Quick Faculty Release Time Analysis, California State University, Sacramento

Introduction

California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State) serves the educational needs of over 30,000 students (Fall 2023 Census).

Sacramento State also employs approximately 1,867 faculty. Female faculty make up 53.8% and 46.1% male and 0.2% non-binary, respectively. Tenure faculty make up 29.5% and 55.2% are non-tenured.

Purpose

The purpose of this quick report is to highlight faculty workload as it relates to assigned and/or release time, the descriptive statistics of those receiving time and the use of that time. This report may be useful for administrators and other stakeholders to make decisions on release time, course creation and workload. This report examines important areas including faculty workload, faculty receiving release time, tenure characteristics, the effectiveness of future faculty release time, and budgeting of release time.

Study Area

Using the faculty population at Sacramento State a five-year analysis of faculty assigned time as well faculty workload units and course counts. For the purposes of this quick analysis, release time is defined as units received by faculty released from in-class teaching. This includes assigned and reimbursed time units. Weighted teaching units refers to units taught in the classroom. Total WTU refer to all units combined. Source of all data comes from Human Resources and Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness and Planning (specifically from APDB Census data).

According to charts 1 and 2 below, the five-year headcount for faculty and the weighted teaching units has grown slightly from Fall 2019 to Fall 2023. Weighted teaching units include both release time and teaching units in the classroom.

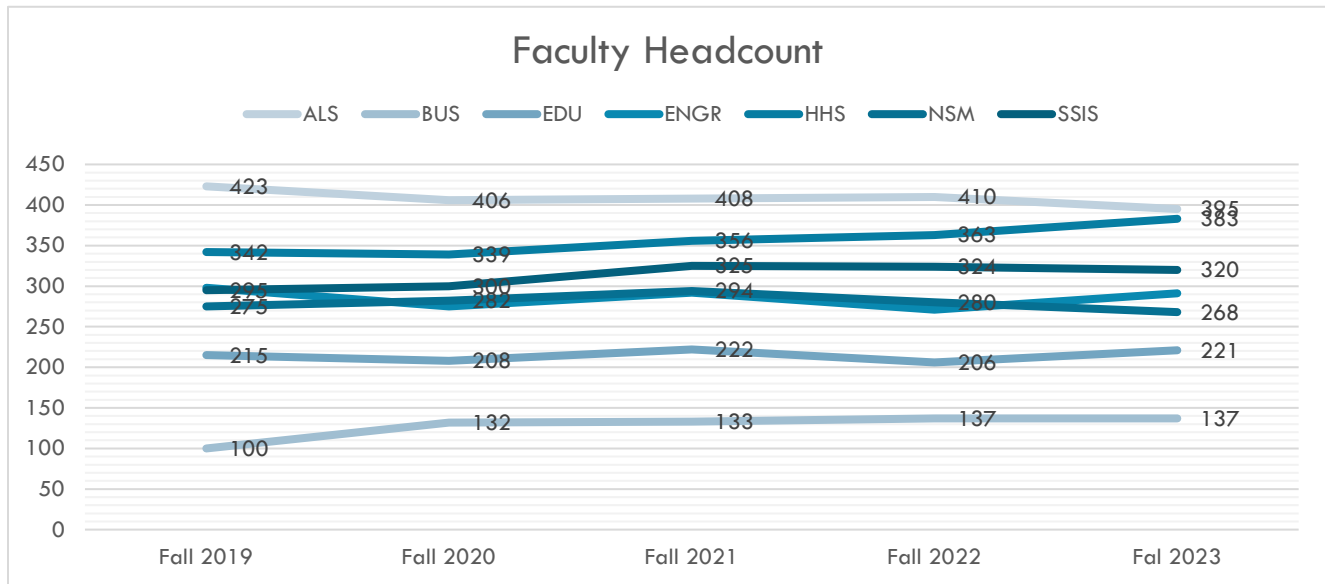## Chart 1: Faculty Headcount by College for Fall 2019-Fall 2023

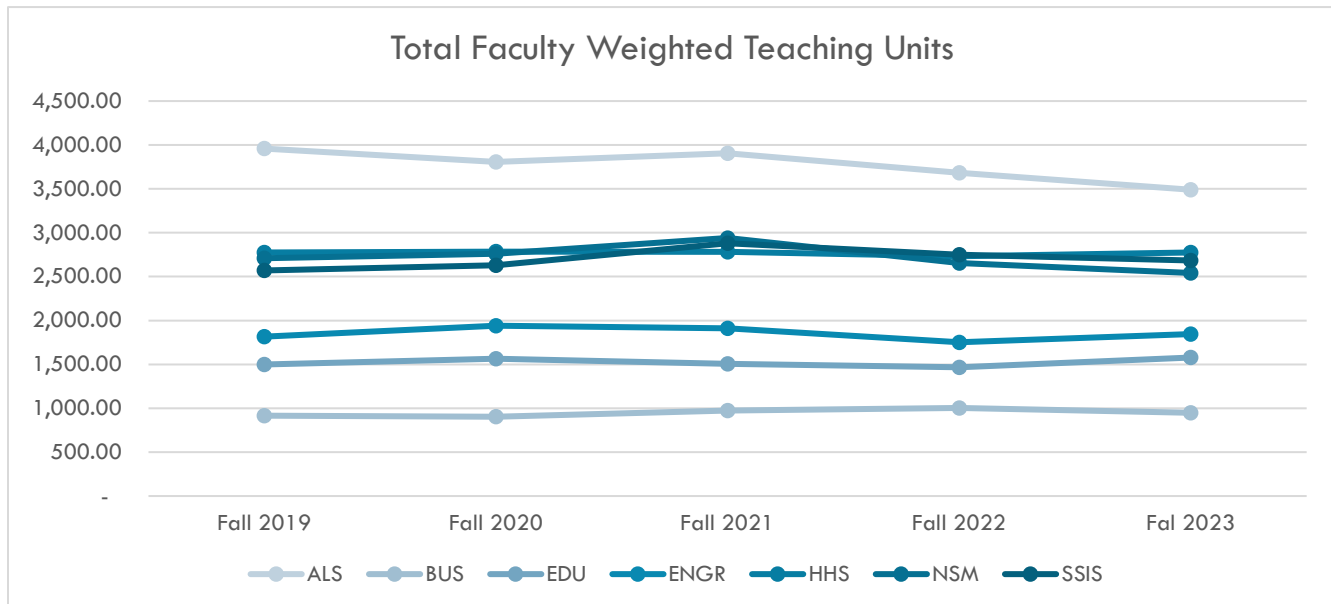## Chart 2: Faculty Weighted Teaching Units from Fall 2019-Fall 2023

Chart 3: Release Time Units vs. Weighted Teaching Units

According to chart 3 weighted teaching units decreased by 2.35% while the number of release time units have increased by 15.88% over that same five-year period.
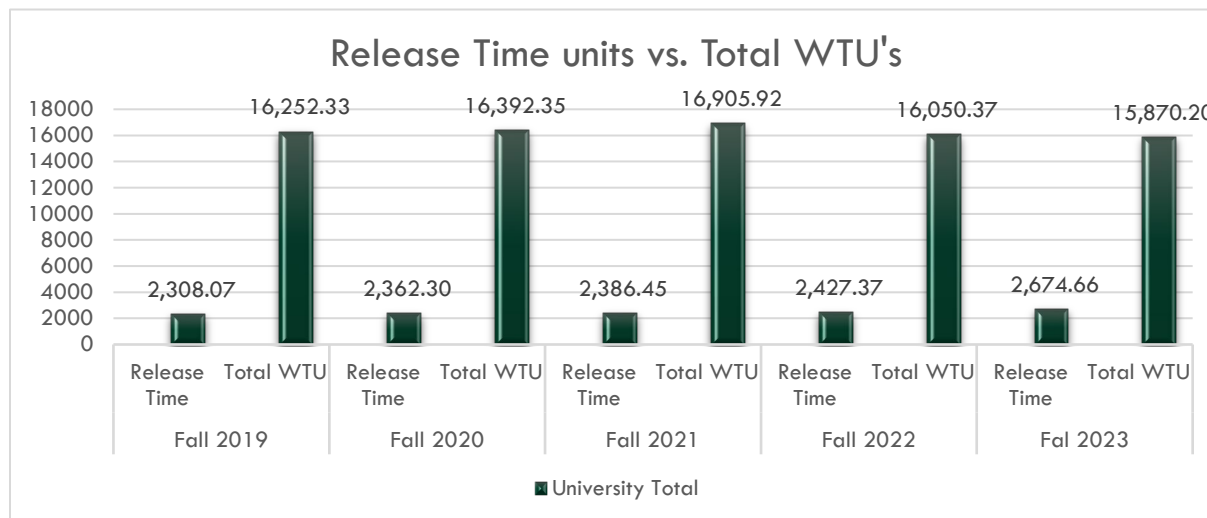

Chart 4: Percent of Faculty Receiving Release Time

According to Chart 4, the number of faculty receiving release time increased by 12.5% university-wide for same five-year period.
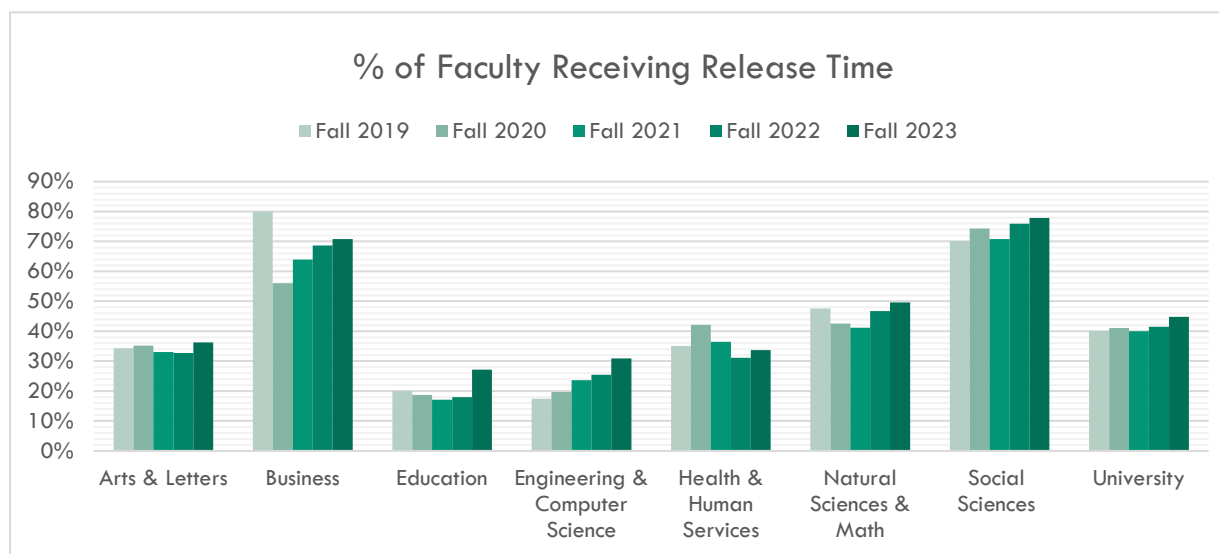
Table 1: Release Time by Type for Fall 2023 by Tenure

Table 1, as expected, tenured faculty received more release time units than non-tenured faculty across all colleges. Fall 2023 is a typical representation of the five-year trend. Internal Release time includes any units that can be billed back to either the College or Department and External Release time reflects units reimbursed by other entities. The Internal Release time is also further broken down by Teaching, Research, Service and Other. Since there was no data for "Other" for the time of study, it was removed from the table.

Table 1							
College	Faculty Title	Headcount	Internal Teaching	Internal Research	Internal Service	Total External	Total
ALS	Tenure/Tenure Track	160	120.0	58.2	63.8	63.0	305.0
	Non-Tenure	210	96.0		9.0	42.0	147.0
	Total	370	216.0	58.2	72.8	105.0	452.0
COB	Tenure/Tenure Track	64	21.0	201.0	3.0	24.0	249.0
	Non-Tenure	46	18.0				18.0
	Total	110	39.0	201.0	3.0	24.0	267.0
ECS	Tenure/Tenure Track	65	42.0	33.0	24.0	36.0	135.0
	Non-Tenure	129	41.4		3.0		44.4
	Total	194	83.4	33.0	27.0	36.0	179.4
EDU	Tenure/Tenure Track	92	12.0	40.0	85.0	90.0	227.0
	Non-Tenure	162			16.5	10.5	27.0
	Total	254	12.0	40.0	101.5	100.5	254.0
HHS	Tenure/Tenure Track	122	24.5	126.0	65.0	106.0	321.5
	Non-Tenure	252	60.5		12.0	15.0	87.5
	Total	374	85.0	126.0	77.0	121.0	409.0
NSM	Tenure/Tenure Track	105	49.0	30.0	55.0	145.5	279.5
	Non-Tenure	116	61.0	6.0	6.0	22.0	95.0
	Total	221	110.0	36.0	61.0	167.5	374.5
SSIS	Tenure/Tenure Track	150	94.3	340.9	65.0	138.5	638.8
	Non-Tenure	147	58.0			36.0	94.0
	Total	297	152.3	340.9	65.0	174.5	732.8
Grand Total	Total	1,820	697.7	835.1	407.3	728.5	2668.7

Table 2: Release Time Top 5 Activity Codes

According to Table 2 the top 5 activity codes given to faculty during the last five academic years was related to faculty teaching larger than normal class sizes (11A and 11B) which combined for 2,157 units and discipline-based research (22B). Probationary Faculty Activities is related to new faculty receiving release time as new hires – typically a 2-year year probationary time. Other support fraction (OSF) is related to reimbursed time paid out by other entities i.e. UEI, NSF, CCE, etc.

Table 2					
Tern/Year	11-A: Excess Enrollment <75	11-B: Excess Enrollment <120	22-B: Instructional Experimentation, Innovation-Research	36: Probationary Faculty Activities	OSF (Reimbursed Time)
Fall 2019	80.50	330.00	489.82	299.20	175.25
Fall 2020	87.00	365.00	592.10	240.80	178.50
Fall 2021	92.70	311.00	674.97	161.40	231.75
Fall 2022	91.00	317.00	613.07	219.00	252.30
Fall 2023	139.90	343.00	615.43	286.20	195.50
Grand Total	**491.10**	**1666.00**	**2985.39**	**1206.60**	**1033.30**

Table 3: Release Time Top 5 Activity Codes by College

Table 3 Most notably, the top 5 activity codes given to faculty by College for the five-year period show that ALS had the highest release time for larger than normal enrollment. COB and SSIS gave the most units to Discipline-based research. HHS and NSM had the most reimbursed time paid by other entities.

Table 3					
Tern/Year	11-A: Excess Enrollment <75	11-B: Excess Enrollment <120	22-B: Instructional Experimentation, Innovation-Research	36: Probationary Faculty Activities	OSF (Reimbursed Time)
ALS	91.70	765.00	129.70	228.60	14.80
COB	2.50	96.00	849.00	99.00	3.00
EDU	60.00		83.00	135.00	185.00
ECS	80.40		43.00	105.00	154.50
HHS	2.00	27.00	418.00	223.00	289.50
NSM	39.00	297.00	150.00	185.00	274.50
SSIS	215.50	481.00	1308.19	231.00	82.00
Univ. Total	491.10	1666.00	2980.89	1206.60	1003.30

Summary and Conclusions

This report has been assembled with important data to help administrators, chairs and deans at Sacramento State make informed decisions for the institution. A further study involving a faculty survey may assist in exploring the many nuances associated with release time, the necessity of it and the effectiveness. There have been studies showing that especially for new tenure track faculty, release time gives them the opportunity to adjust to the stress and high expectations of becoming tenure. Any reimbursed time should not be a part of future studies as it can be agreed upon that since reimbursed time is paid by a third party, no further analysis is needed.

The two areas that have the highest concentration of units is excess enrollments and discipline based research. Considerations may be given to faculty with extra large class sizes. However, alternatives to the given units could also be the hiring of graduate students to aid in those large classes, alternative ways of teaching the class i.e eLearning and other technological advances or raise the classroom size limits so that fewer units are given. For discipline-based research (DBR), a survey or audit to further understand the follow-up procedures to ensure that faculty are utilizing the "DBR" to its optimum and that departments and colleges are reaping the benefits of given time thereby foregoing placing tenure and tenure track faculty in the classroom where students may benefit more from their expertise.

As the university looks to add "research" to the university mantra, administrators, departments and colleges need to research the benefits and set certain standards and explore all considerations and alternatives for faculty use of time.

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