



*The task of the university is the creation of the future,
so far as rational thought, and civilized modes of appreciation,
can affect the issue.*

Alfred North Whitehead

Pythian Papers on Academic Careers

**The Office of Academic Affairs’
Expectations for**

FACULTY MEMBERS’ PRESENCE ON CAMPUS

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This paper, originally written by former Provost Myron Allen and Associate Vice Provost Nicole Ballenger, has been updated to reflect the evolution of expectations for faculty at a residential university in the digital world.

Most UW faculty have a very visible presence on the UW campuses in Laramie and Casper. Some faculty members have primary job assignments at other sites, such as the agricultural research and extension centers, and are likewise highly visible at those locations. However, questions periodically arise about UW's expectations for presence "on campus" by its academic personnel.¹ Inadequate presence by a faculty member at the assigned work location can negatively affect the university's mission in a number of significant ways, including:

- Weakening a department or unit's effectiveness in teaching and mentoring its undergraduate and graduate students.
- Hindering the effective operation and faculty governance of an academic unit.
- Unfairly shifting the absent person's departmental, college, and university service responsibilities to colleagues.
- Undermining the university's mission to serve the citizens of Wyoming at university locations throughout the state.

The key point here is this:

Responsible and effective conduct of professional duties requires that faculty members be routinely present on campus throughout the academic year, in order to interact with students, faculty colleagues, administrators and staff.^{2,3} We expect faculty members to exercise good judgment in performing their duties, and failure to do so in a department head's or dean's assessment can affect decisions about work assignments, performance evaluations, salary, retention, and promotion.

There is no university regulation that tells academic personnel exactly how much time working away from campus is allowable, nor would a precise, uniformly applied prescription be appropriate. Departmental cultures and expectations vary; for example, some disciplines require extensive field work that necessarily involves travel away from campus, others do not. However, and regardless of those differences, there is no question that presence on campus can and does matter to job performance. Because of this, inadequate presence on campus can become a legitimate consideration

¹ Here the term "on campus" is used to refer to any assigned university location.

² It is understood that approved leaves, professional travel for the purposes of conducting research and participating in professional conferences, as well as occasional personal travel, will require that faculty members be gone from campus periodically for appropriate durations. Also, in unusual circumstances, alternative work site arrangements may be made on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the department head, dean, and provost.

³ The academic year encompasses the period from the fall faculty report date through the date spring semester grades are due. With the exception of official university holidays, faculty members may be asked to be on campus for work-related duties at any time during the academic year.

in reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions when it has an impact on the quality of performance of academic duties.

A Philosophy to Guide Presence on Campus

The job of a faculty member⁴ is complex and challenging, but it is also one of great privilege. Faculty deliver the core missions of the university, including teaching undergraduate and graduate students, training graduate and professional students, stimulating scholarly discourse, conducting, and disseminating original research through a variety of modes, creating and exhibiting works of visual and performing arts, and extending knowledge to the wider community. By their very nature, and by virtue of the high expectations the university has for faculty performance, these duties require deep knowledge, intellectual commitment, creativity and original thought, and successful production of scholarly and creative works.

The duties also require a level of personal initiative and independence that is unusual among the learned professions. Faculty members may be inspired to pursue their scholarship or creative endeavors at almost any time of the day or night. The university consequently does not and should not ask faculty members to confine their scholarly thoughts and creative activities to routine office hours or even necessarily at all times to the academic department's office location. In fact, because they can pursue such activities virtually 24-7 and from various locales, faculty members often feel as though they work all of the time.

Faculty members may — and are expected to — generate their own ideas for research, formulate courses the way they think they are best taught, and interact freely with their colleagues almost entirely on their own schedules. In contrast, other university positions are by the very nature of the duties much less flexible, and are typically linked to specific daily activities, routines, office locales and hours. Faculty members, because of the discipline, stamina, and motivation required to do their jobs well, often feel as if they are their toughest bosses. That may well be true. But, in fact, faculty members do have supervisors—their department heads and deans—who are responsible for ensuring the daily academic business of the university is carried out responsibly, ethically, and successfully, and that progress is made toward achieving the university's longer-term academic goals and in meeting the public's expectations. Faculty members also have regular responsibilities toward others in the university community, including their students, their faculty colleagues, and the staff who support them.

Faculty presence matters to students. Students have reasonable expectations that their professors are not only effective teachers in the classroom but are also available to answer course-related questions, to provide feedback on research projects, and for advising, career guidance, and

⁴ The term “faculty member” refers to all academic personnel, as described in UW Regulation 2-1.

intellectual exchange of ideas. Students *expect* their professors to be visible and present role models. Students *need* their professors to be present, now more than ever. The global pandemic has taken its toll on student mental health and wellbeing, and faculty are key in creating a positive environment in which students can learn, live, and succeed. For our distance students (as well as our on-campus students who prefer elements of online learning), this means faculty must find ways to build a virtual learning community where they feel seen, heard, and safe. At the same time, faculty must find ways to establish in-person learning communities that meet the needs of our on-campus students who prefer and expect in-person experiences.

Faculty presence matters to colleagues. Faculty members are accountable to their faculty colleagues in numerous ways, including through service on department, college, and university committees; through collaborative teaching or research projects; through advising of undergraduate and graduate students; and by virtue of the rights and responsibilities, each has to participate in critical governance and personnel processes such as hiring, reappointment, tenure, and promotion reviews. These activities inherently require exchanges of ideas and the iterative honing of tentative judgments — exchanges that require a meaningful level of presence and interaction. Faculty members also look to each other to cover courses and other duties as needed when someone is absent due to professional travel, sabbatical leave, illness, childbirth, a family member's medical care, or other reasons.

Indeed, advancing the collective vision of a department requires an *esprit de corps* that can only be accomplished through a strong presence in the department, where routine interactions among colleagues is the norm. These interactions are the essence of teamwork.

Faculty presence matters to staff. Faculty members have responsibilities to the staff members in their departments, including: to show respect and appreciation for the work their support staff perform; to organize staff support needs such that they do not create undue workloads; to be thoughtful in their requests for assistance; and to ensure that their actions or inactions pose no barriers to the staffs' ability to carry out their required duties accurately and in a timely fashion. (Such duties include reporting the use by faculty members of approved leave.)

Faculty presence matters to the citizens of the state. Faculty members have responsibilities as public employees to the citizens of the state. The University of Wyoming's budget is largely state financed, such that state funds are the source of most employee salaries, salary raises, and employer paid benefits. The public, through the members of the state's legislature and the state's elected officials, has entrusted the university with public funds as well as with the education and training of the state's young people. It is incumbent upon every member of the university community—administrators, faculty, and staff—to ensure there is never any reason for that trust to be diminished. Faculty members have a special responsibility to live up to the public's expectations because they are granted so much

independence to do their jobs as they see fit. And, frankly, the public expects faculty members to be actively and visibly engaged and present on the university campuses.

Specific Cases of Required Presence or Approved Absence

Office hours. UW Regulation 2-117 establishes a policy for the development and distribution of course syllabi, which includes the expectation that faculty teaching site-based in-person classes provide additional support to students by holding office hours and/or are available for students to drop-in as compared to faculty teaching online courses, who are expected to provide their response time and availability for virtual office hours. Each college and the UW/Casper campus has its own specific expectations for office hours as described in this regulation. Being available to meet personally with students at regularly observed office hours is a binding constraint that UW faculty must observe. However, the office hour requirement is really just a proxy for the intended outcome, which is: student-professor interactions should afford students a reasonable prospect of achieving success in coursework, research or lab assignments, and in completing degree requirements such as master theses and doctoral dissertations in a timely manner. *Concerns with the adequacy of student interactions may be reflected in performance reviews, including unsatisfactory progress toward tenure, promotion, and fixed-term rolling contracts.*

Consulting and conflict of commitment. UW academic personnel are allowed to perform outside consulting services for non-UW entities. The purpose of approved consulting is to make it possible for outside professional experiences to inform or improve classroom teaching or scholarship. UW manages consulting primarily by limiting the time committed to such outside activities to no more than 39 days annually for academic year personnel, or no more than one day per work week. The main effect of this constraint is to help ensure that consulting activities do not interfere with meeting the workload obligations associated with regular university responsibilities. Such interference would constitute a conflict of commitment, according to the [Employee Handbook](#).

Faculty members should be aware that their colleagues and their administrators may see their consulting activities as detrimental to the university mission, even if those activities fall within the scope of the allowable time limits. Faculty members would be wise to not accept or to scale back consulting work if by performing the outside work they would be available too little to interact effectively with their students, to attend regular faculty meetings, to perform regular or specially assigned service duties, or to generally meet their colleagues' expectations for engaging in activities that require scholarly or collegial collaboration. *Concerns with the adverse effects of consulting activities may be reflected in performance reviews, including unsatisfactory progress toward tenure, promotion, and fixed-term rolling contracts.*

Professional travel. Professional travel is virtually a necessity for a successful faculty career. Presenting papers at professional conferences is a widely accepted means of soliciting feedback from

peers and of building a national audience for one's scholarly work. As careers progress, many faculty members find themselves receiving multiple invitations each year to present and discuss their work at out-of-town events. While professional travel is expected, faculty members should consider the same caveats that may limit involvement in outside consulting. *Professional travel may have to be scaled back if it adversely interferes with student interactions, service responsibilities on campus, faculty governance, or other collaborative endeavors.* A faculty member's department head does have the right and, indeed, the responsibility to put limits on professional travel if the faculty member's performance is affected or the mission of the department is impaired.

Alternative course delivery methods. UW has a robust and growing distance education program. Even if located on the Laramie campus, many UW students take some courses in formats other than face-to-face. Prior to 2020, an increasing number of UW faculty used distance technologies to deliver some portion of their courses. UW cannot simultaneously encourage the growth of its distance education mission and prevent or discourage the use of distance education technologies and the delivery of on-line classes and programs.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, circumstances forced faculty to move to the use of digital formats to deliver their instruction and in some cases, student research experiences. Teaching and learning occurred through synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods and in some cases hybrid models were used. As the university emerges out of the pandemic, it is important for faculty and academic administrators to identify which of these new digital practices were successful and sustain them as part of their regular course and program delivery. In some cases, the faculty member (with unit head approval) may determine that an online format provides the best modality for student learning. That said, faculty members assigned on-campus face-to-face classes have a responsibility to be present in the classroom with their students for most of the designated class periods. Distance technologies may be appropriate and useful for keeping a course on track, to augment or add context to the learning that occurs in the classroom, or for working with students on a research project when the professor must be away from campus temporarily for a professional conference or for other approved short-term professional activity. *Too little face-to-face class time and too much use of alternative technologies to deliver classes not specifically designed for distance delivery may reduce teaching effectiveness and may lead to legitimate concerns with teaching performance.*

Sick leave. There are times when absence from campus is expected and advisable. A faculty member's own illness, or the illness of a child or family member who must be cared for by the faculty member, is one such time. It is better to stay home when sick even if it means finding a substitute to teach a class or making an alternative class arrangement. The availability of sick leave benefits makes it possible for faculty members to continue to be paid when they are not well enough to work.⁵ *The*

⁵ Sick leave benefits for academic personnel are described in the University Handbook.

flip side of this benefit is that academic personnel bear a responsibility to report the use of sick leave anytime they cannot work during regular working hours due to illness, regardless of whether that work would have been conducted in the university office or elsewhere. This includes absences to attend routine medical appointments. It is unethical and in violation of university policy to fail to report the use of sick leave during the university's regular business hours, even if it is possible to make up time away from work by working longer hours. There would be no need or justification for providing sick leave benefits to faculty members if university business hours were so flexible that lost work time could simply be made up at any other times.

Flexible Work Arrangements. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the University of Wyoming took several measures to accommodate faculty and staff so they could complete their work in an environment that posed the least amount of risk as possible, including a [policy](#) on flexible work arrangements (i.e., compressed work week, flexible schedule, remote work). As noted in the policy, employee-requested flexible work arrangements are a privilege, are revocable, and should not be an expectation of employment. Work models (e.g., fully on-campus, fully remote, hybrid, or blended) in the post-pandemic era must support the University's mission.

As the University looks to the future of work on a post-pandemic campus, it is imperative that we balance implementation of flexible work arrangements with a robust student experience. Faculty have a responsibility to conduct their professional duties through routine presence on campus. Making connections and giving students the opportunity to build relationships with their faculty and fellow students through in-person experiences, will continue to be needed in the era of the post-pandemic university and as our residential university transforms to serve in the digital age.

Unit heads and deans must weigh the needs of the unit, college, and university when considering requests from faculty and staff for flexible work arrangements. Faculty have a level of flexibility and uniqueness inherent to those positions. Faculty may teach their online classes from home and be away from campus to conduct their field research or extension activities without needing a formal flexible work arrangement. As such, flexible work arrangements involving compressed work week and flexible schedules are not necessary as long as faculty members are fulfilling the work hour expectation for their type of appointment (e.g., 40 hours per week for 1.0 FTE, 20 hours per week for 0.5 FTE).

A *remote* work arrangement is needed if the faculty member is unable to complete his or her assigned workload that is intended or needed to be done on campus.⁶ If a position was not posted as eligible for remote work and reference to remote work is not included in an offer letter, then presence

⁶ The job responsibilities for faculty include one or more of the following components: teaching, research, creative activities, administration, service, advising, outreach/engagement, and extension.

on campus is expected. When remote work arrangements are needed, they should be temporary or short term and there will be some expectation of on-campus work unless an exception has been granted.

A faculty member's department head and dean have the authority to put limits on remote work if the faculty member's performance is affected, the quality of the learning experience or student engagement is at risk, or the mission of the department is impaired. Prior to approval, all remote-work arrangements should be discussed with any academic supervisor that may be affected (e.g., unit heads or directors in joint appointment units). If a department or college has faculty who are unable to fulfill their full-time duties on campus during the academic year, unit heads should discuss alternative employment options with the faculty member.

Implications of Inadequate Presence for Reappointment, Tenure, Promotion, and Fixed-Term Rolling Contracts

Reappointment, tenure, promotion, and fixed-term rolling contract procedures for UW faculty are governed by UW regulation 2-7, and addressed in Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures. In all cases, a candidate's record shall be "evaluated on the academic functions they are expected to perform". In other words, "presence on campus" is not in and of itself a rating factor. However, the main message of this paper is that presence on campus can and usually does matter to job performance. Unless the candidate's offer letter specifies a remote work arrangement that does not require presence on campus, or approval for full-time remote work has been given by the appointing authority, presence on campus may be considered in reappointment, tenure, promotion, and fixed-term rolling contract decisions when it has an impact on the quality of performance of academic duties.

In the context of UW's reappointment, tenure, promotion, and fixed-term rolling contract process, the determination of acceptable presence on campus must rest on a feedback process:

- Each faculty member has a professional responsibility to make judgments about the level of presence required to carry out the duties of his or her position.
- The faculty member's peers, including the department head, have a responsibility to provide feedback when those judgments appear to be in error, based on concerns about adequate contributions to teaching, research, or service broadly construed.
- Administrators have both the responsibility and the authority to incorporate assessments about a faculty member's level of presence into performance evaluations, including recommendations regarding reappointment, tenure, promotion, fixed-term rolling contracts. These assessments need not include quantitative prescriptions. The issue is effectiveness in carrying out duties, not time in a specific locale *per se*.
- The faculty member has a responsibility to respond professionally to legitimate concerns expressed by students, colleagues, or administrators regarding the adequacy or effectiveness of presence.

Finally, concerns about presence on campus may be serious and may provide a legitimate basis for negative personnel recommendations—including in the context of post-tenure reviews--when lack of presence affects adversely or impairs the functions of teaching, research, creative contributions, extension, and professional services, as well as other university-related activities and services.⁷ Furthermore, the complex and interactive nature of all of these duties militates against a reductionist interpretation that views teaching as a duty limited to the classroom, research as a duty limited to refereed publications, creative contributions as a duty limited to juried exhibitions or performances, and so forth.

In summary, faculty members have complex and challenging appointments that carry with them great responsibilities but also offer a great deal of independence in determining how, when, and even where job functions are carried out. It is also certainly true that college and department cultures vary at UW. Some department cultures and disciplinary expectations allow for more variation in faculty presence in their university offices than do others. There is no university regulation that tells academic personnel exactly how much time working away from campus is acceptable and how much time is not. That said, the general principle employed across the university must be uniform. That principle is that presence on campus does matter. It matters to our students, our faculty and staff colleagues, and to the public. Presence on campus matters to how well we do our jobs.

⁷ In the extreme, failure to be present on campus may potentially rise to the level of neglect of duty (for example, when classes are left uncovered). Dereliction of duty is grounds for dismissal under the terms of UW regulation 2-6).