC must meet the academic and occupational/technical needs of their students. Though many view teaching as primarily class time spent with students, this is not the case. Instruction is the culmination of a long series of preparatory actions, choices, and activities that lead to semester, weekly, and daily plans. The design and implementation of a course must be vital and engaging in order to prepare students for both academic and work demands they will encounter after finishing their course of study.

Maintaining current knowledge of discipline and pedagogy: When developing academic materials, faculty members use knowledge of their disciplines, appropriate pedagogical strategies, and knowledge of the demands that will be placed on their students when they complete their studies. Faculty members should develop educational environments for students that inspire a shared sense of responsibility for their own learning. Faculty members must remain current in their fields, whether that involves staying abreast of changes in their discipline and making instructional changes to meet the needs of students or simply making changes in pedagogy to better reflect modern learning theories. Faculty members must also remain cognizant of the demands placed on students after they complete their course of study. In addition, faculty members must prepare engaging lessons that promote the desire to learn. They must continue a life of scholarship and academic renewal and establish themselves as models of lifelong learning for the students under their instruction. Faculty members must design and implement curricula that will meet the needs of students in the 21st century.

Designing and implementing course materials: Academic tasks vary significantly by discipline; however, there are some aspects of instruction that are common to all faculty members. All faculty members must provide students with course materials that accurately describe the course objectives, requirements, and evaluation methods. They must also impartially administer evaluations that are consistent with defined objectives. Faculty members must support educational environments that stimulate inquiry and learning by presenting and accepting a reasonable range of opinions on controversial issues, protecting academic freedom, and providing all reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Faculty members should respect students and act as their intellectual guides. They must encourage self-motivation, honesty, and protect a student's right to learn.

Faculty members should be available to provide advice and academic help outside classroom hours for students; thus, office hours, at times convenient to students, should be posted and maintained. The question of exactly what this means for faculty teaching all their courses in an online environment is one that has not yet been satisfactorily answered. It has been established, however, that faculty members who are teaching classes entirely online must maintain a regular physical presence on campus to help foster a relationship with colleagues teaching in a more traditional setting.

Finally, faculty members may serve students as mentors or club advisors to enhance the collegiate experience.

Responsibilities to the College

Much of a faculty member's duties to the college are fulfilled by conscientiously meeting their responsibilities to students. Still, the role of faculty member includes obligations to TCC that go beyond excellence in the classroom. It is essential that TCC faculty members devote time and energy to the improvement and operation of the college. Without this participation, TCC will be inhibited from meeting the goal of becoming an exemplar of the 21st century comprehensive community college.

In order for TCC to reach this goal, faculty members must play an active role in the decision-making and governance processes of the TCC and of the department in which they work. Under a system of shared governance, faculty members have the right and responsibility to be involved in the process of developing, evaluating, and revising college policies and procedures.

Participation in the governance and decision-making structure can take many forms. At the department level, faculty members may be involved in committees to coordinate activities between campuses, and to interview candidates for new faculty positions. At the division level, faculty members may serve on bodies that establish and maintain academic excellence. At the college level, they may serve as elected members on the various standing committees of the governance structure or on the Faculty Senate, either as members or in a leadership capacity. Finally, they may serve as representatives of the institution at meetings and events lying beyond the boundaries of TCC. These efforts are indispensable for maintaining quality in all the activities of the college. Faculty members may also serve in administrative capacities as program heads, department chairs, Assistants to the Deans, and in ad hoc or interim positions.

Responsibilities to the Community

Faculty members should inspire engaged citizenship in their students. TCC "regards its educational mission as a central element in serving the community and its citizens, helping to power the region's continued economic vitality and competitive capacity in a global economy" (Strategic Plan 2001). In addition, The Strategic Plan for the college lists service and accountability as core values for the college. Faculty members can become involved with the local community through volunteering, service learning, advocacy, and experiential research.

Faculty members possess unique talents, training, and backgrounds that lend themselves to a host of community activities. Therefore, the expertise of faculty members from TCC is available to meet a wide variety of needs in the community. As professionals in their disciplines, faculty members at TCC should look for opportunities to use their expertise for the improvement of the community.

Faculty Responsibilities to the Profession

Faculty members should maintain professional memberships and actively participate in professional organizations. In addition, responsibility to the profession includes participation in teaching associations, state/local organizations, and discipline-centered networking services/programs.

Faculty members must remain current in their fields, maintain any required professional certifications, and promote ethical behavior in their professions.

Faculty members should act as mentors to new and adjunct faculty members. Collegial groups within the discipline should be established to exchange ideas, discuss teaching and learning strategies, and identify solutions to current issues and problems. These groups can provide safe and rich learning environments in which faculty members can share resources and continue to learn.

Constraints

According to an issue paper by the American Association of Community Colleges, community college faculty members register more student contact hours than any other educational sector (2004). With average teaching loads of 15 – 20 hours per week, TCC faculty members have teaching loads equal to those at community colleges across the nation. Moreover, in 2002, Governor Warner predicted that budget cuts would mean increased class sizes and fewer class offerings. At the same time, budget cuts have also driven more students to attend community colleges instead of four-year universities. Circumstances have mounted to increase the already heavy workloads of faculty members at TCC.

As a direct result of the current woeful state of faculty salaries, many faculty members experience multiple demands on their time and attention resulting in a diminished fulfillment of their responsibilities toward TCC. While the stated goal of SCHEV for college faculty throughout Virginia is to move faculty average salaries to the 60th percentile of peer institutions nationwide, the current level for the VCCS is only the 37th percentile (Patterson Summer 2004). In a similar fashion, one goal of Dateline 2009 is to move faculty salaries from the 35th percentile to the top one third (or 66%) of the benchmark colleges.

In the 2005 legislative session, the General Assembly appropriated funds to provide an average raise of 5.4 % for VCCS faculty, a greatly appreciated first step toward the Chancellor's Dateline 2009 goal. In addition, TCC faculty members benefited from additional amounts provided by the State Board for Community Colleges and the College's operating budget, improving the overall position for TCC faculty to the 46th percentile among comparable institutions nationwide. TCC is experiencing record enrollment, while at the same time many of our faculty members are at or near retirement age. The College has also found that it has exhausted the pool of available adjunct faculty in a number of high demand fields. This combination is beginning to affect access to classes. It is thus critically important for the College to both retain and continue to attract the best community college faculty members, and thus increase access for students across South Hampton Roads and beyond. In order to accomplish this, the College will have to continue to close the gap between faculty salaries at TCC and the national average for faculty salaries. An average salary for its faculty that is less than that of half of comparable schools nationwide simply will not support a college that aims to become a national exemplar of a comprehensive community college.

Financial pressures brought about by low salaries lead many TCC faculty members to take on heavy loads at other institutions of higher education. This in turn cripples their ability to fulfill responsibilities at TCC beyond what they do in the classroom. Until the General Assembly makes a commitment to rectify this situation, there will always be a significant number of faculty members willing but unable to take on many of the responsibilities detailed in this report.

The ratio of sections taught by full-time faculty members to sections taught by adjuncts has a significant impact on the time and energy that full-time faculty members have to devote to professional activities outside the classroom. This impact can be negative across several areas when the percentage of full-time faculty dips below 50%. TCC is fortunate to have many outstanding adjuncts working for us; however, their job does not require responsibilities other than to students. Under normal circumstances, there are enough full-time faculty members to share the load of non-teaching professional responsibilities. But when the full-time/part-time ratio falls below 50%, full-time faculty find themselves repeatedly asked to do more with less. In order to help TCC reach national prominence, faculty members will need an environment that encourages participation and allows time for innovation.

In short, to meet the needs of students, faculty members must:

- meet the academic and occupational/technical needs of their students
- develop educational environments for students that inspire a shared sense of responsibility for their own learning
- remain current in their fields
- remain cognizant of the demands placed on students after they complete their course of study
- prepare engaging lessons that promote the desire to learn
- establish themselves as models of lifelong learning for the students under their instruction
- design and implement curricula that will meet the needs of students in the 21st century
- provide students with course materials that accurately describe the course objectives, requirements, and evaluation methods
- administer evaluations that are consistent with defined objectives in an impartial manner
- support educational environments that stimulate inquiry and learning by presenting (and accepting) a reasonable range of opinions on controversial issues
- protect academic freedom
- provide all reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities
- respect students and act as their intellectual guides
- encourage self-motivation, honesty, and protect a student's right to learn
- post and maintain office hours at times convenient to students

Options to serve the college:

Faculty members must serve the college by active participation in at least one of the following capacities:

- serve on committees at the departmental level
- serve on committees at the college level
- serve on search committees

- serve on bodies that establish and maintain academic excellence
- serve as elected members on the various standing committees of the governance structure or on the Faculty Senate, either as members or in a leadership capacity (college wide committees)
- serve as representatives of the institution at meetings and events outside the College
- play an active role in the decision-making and governance processes of the College, and of the department in which they work
- be involved in the process of developing, evaluating, and revising college policies and procedures

Serve the Community

- volunteer in various capacities
- use service learning in their classes
- advocate for change
- conduct experiential research

Serve the Discipline

- maintain professional memberships and actively participate in professional organizations
- participate in teaching associations, state/local organizations, and discipline-centered networking services/programs.
- remain current in their fields
- maintain any required professional certifications
- promote ethical behavior in their professions
- act as mentors to adjunct and new faculty members

Conclusion

Beyond their primary responsibility to students, faculty members at TCC have many other duties including service to the college, the community, and their disciplines. Though these roles often overlap, and heavy participation in one area may negate the need for active participation in all service areas, faculty members at TCC must be prepared to do more than teach. To accommodate this need and elicit the necessary levels of active participation, TCC will need to hire additional full-time faculty to lighten the current workloads and compensate faculty members who take on key roles on major committees and in governance, and act as Assistants to the Deans. TCC's faculty members are an integral part of TCC's vision of becoming a "national exemplar of a comprehensive community college in the new millennium" (Dr. DiCroce PIAC Charge 3 Mar. 2005).