

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
**of the**  
**ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL**  
**concerning**  
**INCREASING THE VALIDITY OF ACADEMIC**  
**PROGRAM DATA RELATED TO FACULTY PRODUCTIVITY**

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## Special Report of the Academic Priorities Council on Increasing the Validity of Academic Program Data Related to Faculty Productivity

During the 1991-1992 academic year, the Academic Priorities Council reviewed the processes that had been used in prior years to reduce school and college budgets, and to reduce and eliminate programs. We concluded that existing procedures needed refinement, even though we recognized that different processes might be used in the future. Thus we endeavored to recommend steps so that safeguards would be in place in the event that either the *same* processes were used again or that *new* elimination or reduction procedures were developed.

In addition to being concerned about the lack of an operational definition of *centrality*—discussed in a separate special report—we were aware of assertions that many of the decisions referred to above were based on data of questionable validity. The present special report deals exclusively with steps that can be taken to increase the validity of academic program data related to faculty productivity.

Our concerns related to the data base underlying administrative decisions can be grouped under three observations:

- Central administrators made decisions based on data that had *not been reviewed by departmental faculty*. Departments targeted for reduction and termination reported that decisions had been based on productivity data that they had not previously seen that either (a) were at variance with departmental data or (b) could not be interpreted meaningfully without additional information (e.g., information about the number of faculty on leave or about the nature of faculty assignments).
- There are *equity* problems with the current procedures for collecting and weighting productivity data.
  - When teaching service or interdisciplinary courses or participating in interdepartmental programs, current registration procedures do not permit easy and direct identification of faculty loads by a teacher's home unit.
  - In comparing departments with respect to instructional productivity, lecture courses are given the same weighting as laboratory sections, discussion sections, supervised internships, and field trips.
  - The method of crediting faculty for time spent on supervising students working on dissertations appears to have more to do with arbitrary departmentally-established minima (regarding how much dissertation credit a student must sign up for in order to graduate) rather than with how much supervision is required by the faculty.
- Departments were sometimes targeted for reduction or termination on the basis of either *untimely or unrepresentative productivity data*.

- Data on scholarly productivity was several years out of date, sometimes including information relating to faculty who had long since left and sometimes omitting information related to recently hired, highly active faculty.
- Data on instructional productivity was compiled solely for one Fall semester.

On the basis of the above observations, we offer four motions. The first three have to do with collecting data for cross-campus resource allocation decisions or for program reduction and elimination decisions. These include:

**MOVED:** That before using assessments of a program's teaching advising, or scholarly  
**16-93** productivity for reduction, termination, or resource allocation decisions, the Administration shall provide the unit head or chair and an appropriate faculty committee an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data or point out errors requiring correction.

**MOVED:** That the Administration take measures to speed up acquisition of *program-level*  
**17-93** teaching, advising, and scholarly productivity data; develop procedures to increase the accuracy of the assignment of *scholarly* productivity data to categories; and develop registration procedures that will allow easier and more direct identification of faculty loads by a teacher's home unit—especially for interdepartmental program courses.

**MOVED:** That when teaching and advising productivity data are to be used for reduction,  
**18-93** termination, or resource allocation decisions, they should be based on three-year rolling averages consistent with currently available data. The three year figures may be supplemented by one-year data to suggest short-term enrollment trends, but one-year data should receive minimal weight because of short-term irregularities.

The final motion has to do with issues of how to weigh and count faculty instructional activity equitably. While one possible use of such productivity data is to aid in making resource allocation decisions or program reduction or termination decisions, there are other potential uses, such as to aid in making merit decisions.

**MOVED:** That appropriate Faculty Senate councils or committees be asked to develop (1) a  
**19-93** system for weighting the faculty time and effort involved in conducting laboratory sections, discussion sections, supervised internships, and field trips vis-à-vis standard lecture and discussion classes; and (2) a system for weighting the faculty time and effort involved in supervising masters and doctoral students vis-à-vis teaching.