

# Service Task Force Report

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## Table of Contents

1. [Summary](#)
2. [Context and Background](#)
3. [Recommendations](#)
  1. [Clearly define service and distinguish internal and external service](#)
  2. [Create a service “dashboard”](#)
  3. [Develop rubrics/matrix](#)
  4. [Consider broad rewards/incentives/compensation](#)
  5. [Enhancing faculty member autonomy](#)
  6. [Periodic service audits](#)
  7. [Accountability tools](#)
  8. [Better onboarding new faculty](#)
  9. [Shifting the narrative about service](#)
4. [Conclusion](#)
5. [Chart of Recommendations, Timeline, and Priority](#)
6. [Potential Implementation Models](#)
7. [Appendix](#)
  1. [Data sources](#)
  2. [Table 1](#): Service Expectations as Reported in the 2019 and 2022 Campus Climate Surveys
  3. [Table 2](#): Self-reported amount of time spent on service, ideal and in practice, 2022 and 2019 Campus Climate Survey
  4. [Figure 1](#): Faculty hold inconsistent definitions of internal or university-related service
  5. [Figure 2](#): Faculty hold inconsistent definitions of “external service” or service to the profession
  6. [Exhibit 1](#): Definition of service in the Faculty Manual
  7. [Figure 3](#): Compensation among faculty for service activities
  8. [Figure 4](#): Sample service dashboard
  9. [Figure 5](#): Excerpt from SIS Service Matrix
8. [Acknowledgements](#)

## Summary

The Office of the Provost and the Faculty Senate formally launched a Task Force on Service in fall 2022. Over the next year, the Task Force gathered information within and external to the American University community related to service burden and equity, and best practices surrounding internal or university-related service.

The data collection revealed several striking conclusions, especially:

- A decent share of faculty remain committed to contributing to the AU community and mission.
- There is a rising and concerning frustration insofar as the wider context surrounding service, be it ambiguity around definitions or how service is assigned or valued, to cite a few examples.
- The presence of deeply ingrained narratives about service among the AU community - such as the perceived crushing burden or who does the service - that cannot be easily confirmed or dispelled without appropriate evidence.

The Task Force has developed 9 recommendations as a series of first steps to promote greater transparency, equity, and accountability insofar as service, including:

- 1) Clearly define service and distinguish internal and external service in the faculty manual, Elements, and other related documents.
- 2) Create a service “dashboard” within units that can provide transparency in service roles and opportunities.
- 3) Develop rubrics/a matrix within units for describing service roles, effort, and expectations by position.
- 4) Consider a range of rewards, incentives, and compensation for service roles.
- 5) Enhance faculty member agency in selecting and performing service and affecting change through service.
- 6) Conduct periodic service audits within units to assess the value of service roles and faculty burdens.
- 7) Consider a range of accountability tools for performing service (or not).
- 8) When onboarding new faculty, better describe and clarify service opportunities and expectations, and encourage participation.
- 9) Shift the narrative about service away from a necessary burden to a key tool of self-governance.

## Context and Background

In fall 2022, the Office of the Provost and the Faculty Senate formally launched a Task Force on Service. They charged the Task Force with collecting data on faculty service at American University (AU) and service practices in other institutions. They were also asked to offer their recommendations for making internal or university-related service expectations towards reaching AU's goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion clear, balanced, and intentional. In the spring and summer of 2023, the Task Force conducted a university-wide faculty survey, facilitated multiple focus groups, and gathered input from a variety of stakeholders within and external to AU to understand perspectives, concerns, and best practices used at the university and at our peer institutions.

Based on the work of the task force, it is clear that many American University faculty care about service to the university community. This good news was underscored by the research and the many conversations held by members of the task force with faculty colleagues. There are many faculty members who are motivated to do "internal" service to help improve the institution and contribute to the broader community, and who are driven to do so not just because it is a job requirement. Given that faculty members report spending about one-quarter of their time on service activities (Appendix [Table 2](#)), service remains ingrained in the fabric of faculty life at AU.

However, the Task Force also found deep frustration about the context surrounding service as performed at or for the university. As one colleague vividly illustrated in a survey, AU has 'a toxic work culture' and'. The concerns about internal or university-related service touched upon many dimensions including:

- Lack of a clear definition of what constitutes service;
- Lack of clear expectations about what level of service is "enough;"
- Discrepancies between the proportion of time spent on service, expectations for faculty time spent on service, and faculty preferences for time use;
- Inequities or a lack of transparency in how service is assigned, and in the ability of colleagues to say no to requests;
- The amount or lack of agency when choosing or volunteering service;
- The perceived or real inequities in the distribution of service and related roles between faculty members, particularly regarding race, gender, and rank;
- Lack of transparency and real or perceived inequities regarding compensation for service roles and the general lack of incentives for performing service;

- Expectations for service performed during uncompensated periods, including summers and when on leave from the university, including periods when compensated by sources external to AU.
- High levels of burnout and “overperformers” of service, while “low performers” are kept away from service roles;
- The amount or lack of efficacy in affecting change or governance with service activities; and
- Resentment regarding service activities that are viewed as more performative than meaningful.

Many faculty members – like members of the broader university community – are worn out, particularly in the wake of the difficult COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout, which was harmful to many but unevenly experienced.

The complaints about the context surrounding service were hardly surprising; the depth and scale of the disaffection, however, were striking and cause for grave concern. Faculty may generally believe in the importance of being good citizens, and the need for service; but this sense of commitment is declining, and at risk of further erosion if AU does not try to address some of the tensions around how service expectations are communicated and understood.

For example, in 2022, fewer than 6 in 10 faculty members reported that their service was valued at AU, down from two-thirds of faculty just three years earlier ([Appendix Table 1](#)). Our survey found that one-quarter of faculty report performing service outside of the academic calendar (winter break, summer), and among those who have been on leave from the university, nearly half (46%) reported performing university-related service while on leave. The lack of traditional vacation time for faculty and potential compensation from sources external to the university during these periods raises concerns. Further, while internal service performance is taken into account in annual merit reviews, research and external service activities are often more beneficial in gaining external recognition and offers, which have the potential to increase salary much more than merit reviews. Ignoring the problem is likely to deepen divides within the community and undermine morale and cohesion, increase the risk of losing bright and talented colleagues burnt out by service, and weaken trust in AU leadership, at a time when relations are not optimal. As the recent UMD report [Equity-minded faculty workloads](#) (p.1) points out, “the context that surrounds faculty workload reinforces and perpetuates workload inequities, and these inequities have the potential to undermine productivity, satisfaction, and retention.”

The Service Task Force followed its mandate of addressing “the tension, challenges, and inequities around service responsibilities,” and of collecting data to inform best

practices and recommendations. The Task Force's evidence, collected throughout the spring and summer 2023, principally comes from:

- Reviewing existing AU data (such as the campus climate surveys of 2019 and 2022);
- Conducting its own faculty survey with 410 responses (43% response rate);
- Holding 5 focus groups with dozens of faculty colleagues across all ranks and status; and
- Reaching out to multiple stakeholders within and external to the university, such as deans, program chairs/department directors, and faculty at other institutions that have grappled with similar issues.

The data collected by the Task Force highlight key challenges and offer several possible recommendations moving forward, but there are still important gaps in our understanding of the tensions around service. Whether at the university or at the unit level, there is still a lack of clear evidence to determine the exact scale of the problem when it comes to service burden and inequity between categories of faculty. At a more granular level, faculty members too often struggle to assess how their service contribution compares to their peers, and whether their work burden is below average, average, or above average. These issues both relate to the fact that "service" is not defined and service information is not gathered consistently across individuals or university units.

The nine recommendations listed below are, therefore, not intended to be an exhaustive list of solutions to the complex challenges around university-related service and its context. But they are viewed as first steps in approaching service in a more intentional manner, with an eye to promoting greater transparency, equity, and accountability. Beyond this, the Task Force recommends continued efforts to gather information about service burden, performance, and inequities, to implement best practices that have been identified at AU and other institutions, and to monitor the results of the strategies implemented on burden, performance, and equity.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Clearly Define Service and Distinguish Internal and External Service Tasks and Expectations

In academic settings, there is an obvious distinction between internal service related to the university and its mission, and external service to the profession. However, members of the AU community lack a clear, consistent definition of what qualifies as service or of types of service. This lack of a definition leads to problems not only in assigning roles and comparing service burdens, but also in Elements reports and during merit reviews. About half of faculty report performing 5 or more hours of internal service per week during the academic calendar, and one-quarter report doing so outside of the academic calendar (winter break, summer); but service burden is difficult to measure as faculty members vary in what they consider service (see Appendix [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)). The [language in the Faculty Manual](#) (see Appendix Exhibit 1) provides examples and some characteristics of service roles, but does not explicitly define service. Further, many faculty, particularly faculty of color and women, take on additional “invisible” forms of service that are typically not measured or recognized. Service expectations are not clear and are inconsistent across rank and unit and differ across term and tenure track faculty. Even the word “service” conjures different reactions from faculty, with some in focus groups questioning whether it should be termed “labor” to reflect the activities as part of the job, or as community-minded but extraneous tasks that take away from the “real work” of faculty.

We recommend that the Faculty Senate and university administration form a partnership or joint committee with the aim of drafting a clearer definition of service in the Faculty Manual that: 1) distinguishes between student *teaching/mentoring activities* (writing recommendation letters) and *research* (directing a center, media interviews) from other service activities; and 2) among service activities, distinguishes expectations regarding forms of *internal service* performed for or at the university (unit, school, and university committees and ad-hoc activities,) and *external service* (journal editing, manuscript, conference, or grant proposal reviews). External service often consists of tasks or roles that may provide career opportunities or advancement, or external offers that may lead to counteroffers and substantial salary increases, whereas internal service tasks or roles contribute to the university community and mission in some way. These categories and activities should be reflected in the service reporting components on Elements. Within the service section of Elements, space for faculty to include narratives] would be useful to provide detail on service tasks (or lack thereof,) compensation received, and whether they performed service during or outside of the academic year. It is important that these definitions of service be harmonized in expectations for term faculty and

tenure-track faculty, with attention to faculty's performance of both external and internal service.

Finally, we recommend that Merit and Course Load Committees consider the implications of reviewing the prior two or three years of service rather than only the prior year, which would allow for some year-to-year fluctuations in service.

A consistent, clear definition as detailed in, and gathered by, Elements reports will improve faculty morale, motivate underperforming faculty to participate more in service, recognize and reward overperformers, and reduce faculty burnout. Clear and consistent reporting on Elements can also be used to gather data and monitor service burden, equity, and the effects of the other recommendations we detail below.

## Recommendation 2: Create a Service “Dashboard” to Enhance Transparency

Faculty often struggle to assess how their service burden matches to expectations, but a ‘Service Dashboard’ can play a key role in ensuring greater transparency and clarity. This simple and easy-to-implement device is described by the [University of Denver](#) as providing four key functions:

*“Identifies the kinds of work that must be done to maintain an academic unit and what work faculty are doing beyond it. Dispels myths and misconceptions among faculty about the workloads of colleagues. It informs historically marginalized faculty of the norms, so they know when to refrain from volunteering. Finally, it reveals unintended inequities in assigned service and teaching that compound over the trajectory of a faculty member’s tenure in a department.”*

The creation of a dashboard relies upon implementation of [Recommendation 1](#): a clear and consistent definition of service, and the delineation of clear service roles, and this should be done across the University. Furthermore, these service roles should be weighted to account for their required labor and value (see [Recommendation 3](#)). Establishing a list and rubric of service roles (ideally through already collected data in Elements), would then allow for a Dashboard visualization or scale of one’s service labor at the University. Faculty thus would be easily informed if they were above, below, or happily meeting the service requirements of their contract. This information would also be available for Rank, Tenure and Promotion committees as well as deans, ideally



providing more objective and easily quantifiable data about individual service obligations that could be used for merit and promotion review.

Additionally, it would identify faculty who were over-extended, and those who had capacity to take on a new role, allowing chairs and deans to access this information at any point to maintain more balanced service roles. Such a mechanism could help avoid the “curse of competency,” or the pitfall of the “usual suspects” being repeatedly asked to take on work, while also making it clearer when others have taken on less service responsibility. After all, the survey highlighted a significant gap between practice and aspirations among faculty respondents who have been assigned ad-hoc service. 10% reported using faculty workload as a criterion for ad-hoc assignment, but 35% underlined that assigning service to faculty doing less than their fair share *should* be a key criterion.

In addition to the University of Denver example cited above, other examples of service transparency and scaling can be found at [George Mason](#), [Georgia State](#), and [TCU](#), and a simple Microsoft excel dashboard is already being used in the School of Public Affairs’ Department of Public Administration and Policy (see Appendix [Figure 4](#)).

As such, the Task Force recommends that the University either establish an easily accessible, visually informative dashboard, ideally drawing data from already established mechanisms like Elements, or that it mandates that departments/units adopt a dashboard based on existing templates. In either case, that tool would provide faculty and administrators clear, current, and comprehensive service metrics.

### Recommendation 3: Develop Rubrics and/or Matrices at the Unit Level to Set Expectations for Service and for Transparency

As alluded to in the context/background section, the Task Force identified key problems related to setting clear expectations for service work, namely:

1. The concern across faculty rank and status of being burdened with service and that much of it was not meaningful.
2. The lack of clarity about service expectations from year to year, making it hard to ‘say no’ in some circumstances.
3. The confusion about what exactly counts as service (as covered in [Recommendation 1](#)), and what each service task requires in terms of skill and time commitment.

In the last ten years SIS developed a 'service matrix' (see Appendix [Figure 5](#)), which sought to address some of the concerns raised above. The matrix presents the benefit of: a) listing existing service opportunities; b) dividing them into broad categories based on time commitment; and c) defining a 'fair share' based on rank and status. The current matrix has some limitations, namely in determining how to keep it up to date and it not addressing the 'why' of service, but it is nonetheless a model that could be applied across AU.

Whereas the dashboard provides information about the service work of individual faculty (i.e., who does what), the matrix fulfills three separate functions: a) listing all service opportunities, internal and external, open to faculty in a unit, b) organizing these activities by time to effort, and c) providing a definition of a 'fair share' of service by faculty type and status. The Task Force therefore recommends that all units/departments should develop their own matrices around service, according to the following core guiding principles:

Describe service and organize it by time to effort

**Schools/Colleges and Departments/Divisions should first compile a complete list of service opportunities, with brief descriptions for each that emphasize the required skills.** They should then organize and divide those service opportunities by time to effort; either using descriptors like low, medium, and high, or using Elements' format of 10 hour increments: 1-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 30+ hours per semester.

Develop clear expectations for each status/rank

**Schools/Colleges and Departments/Divisions should develop service expectations by status and rank** that reference these categories so that faculty know what constitutes sufficient or expected service per semester or year. This list should then be published and shared widely a month in advance of each academic year so that faculty have clear guidelines on what their service opportunities are for the coming year.

**Expectations should be straight-forward and not subject to interpretation.** Unit guidelines should strive for clear statements like the following: "term faculty on continuing appointments may meet their service requirements by serving on x number of low time commitment committees on the unit or university level, or a mix of the two, by other forms of recognized service, by serving on x number of medium to high time commitment committees, or other forms of recognized service in an academic year."

Explain the ‘why’ of service and use that as a base for streamlining or reducing assignments when necessary

Units/departments should use the matrix as a tool to underline the ‘why’ of service. For example, a unit could determine that faculty service work should primarily advance and concentrate on two core areas: **faculty governance** and **mission critical work**. Schools/Colleges and Departments/Divisions could then use this as criteria to **eliminate or curtail existing service assignments that do not fall into the identified focus areas**. In cases where such work must still be done, it should be reassigned to faculty with administrative duties and their staff, or should otherwise come with stipends.

Distinguishing service from ‘good citizen’ work

The matrix can also help to better delineate between core service work and ‘good citizen’ work that should be part of every faculty’s work requirement. Deans, faculty governance, and department chairs/divisions directors should **identify and clarify what counts as “good citizen” work, making sure to include that in the matrix**. Good citizen work usually lies in the area between service and teaching. This work may be related to the teaching mission and is intermittent (e.g., attending Preview Day, or attending recruitment events), participating in other university or department events, or being a good colleague.

## Recommendation 4: Consider a Range of Rewards, Incentives, and Compensation for Performing Service

Expectations for service are also muddled by the compensation structures across the university for specific service roles which vary and are often inconsistent within and across units. For example, some program directors receive a course release, some receive a stipend, and some receive both. Half (51%) of respondents in our faculty survey reported being compensated for a service activity. Of those, 94% reported receiving a stipend and 68% a teaching reduction. Importantly, among those who had received compensation, 15% reported that it was negotiated between themselves and their units, and only 38% reported it was adequate for covering their time involved in their service activity, raising concerns surrounding equity and burden (Appendix [Figure 3](#)).

A January 2020 report entitled “Compensation of American University Faculty for managerial, administrative, or supervisory responsibilities: Recommendations to Deans”

also described these problems, among others, and the resulting inequities of ad-hoc or negotiated compensation. They provided several recommendations:

- Compensation for ongoing roles should be provided through base salary changes, whereas short-term/term-limited roles should be compensated through stipends adjusted to inflation and role;
- Course releases should be recognized as necessary for completing the role rather than a reward or compensation;
- Compensation should be calculated according to the volume of work, as well as adjusted as needed by department or program size.

**The Task Force endorses these recommendations, and further recommends a consistent and transparent compensation structure for similar roles across the university.**

In addition, when a faculty member is asked to step into an administrative role, such as a program director or chair, we recommend an explicit assessment and reallocation of existing service commitments so that they can focus on their new role. Further, the compensation provided per service activity should be assessed by units every few years as the time required for service roles fluctuates. For example, establishing a new program is likely more time-consuming than maintaining an established program (see [Recommendation 6](#)). Importantly, compensation should consider a faculty member's contract (e.g., 9 or 12 months; single or multi-year). That is, working during uncompensated periods should not be the norm nor expectation.

At present, the university considers service performance in the merit review, reappointment and promotion processes. For faculty who perform outstanding levels of service, the university gives two Outstanding Service to the University Community Awards each year, with a \$2000 stipend for both the term and tenure-track recipients. Given that there are 489 tenure-line or tenured faculty and 458 term faculty members at the University ([OIRA, 2023](#)), **the Task Force recommends that the university offer additional rewards, incentives, and compensation for outstanding service to incentivize and reward the large amount of service expectations across the university.** For example, the University of Wisconsin - Madison offers a \$10,000 [Exceptional Service Support Award](#) for outstanding service which can be used for a course release, summer salary, or similar expenses.

As noted in [Recommendation 1](#), **the Task Force recommends that the merit review lookback for service is increased from one year to three years** to be consistent with expectations for the research activities lookback. We see this as imperative for several

reasons. First, with the current one-year lookback, overperforming faculty have to keep agreeing to new service opportunities with the hopes of being granted the maximum merit amount. However, there may be some years that faculty cannot engage in as much service due to extraneous circumstances such as sickness, disability, child/elderly care, or other unexpected life events. However, if their three-year commitment to service were evaluated, it would be clear that this period of “underperforming” was an anomaly. Second, a three-year lookback would help faculty manage their other duties more effectively. Faculty would have more control over their workloads from year to year and may be willing to take on roles with higher service levels. For example, if a faculty member is engaged with a high level of service for two years, they can focus more on their research or teaching in the third year without penalty.

Relatedly, **the Task Force recommends a new system where faculty members can “bank” service** if they participate in service beyond their respective expectations, as outlined in [Recommendation 3](#) above. This would be similar to the banking that can occur if a faculty member teaches an extra class one semester, where they can “bank” the class to reduce their course load in a future semester.

In addition, **the Task Force recommends that a “service sabbatical” process be implemented**, where “overperforming” faculty members can apply for a service exemption for 1 - 2 semesters, without an impact on merit review, reappointment, or promotion (which would be easy to do with a three-year lookback).

Finally, **there should be no expectation of university-related service over the summer for all faculty on 9-month contracts or while faculty are on leave from the university (e.g., sabbatical, family leave, IPA at a government agency or other institution)**. If service is required or needed by a faculty member on a nine-month contract, a reasonable stipend or other recognition or arrangements should be provided for the service.

Implementing these recommendations will improve faculty morale, motivate underperforming faculty to participate more in service, recognize and reward overperformers, and reduce faculty burnout.

## Recommendation 5: Enhance Faculty Member Autonomy in Selecting Service Assignments

Faculty have repeatedly stressed frustration over the lack of support, flexibility, and autonomy in selecting their service opportunities. One focus group participant vividly regretted the lack of:

*“control over what service they are doing,” adding feeling burdened by “some bureaucratic hurdle that doesn’t have any impact,” deploring the “heavy grip at the top of institution,” the lack of trust from higher-ups, and concluding that their service is performative, as their “contributions are being asked for in name only.”*

Morale would improve if faculty’s service felt impactful, harnessed their expertise, aligned with their goals of learning and personal growth, and contributed to a cause they care deeply about. However, they also noted the lack of administrative support and tools available, an expectation not to “shake things up” or make big changes, and how it burdened them with tasks they were not equipped to do. Being asked to do many tasks one is not qualified or trained for can taint one’s experience and future motivation in getting involved in service activities. As one participant in a focus group expressed:

*“You don’t mind doing service if you’re abiding by your own calling, but if you need to do more tasks, it gets overwhelming.”*

Another participant noted:

*“Institutions should stop outsourcing service, which should be paid labor to faculty”.*

They concluded that **“the pressure on faculty should trickle upwards as well”**, with the suggestion that the institution hire more staff to support faculty, so they can truly and efficiently perform service. If administrative support is not available, the university could provide professional development opportunities to develop skills such as project management, managing teams and holding meetings, or software skills that may be beneficial for the performance of the service role as well as useful for the individual performing it.

To enhance autonomy, we recommend the following:

- Offer clearer descriptions of roles and expectations to allow for more informed decisions, such as the rubric/matrix in [Recommendation 3](#): Our faculty colleagues have pointed to some of the workload inequity emerging from the

“foggy” context in which decisions are made, and the lack of tools and data to make informed decisions, as best described by page 23 of the UMD [Equity-Minded Workload report](#). Therefore, faculty need more clarity on service expectations per rank, which service roles are available, and how much time and skills are involved in those roles to be able to make more informed choices. More clarity and transparency would improve morale and encourage faculty to confidently volunteer and fulfill service roles that draw on their skills or offer them a chance for professional development and mentoring, and in some cases, service that supports teaching and research.

- Polling faculty for desired roles: In addition to reporting their service activity in Elements, faculty should be provided an opportunity at their departmental level to give input regarding the service roles they desire in the future. The UMD Equitable Workload Report suggests auditing faculty every spring to indicate which of their current service roles would carry over the next academic year and which roles they would be interested in playing in the future. (See p 34 [Equitable Workload Report](#) as an example.) Allowing faculty more autonomy by choosing rather than being assigned roles would utilize the varied, currently untapped skills that faculty may offer. It would also improve morale and make our colleagues feel that their voices have been heard.
- Ensuring an equitable distribution and mentoring opportunities with planned rotations: We recommend establishing a planned service rotation with clear time frames for certain time-intensive key roles that would run parallel to the volunteering/election systems already in place. A planned service rotation could serve as a guardrail against overburdening faculty and prevent burnout in faculty serving in time-intensive roles. It would bring a more equitable distribution, accountability, and ensure that all faculty members can develop and learn new skills needed to gain experience, exposure needed to achieve long-term goals, as well as an opportunity for collaboration and mentorship. (See p 46 [Equitable Workload Report](#) for an example of a planned service rotation schedule over 6 years for 12 faculty members. This rotation suggests a model for implementing training/mentoring systems that are essential for growth, efficiency, and autonomy in the long run. For example, a faculty member would serve as a member on a committee or “shadow” the person currently in charge one semester prior to serving as said committee’s chair and assuming a new leadership role.)
- Providing administrative support and tools needed for success: As noted previously, empowering faculty to conduct their service efficiently requires hiring

qualified and trained professionals to perform additional administrative tasks and to cover the logistics of a given service task.

## Recommendation 6: Conduct Periodic Service Audits at the Unit Level

The many views expressed by colleagues, whether through surveys or focus groups, highlighted strongly-held narratives about service such as the existence of significant inequities when it comes to the distribution of work, or the fact that AU faculty are overburdened with service, especially in comparison to other institutions, and that some of this work is performative or unnecessary. In our faculty survey, 70% of those who had been at other institutions reported their service levels at AU were “more” or “much more,” and one survey respondent bemoaned:

*‘the culture at AU where every idea raised ends up creating more work.’*

Within the university, there are perceptions of inequities. In the survey, 60% of respondents reported believing that they are doing more or much more than their colleagues within their units **and over 80% believe they are either doing as much or doing more/much more than their colleagues**. More than half (54%) of survey respondents either strongly disagreed, or disagreed, with the statement that service at AU is distributed in an equitable manner.

Further, as discussed above, there is a perception that some service activities are performative or that a committee is a holdover from a past initiative, without bearing or impact on university process, procedure, or governance. These narratives of inequity and overwork may very well be based on kernels of truth, but it is difficult to conclusively support or refute them in the absence of reliable data.

We recommend that units and departments conduct a service audit every three to five years. The audit would essentially amount to a simple data collection exercise, which could measure, for example, the following:

- a) A breakdown of service activities over the course of several years by rank, status, gender, and ethnicity;
- b) The ratio of faculty in a unit/department in comparison to the service requirement for that unit/department, in order to provide an estimate of the overall service burden per person; and



- c) Related to the recommendation above, understand the explicit goals, purpose, and workload involved in each service assignment.

While the audit would demand some additional work from the unit/department, it would still be a wise investment for AU. An audit would be a valuable tool to both 1) **provide greater transparency** and 2) **cut superfluous service in an intentional manner**. The findings generated by the audit would also determine priorities for next steps as it pertains to service. This could include developing more targeted actions to address inequities, streamlining service activities if the burden for the unit/department is too high or eliminating service activities that may be outdated or no longer core to the mission of the unit or university, and reassigning or reallocating incentives and rewards for service.

Conducting audits at regular intervals is a good practice because it acknowledges that the service needs, priorities, and burden within a unit/department are not static. Reviewing the state of service also matters because it seeks to paint an honest picture of the dynamics within a unit/department. It could help to acknowledge and shed light on the real inequities, as well as dispel the myths and perceptions that can be corrosive if left alone.

Further, an audit is an opportunity to periodically ask more strategic questions about service. By reviewing the existing universe of activities, it is a chance to focus on the 'why' of service; what service needs to be done and what is superfluous, not being done, or missing? Does the unit have the right incentives and resources, or should those be reallocated for activities that have become more critical since the previous audit?

The Task Force recommends that audits be conducted at the unit or departmental level. To ensure buy-in and some degree of consistency, we propose that a small working group should work with OIRA, or other trained colleagues/offices, to develop a template for an audit. The working group can also rely on the helpful audit template provided in the report [Equity-minded faculty workloads](#) (pages 25-27).

## Recommendation 7: Develop a Range of Accountability Tools for Engaging In and Performing Service

The work of the Task Force revealed a wide range of service performance across and among university units. At the individual faculty level, some faculty carry units', departments', and divisions/programs' service commitments far more than others; yet others do not carry their obligations fully. Service "underperformance" may lead to avoiding those faculty members when service decisions are made. Further, other faculty carry far more service commitments that are both visible and invisible. For instance,

existing research highlights how faculty of color, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community often mentor students, write recommendations, and sit on relevant committees more than men (see UMD's [Equity-Minded Workload report](#)).

The Task Force recommends developing accountability tools to foster a healthier culture of burden-sharing and to encourage more consistent participation in service across all faculty. Implementing [Recommendations 6](#) (gathering good data through a service audit) and [Recommendation 2](#) (creating a service dashboard in Elements or in a separate app) should not only provide faculty and supervisors with a more accurate landscape and assessment of service, but also provide tools to promote better participation among those who are not meeting commitments or expectations. The tools should also provide a way for faculty and their supervisors to account for and respond to those individuals who exceed their service commitment, whether in a particular academic year or spanning several periods.

However, the current system used by AU for faculty activity, Elements, is self-reporting. Therefore, the data may reflect differences in definitions of service and perceptions of workload and time (e.g., see [Recommendation 1](#) for defining service). We suggest that the university empower and entrust the chairs of committees or service bodies to report to the relevant unit's department chairs or division/program directors, or an associate dean or designee, any colleague who is essentially invisible, either arguing they're only performing external service or not participating in the activities of the service body to which they are assigned (or a member may report a chair who is essentially shirking their duties altogether). If the problem persists, a chair should have the discretion to remove a colleague from a committee, who then will not receive any service or professional merit for that service activity.

When a faculty member fails over the course of several academic years to meet their fair share of service (for example, as shown over multiple years in the service dashboard, relative to the expectations communicated in the rubric/matrix each recommended above), the units should develop a graduated set of penalties that go beyond lower merit pay. These could range from losing access to a research assistant, losing access to all or part of one's research/conference funds, or having to teach an extra class.

This issue of under-serving is particularly detrimental because uneven burden-sharing undermines faculty morale at AU (based on our survey and focus groups), is inconsistent with the university's commitment to equity, and encourages a culture of impunity.

Implementing this recommendation would include:

- Amending the Faculty Manual, Faculty Senate bylaws, and unit bylaws to clarify the role of committee chairs/department chairs and empower them to monitor and report faculty members who are failing to participate or fulfill their service expectation;
- Unit dean's offices, in coordination with faculty governance structures, would have to develop a set of proportionate and realistic penalties, as well as a timeline, for colleagues who perennially refuse to engage in university-related service or nominally participate in assigned service;
- Unit dean's offices and faculty governance structures would have to develop a set of rewards for those who exceed service expectations over time;
- Amending the Faculty Manual to clarify that units are empowered to assign penalties in case of a persistent refusal or inadequate levels of service;
- Senior AU administrators would need to provide clear commitment to these accountability measures.

## Recommendation 8: Better Onboard New Faculty In Service Expectations and Opportunities

Both the faculty survey on service and the focus groups conducted by the Task Force with faculty who are in the early stages of their teaching career at AU indicate a lack of clarity, transparency, choice, and equity when it comes to service assignments. For example, one focus group member stated that:

*"Some service I don't like [to be assigned] because it feels like it's because nobody wants to do it, so they give it to junior faculty because they have no choice or voice."*

When asked how they perceive the balance of demands on their time, another answered:

*"Honestly, personally, I have zero balance. I just don't have time for anything, and a lot of times it's to the point where I'm like – well, what can I not do, so at least I can get something else done that is more important."*

Overall, the focus group also communicated a lack of clarity from their units around what constitutes service and what is expected from new faculty during their first year at AU (which could be helped with the rubric/matrix described in [Recommendation 3](#)).

Given that service, or the skills involved in many service roles, such as management, are rarely taught in graduate school, AU can take steps to facilitate a smooth transition into their roles for new faculty. These can include, for example:

- Communicating to new faculty why service is meaningful and important to the university;
- Underlining what is expected from new faculty in terms of service assignments;
- Clarifying how service is measured and rewarded.

A more intentional focus on service during onboarding matters because it can help new faculty thrive and increase the chances of retaining them at AU.

The Task Force recommends a two-pronged approach to achieving increased clarity, transparency, choice, and equity in the introduction, assignment, measurement, and compensation of service at AU when onboarding new faculty:

1. Through the New Faculty Orientations, and additional programming organized by the Center for Teaching, Research & Learning; and
2. Through department/unit-level onboarding, professional development, and mentoring programs.

The Task Force recommends continuing to include a segment on service conducted by representatives from the Faculty Senate and Office of the Provost at the annual New Faculty Orientation each August. It also recommends the inclusion of an additional workshop or session as part of the New Faculty Orientation or held soon after that:

- Offers more detail for new faculty on the definition of service, service opportunities, and the types and amount of service expected of new faculty (drawing from [Recommendation 1](#), defining service);
- Encourages faculty to reflect on their service skills and interests; and
- Helps them prepare statements to be ready to apply for committees and be matched with service opportunities that align with their skills and interests (as displayed by the dashboard described in [Recommendation 2](#)).

To ensure that new faculty who begin their appointments in the spring have access to the same information and resources, we recommend repeating these service-focused programs prior to the start of the spring semester, either as part of the Ann Ferren Conference or as a stand-alone workshop. To ensure consistency and continuity in how information on all aspects of service is communicated to new faculty, we recommend

that CTRL shares information in their onboarding programs related to service with departments and units.

We recommend that additional onboarding is conducted with new faculty that outlines opportunities and expectations of service that are specific to the department/unit. In addition to this initial onboarding session, we suggest departments/units could develop:

- Professional development programs with the purpose of learning service, so that new faculty can familiarize themselves with the opportunities and expectations for service within their department/unit during their first years at the university; and
- Service mentoring programs that pair new faculty with a senior faculty member in the department to have continuous conversations about various aspects of the service component of their job.

## Recommendation 9: Shift the Narrative Around Service from a Necessary Burden to a Key Tool of Self-Governance

The ‘Scholar-Teacher’ Ideal; prioritizing giving praise to the faculty who are high-achievers in research or receiving large grants; colleagues frequently skipping departmental meetings or community events such as interacting with prospective students and their parents. These are just a series of examples of how service is labeled, talked about, and modeled at AU; and these discourses and actions play a part in perpetuating the tensions around service. As one colleague mentioned in a focus group:

*“If the culture and stories of exemplar faculty are centered on research, it creates a narrative framework in which faculty are not going to participate in service.”*

Changing how we talk about and model service will certainly not be a cure-all, but it can help to soothe some of the tensions and frustrations around the existing inequities, and it can underscore the fact that the AU leadership takes the challenge of service seriously. Such steps could include:

- Renaming the ‘Scholar-Teacher’ ideal to the ‘Scholar-Teacher-Community builder’ to recognize the fact that service is part of a faculty’s job.
- Engaging in a systematic effort to also praise and highlight, whether at the university or unit level, the major achievements of faculty in the service space.

- Creating a common set of expectations around community building and core institutional tasks, such as admissions and conversion, to make sure that those are viewed as part of one's job as opposed to volunteered activities.
- Emphasizing the fact that service and shared governance are inextricably tied, and putting this into practice. Faculty are disengaging from service and will continue to if they feel that they have little to no opportunities to shape how AU is run and how it will develop in the future.

Changing the narrative around service matters deeply for AU as a whole, but also for faculty in particular. As one colleague reminded us, service is:

*"The place where we are doing the work of governing ourselves collectively."*

It is a work that remains vital because:

- It provides faculty and other stakeholders a chance to shape the environment in which they operate;
- Absent faculty involvement, many key decisions in the university will be made for us; and
- It can be challenging and requires dedicated, wise, and courageous colleagues' involvement.

## Chart of Recommendations/Timeline/Priorities

	Main Action(s)	Implementation Stakeholders	Work Burden	Timeline
1 Definition	Faculty Manual revisions	Faculty Senate/Provost/OGC	Medium – FM edits require a longer process	Rest of AY 23-24
2 Service Dashboard	Creating dashboard template and spreading to units	Task Force; Provost Office/Senate/units	Low; there are existing templates for a dashboard	Could be easily implemented this AY
3 Service Matrix	Creating a matrix that presents service opportunities and groups them by time and effort	Task Force; Provost Office/Senate/units	Low; SIS has a template that could be improved and shared	Could be easily implemented this AY
4 Rewards/ Incentives	Develop additional rewards/incentives for service	Task Force; Provost Office/Senate/units	Medium – this would require developing new policies	Rest of AY 23-24
5 Service Autonomy	Provide greater autonomy for faculty when selecting service assignments	Task Force; Provost Office/Senate/units	Medium – units would have to review service assignment procedures	Rest of AY 23-24
6 Service Audit	Units/Departments would conduct periodic service audits	Task Force/Provost Office/Senate/OIRA/units	Medium – developing an audit template and conducting it	Rest of AY 23-24
7 Accountability tools	FM/Units/Departments develop tools to address habitual failure to do service	Task Force/Provost Office/Senate/Units/OGC	Medium – need to develop new policies and build buy-in/support	Rest of AY 23-24
8 Onboarding	CTRL and Units provide more mentoring about service	CTRL/Task Force/Provost Office/Units	Low – revising existing workshops and orientation	Could be easily implemented this AY
9 Narrative	Shifting narrative about service to highlight the important work of colleagues	All the AU community	Low – essentially intentional effort to put more of a spotlight on service	Could be easily implemented this AY

## Potential Implementation Models

A clear path and timeline for implementing these recommendations is necessary. Below, the Task Force provides several potential models for implementing recommendations to consider.

### Model 1: Centralized

- Once the Task Force submits the report, the implementation is entirely left to others, especially the Faculty Senate and the Office of the Provost, who decide what recommendations they want to implement.
- Pros: less work for the Task Force members; could encourage fresh ideas/perspectives;
- Cons: risk that the report gets set aside for other priorities; loss of knowledge/expertise gathered by the Task Force;

### Model 2: New implementation group

- The Faculty Senate and Provost's Office could create a small implementation group, with maybe a few reps from the Task Force, that is in charge of coordinating with units and making sure that the recommendations from the report, which have sufficient support, are implemented.
- Pros: maintains continuity with Task Force; could ensure buy in with stakeholders;
- Cons: more work for members of the Task Force; not clear if this new group would necessarily have enough authority to push through recommended changes.

### Model 3: Decentralized model

- The report is shared with key stakeholders, and the academic units, with the latter free to implement as little or as much as they want from the recommendations.
- Pros: less work for the Task Force members; recognizes variety of situations and circumstances among units; values unit autonomy;
- Cons: risk of inertia; risk of recommendations being ignored in the absence of clear directive from AU leadership; could foster further inequities between units;

### Model 4: Continuity



- The Task Force continues to work during AY 23-24 and takes responsibility for putting together a more detailed implementation plan, with support from the Faculty Senate and the Office of the Provost.
- Pros: Continuity between the report and implementation; more time to think through what the various recommendations would look like in practice.
- Cons: the Task Force members would be rewarded with significantly more work; would not necessarily be conducive to developing further support/buy-in for the Task Force recommendations among colleagues and stakeholders.

## Conclusion

The membership of the Service Task force is made up of faculty and staff from across the university who hold various levels of rank in our appointments. Term faculty are working alongside tenured faculty as well as staff. What we share is a genuine and sincere appreciation and love for our work, our colleagues, and shaping the educational lives of the students that provide our purpose. While we accept that our work includes service requirements, we are also strained by these demands which are often unclear, ill-defined, and are overwhelmingly carried out disproportionately by faculty of color, LGBTQ+ and women.

What we seek in moving forward is a more just, equitable, transparent, and fair distribution of service appointments to ensure lessening the burden especially among eager and job-security-seeking junior educators. In addition, we seek a better awareness and understanding of the various strata of faculty types across campus. Service for a member of the teaching faculty, who might write letters of recommendation for a graduate school-applying senior, will be very different for a member of the library faculty whose service commitment might include being a member of the Faculty Senate.

We know that members of the American University community are committed, driven, and care deeply about the students and its stated mission to “...*advance knowledge, foster intellectual curiosity, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership.*” Moreover, AU is well known as the school whose students want to make the world a better place. We would like to amend that to include the campus’ personnel as well; all of us. From department chairs and associate deans to adjuncts and lecturers, tenure-track, term, full professors, as well as the staff who make so much happen behind the scenes; we all share this vision.

When the data are collected and reviewed, and across the various levels of faculty, there is a shared lack of transparency, a sentiment that service is not distributed equitably (reported by over half of the faculty), confusion about “what counts” as service, and a lack of control over service assignments. The Task Force takes these assertions seriously. The report points out a lack of compensation for said assignments as well as a lack of administrative support for this additional work, as well as faculty members feeling inadequate and not skilled enough to carry out instances of service to which they have been assigned.

Further, faculty report performing service outside of the academic calendar and while on leave from the university. Additionally, service obligations tend to exceed the percentage requirement expressed in the Faculty Manual in conjunction with primary

responsibilities and scholarship, leaving less time for those requirements in our faculty roles.

Our recommendations have been shared as part of this report and we ask that they be seriously considered across the university. Make service requirements equitable and just. Make service better for the members who are so dutifully called to provide it for our enormously gifted and talented students. Redistribute the allotment of service burden to lessen its constraint for those often driven to perform it to those who have historically found it elusive. Provide training so that there is some insight so that these commitments are not simply performed for the sake of ticking off a box or checking a list, but so that real work to improve the university and community is done.

American University is a world-class institution of innovation and is filled with changemakers and pioneers that lift up and inspire our students to do their absolute best. It is paramount that our personnel have support across the board, from administration and amongst our colleagues to provide the education that our students so richly deserve.

# Appendix

## Data Sources

Service Task Force members used several sources of data to examine faculty experiences and perceptions of service:

1. The 2019 and 2022 Campus Climate Survey (reports and the narrative responses)
2. Faculty Survey on Service. With the help of OIRA, the Task Force designed and administered an online survey about service to all full-time faculty at the university in March through May of 2023. A total of 410 faculty completed the survey (of 947 faculty; a response rate of 43.3%).
3. A total of 5 focus groups, conducted in April and May 2023 by Task Force members, in groups consisting of term faculty; tenure-track faculty; and tenured faculty.
4. Informal conversations with university leadership and other stakeholders at and external to AU.
5. Reports and other materials from other universities.

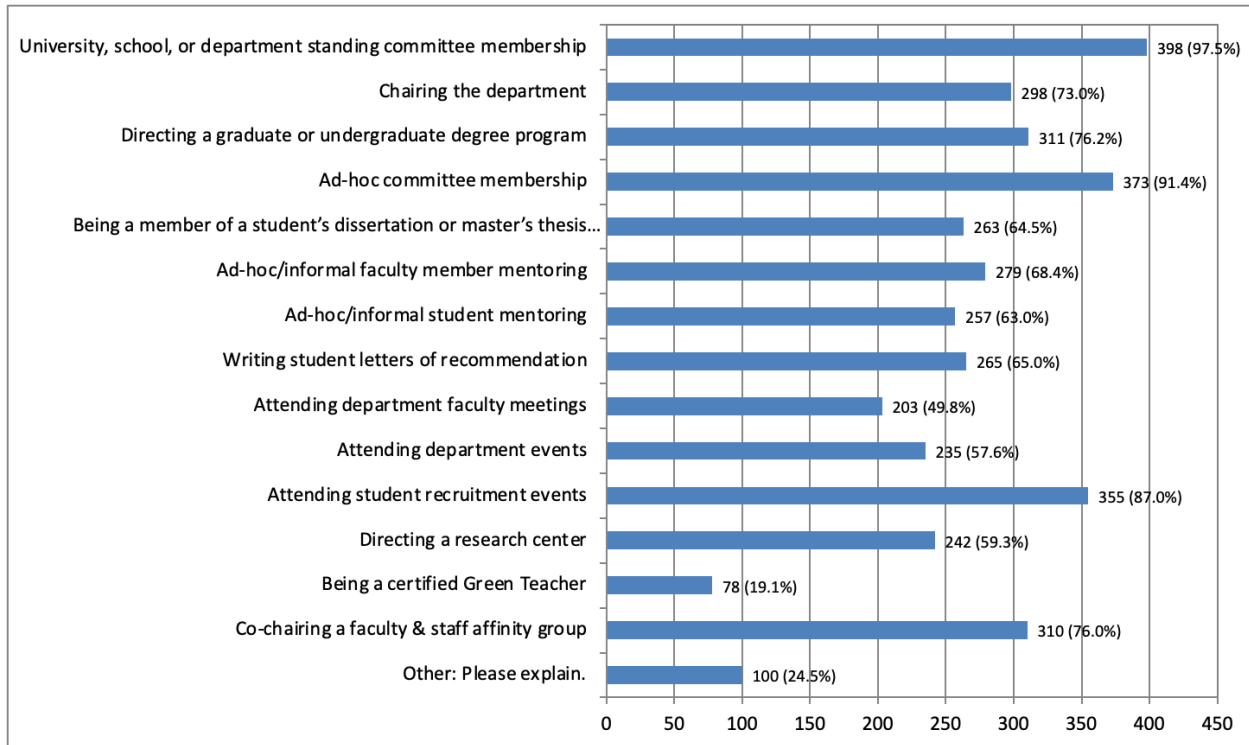
**Table 1: Service as Reported in the 2019 and 2022 Campus Climate Surveys**

	The expectations for service for my position are clear		My service is valued at AU	
	Strongly agree + Agree		Strongly agree + Agree	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
All respondents	59%	57%	66%	58%
<i>By school (full-time faculty):</i>				
CAS		53%		56%
KSB		70%		67%
SOC		66%		71%
SOE		46%		54%
SIS		57%		51%
SPA		62%		69%
WCL		62%		59%
<i>By race/ethnicity (full-time faculty):</i>				
Asian		68%		68%
Black or African American		64%		85%
Hispanic/Latino		55%		64%
International		-		-
More than one selected		52%		55%
White		59%		59%
<i>By gender (full-time faculty):</i>				
Men		63%		68%
Women		57%		56%

**Table 2: Self-Reported Amount of Time Spent on Service, Ideal and in Practice, 2022 and 2019 Campus Climate Surveys**

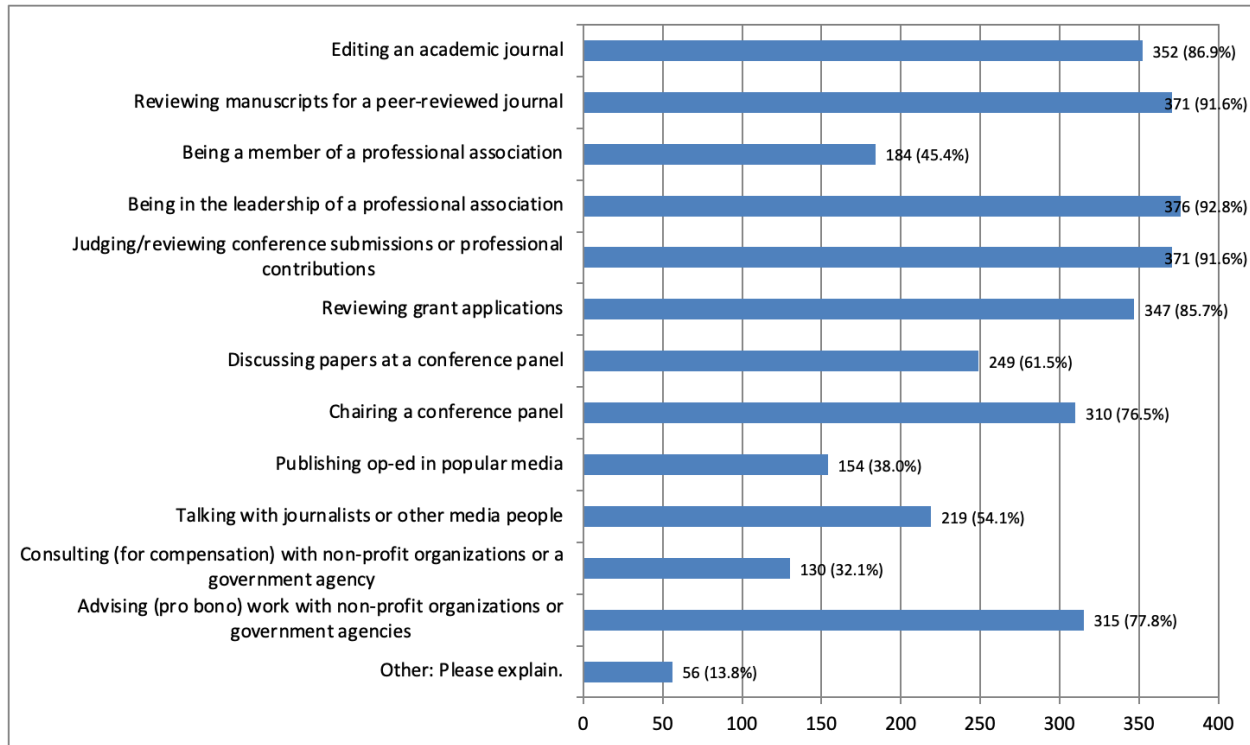
	Year	For me, the ideal balance:	In practice, my actual balance:	Gap between ideal and actual time spent on service
		<i>Mean percentage</i>		
All respondents	2022	16.8%	25.4%	8.6%
	2019	17.2%	24.4%	7.2%
<i>By school (full-time faculty):</i>				
	2022			
CAS		16.8%	25.0%	8.2%
KSB		19.7%	28.7%	9.0%
SOC		16.7%	26.9%	10.2%
SOE		18.2%	25.8%	7.6%
SIS		16.1%	26.1%	10.0%
SPA		15.2%	23.5%	8.3%
WCL		17.3%	25.6%	8.3%
<i>By race/ethnicity (full-time faculty):</i>				
	2022			
Asian		17.4%	27.2%	9.8%
Black or African American		22.7%	27.4%	4.7%
Hispanic/Latino		17.7%	23.8%	6.1%
International		16.4%	22.9%	6.5%
More than one selected		19.5%	25.2%	5.7%
White		16.8%	25.3%	8.5%
<i>By gender (full-time faculty):</i>				
	2022			
Men		17.4%	25.4%	8.0%
Women		17.5%	26.9%	9.4%

### Figure 1. Faculty Hold Inconsistent Definitions of Internal or University-Related Service



Source: 2023 Faculty Survey on Service to the question of “which of the following engagement/activities do you include in your definition or understanding of “internal service” or university-related service?”

Figure 2. Faculty Hold Inconsistent Definitions of “External Service” or Service to the Profession.



Source: 2023 Faculty Survey on Service to the question of “which of the following engagement/activities do you include in your definition or understanding of “external service” or service related to the profession?”



## Exhibit 1: Definition of Service in the [Faculty Manual](#):

- Beyond these student-based responsibilities, **faculty members are encouraged to participate in major campus-wide events, particularly opening convocation and graduation, and service roles that arise when classes are not in session or faculty members are not teaching. These roles may include, for example, recruitment or orientation activities, faculty hiring committees, or other university business or committee work. Such service makes a critical contribution to the well-being of the academic community.**
- When recommending a faculty member's workload assignment to the dean for an academic year, the teaching unit or academic unit may consider, but is not limited to, the following: [scholarship/teaching] **and significant contributions to service (such as major committee assignments) at the university and beyond.**
- Such external service **must be clearly related to the teaching and scholarly interests of the faculty member and/or advances the academic reputation of the academic unit or university.**

Figure 3. Among Faculty Reporting Having Been Compensated for a Service Activity, the Compensation was:

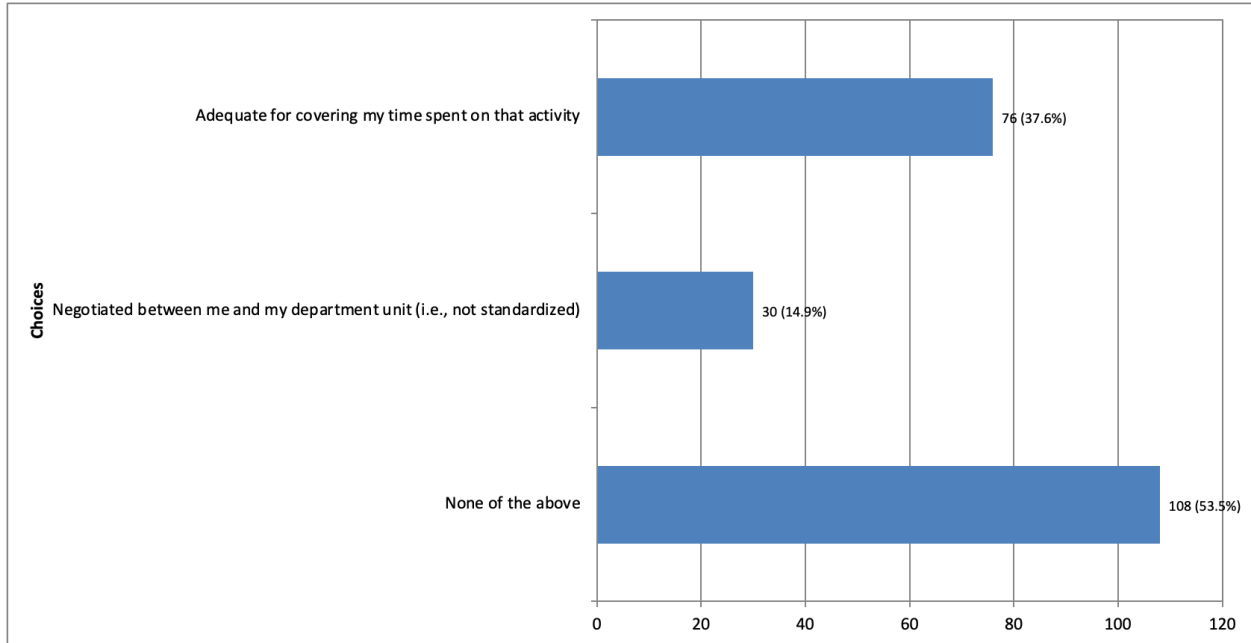


Figure 4. Sample Service ‘Dashboard’ from SPA’s Department of Public Administration and Policy:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
<b>DPAP Faculty Members' Internal Service Commitments, AY 2022-23</b>																
Note 1: Concluding semester of service is indicated in parentheses, e.g. S'23: Spring 2023.																
Note 2: Abbreviations are listed below the table.																
NAME	Admin Roles	SPA EPC	SPA MCL	SPA AIG	SPA DEI	DPAP RSS	DPAP Admissions	DPAP T&PC	DPAP Mentoring	DPAP Searches	DPAP NASPAA	AU Senate Committees	Other 1	Other 2	Other 3	Other 4
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>																
EPC	SPA Education Policy Committee															
MCL	SPA Merit and Courseload Committee															
AIG	SPA Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee															
RSS	Research Seminar Series															
T&PC	Tenure, Promotion and Courseload															
NASPAA	Networks of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration															
VP	Vice Provost															
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion															

## Figure 5. Excerpt from SIS Service 'Matrix':

The service options below are categorized according to estimates of the time required for each position during an average year. The purpose of this matrix is to help people identify their "fair share" of SIS service. The matrix aims to enable faculty members to decline service requests beyond one's fair share. Both the quantity and quality of service (that is, the degree to which people perform the service activity) will be assessed by the FAC, the TFAC, or the Associate Deans as part of the performance evaluation, promotion, and merit review processes.

In addition to the service below, each tenure-track faculty member is also expected to perform service external to the university.

*The "fair share" of service for a tenured faculty member is:*

- One option from category A; **OR**
- One option from category B, plus one from category C; **OR**
- Four options from category C.

*The "fair share" of service for a junior tenure-line faculty member is:*

- One option from category B; **OR**
  - Two options from category C.
- Note: junior tenure-track faculty should not accept service options in category A

*The "fair share" of service for a term faculty who has three or more years of service at AU is:*

- One option from category B; **OR**
- Two options from category C.

*The "fair share" of service for a term faculty who has more than one year and fewer than three years of service at AU is:*

- One option from category C.

*In addition, ALL term and tenure-line faculty members shall routinely perform activities from category X (a minimum of 3 per year) and regularly attend faculty, program, and related meetings. These activities are part of their good-citizen obligations.*

**For Term Faculty** in both the professorial lecturer and assistant professor tracks, merit and reappointment are based primarily on teaching, as well as service and currency. Term faculty who have significant service responsibilities are exceptions; service will receive a greater consideration in their merit and reappointment evaluations. The Standing Committee on Term Faculty Actions should incorporate the evaluation of service into their overall performance evaluation process for all term faculty.

### **SERVICE MATRIX**

The service options below are arranged from the most time consuming (Category A) to the least time consuming (Category C).

## Acknowledgements

The Service Task Force is grateful for the support of the Office of the Provost and Faculty Senate; to David Kaib and Karen Froslid Jones from the AU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) for their help with Elements and the faculty survey data; and to all faculty members who provided their input and time in focus groups and completing the service survey.