Workload Procedures Survey Executive Summary

Purpose:

Across campus, numerous groups have initiated conversations around the transparency and equity of workload procedures, including the Black Unity Forum (BUF), the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Faculty Senate, Deans, and the Provost's Office. PCSW and BUF are particularly interested in determining the prevalence of, and addressing racial and gender inequities in, faculty workloads. These conversations have also been situated within the rich research and broader national discussions in higher education, including the American Council on Education's (ACE) guidance on equity minded workloads[1].

The purpose of the Workload Procedure Process Survey was to obtain faculty feedback around the process of developing and rolling out workload procedures at Southern Methodist University. The survey also elicited input about how university-level service contributions are acknowledged and distributed among faculty. The impetus behind this survey originated from a request by the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in 2021 to address faculty input about the development and implementation of the Provost request in AY 2020-21 that all departments and units provide explicit workload procedures to provide transparency and guidelines that follow from the previously established university Faculty Workload and Compensation Policy 2.7.

Survey Administration and Data Collection:

The survey was administered to all SMU faculty and adjunct faculty (N=1,267) from March 29 – April 22nd. The call for responses came from direct email invitations from the Office of Faculty Success. Complete survey responses were collected from 170 respondents and partial responses from an additional 111 respondents.

Results Highlights:

Enclosed are the full and partial survey responses received. Below is a highlighted summary of the key findings from the survey. The results are organized into two specific foci of the survey: Workload Procedures & University Level Service. The graphical representations are aggregated visualizations of all responses to a specific survey question provided in the title of the figure. The qualitative themes presented are a synthesis of the responses to open-ended questions asked throughout the survey.
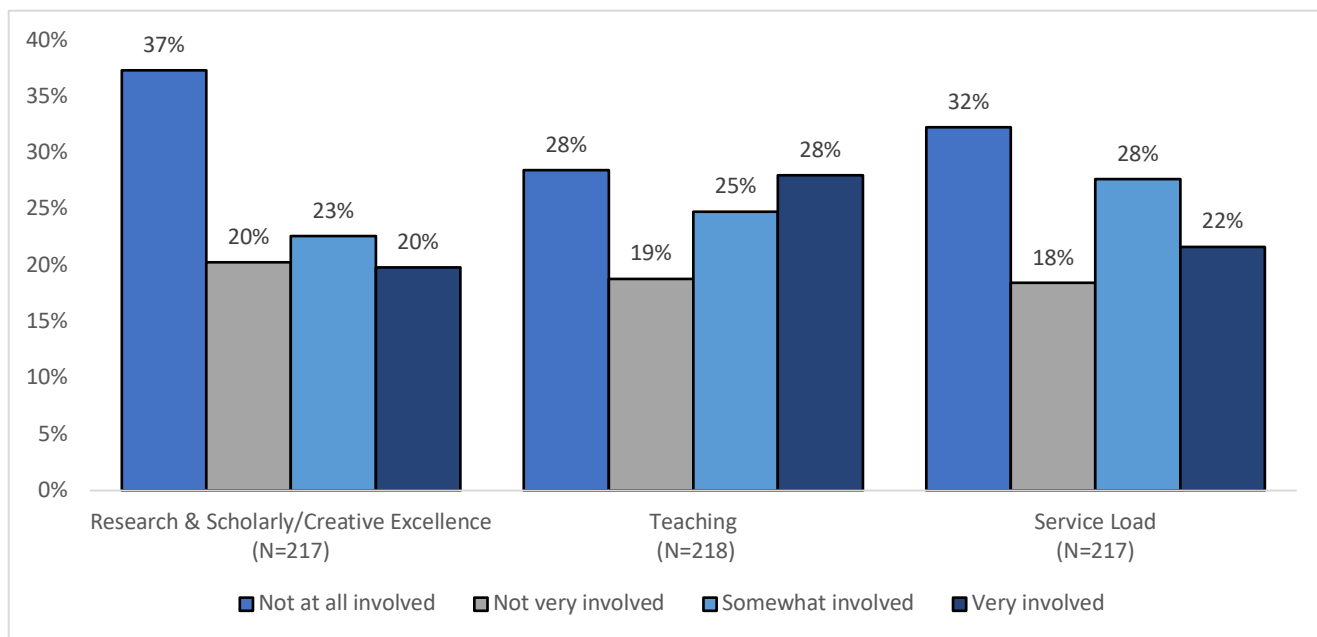
Workload Procedures:

The survey elicited faculty perceptions of the workload procedure development and associated deliverables across three main domains: *Faculty Involvement, Clarity of Understanding*, and *Transparency and Equity* of the workload procedures. The below sections highlight key results from each of these foci.

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[1] O'Meara, K., Culpepper, D., Misra, J., & Jaeger, A. (2021). *Equity-minded faculty workloads: What we can and should do now*. American Council on Education. https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Equity-Minded-Faculty-Workloads.pdf

Faculty Involvement: Schools developed their workload procedures using approaches that involved department chairs and faculty to varying degrees.

Figure 1. Question: To what extent were you involved in the workload procedure conversations?


- Majority (57%) of respondents perceived limited to no involvement in Research & Scholarly/Creative Excellence workload procedures.
- Perception of involvement in teaching workload process was split across respondents, suggesting that involvement in teaching may be very unit- or faculty-specific.

Varied levels of involvement. In the open-ended responses around involvement in the workload procedure process, several central themes emerged around how people felt they were included/not included in the process. In some departments, people felt involved and included: "This issue was discussed multiple times in faculty meetings and with multiple emails requesting feedback from all faculty members, tenured and non-tenured track." In other departments, there were questions about who was involved in the process and how: "there was nothing said about it at the department level and very little said about it publicly at the [school] level. In fact, the only real information I had about it came from the Provost's weekly newsletters." Some faculty mentioned the process was "top-down" or "we were asked about what we felt was significant service to the department but ultimately chair made the final decision which not everyone agreed with."

Lack of communications. Several faculty mentioned a lack of communication regarding the final document: "I did not see the final draft so I don't know what was included" and "We were given an opportunity to provide feedback on a draft, but it is unclear that our changes were incorporated in any way. If the plan was finalized, I am not sure that was communicated to us."

Clarity of understanding: The development of workload procedures was largely undertaken at the school and departmental level, potentially resulting in varying degrees of clarity across campus.

Figure 2. Question: How clearly are expectations for faculty contributions defined in the department/school level workload procedures in each of these critical areas?
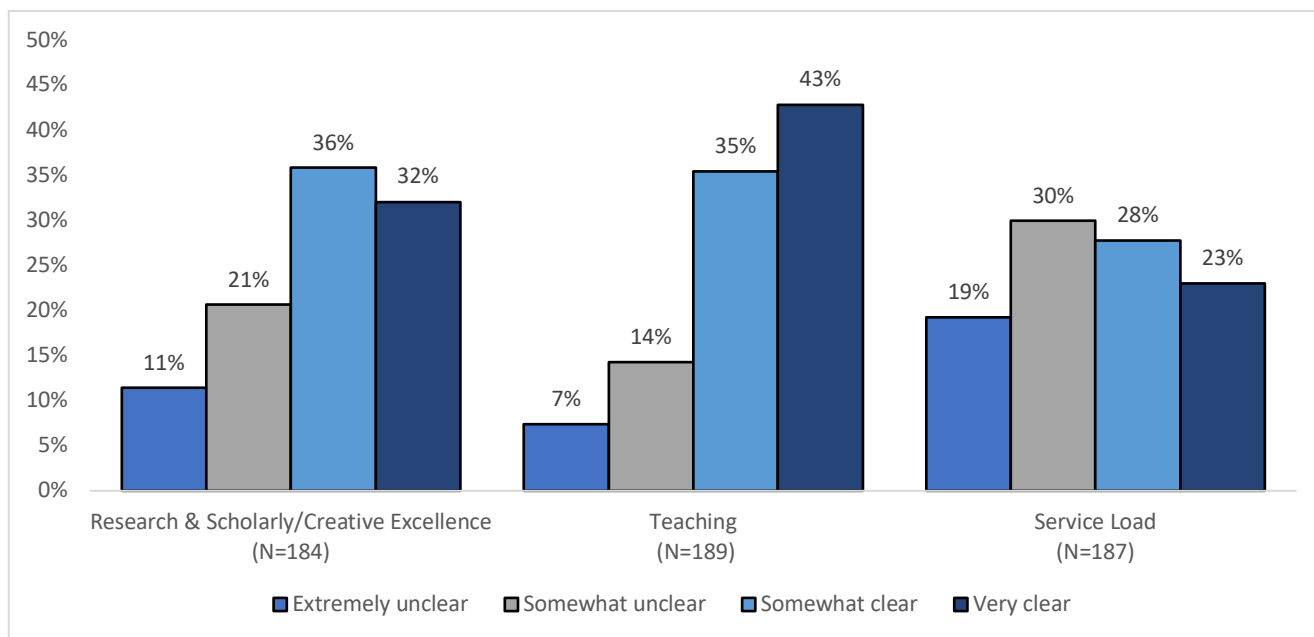
- Faculty respondents perceive more clarity in teaching workload procedures, with 78% indicating "somewhat" or "very clear" than research and scholarly/creative excellence (68%) and service (51%). This is not surprising given the embedded expectations of teaching loads and their ties to contracts.
- Service load procedures lack the most clarity; however, service holds the broadest spread or mix of responses, suggesting that the clarity of service may be faculty- or unit- dependent.

Varying levels of precision. In the open-ended responses around clarity of the workload procedures, faculty elaborated on how teaching load clarity was high: "we are expected to teach eight three-hour course sections per year." However, there is a lack of clarity and consistency around how course releases for service impact teaching loads. As one faculty member shared, "I think teaching workload is 4/4, but its very unclear what level of service buys one out of a class. This seems inconsistent across schools and departments and within departments." Other faculty members noted that more discussion was needed around understanding service. For example, the "service document is incomplete and underestimates time commitments for some assignments" and "While we certainly made some great strides on equity in service loads with this policy crafting last year, I think more could be done for more precision in matters like committee work, task forces, and student group advising. They can't all be equivalent to a half-course or a full course; there needs to be more gradation in the scale."

Differences by faculty rank. There also seemed to be differences in how the workload procedures might apply to different faculty members around rank: "The guidelines are there but how they are

applied to tenure track and non-tenure track seem vague and inconsistent." Another faculty member noted, "As per my contract, my service is neither required or expected of me. However, I am involved in extensive service." Others noted that the size of the department might also impact how the workload is distributed, "Smaller departments have higher service demands per full-time faculty member than larger departments; it's not as if larger departments have more committees or more representation on school committees than the smaller ones."

Continua of clarity. Faculty members also mentioned needing additional conversations around research and scholarly/creative excellence, ranging from too vague: "I have never heard expectations outlined for faculty other than grants, publications, and good feedback from students" to being too specific: "In our case, the research and scholarly expectations are too clear, to the point of being too narrow."

Transparency & Equity: The goal of developing department/school level workload procedures is to be as transparent and as equitable as possible.

Figure 3. Question: To what extent do you agree that the following statements reflect your department or areas?
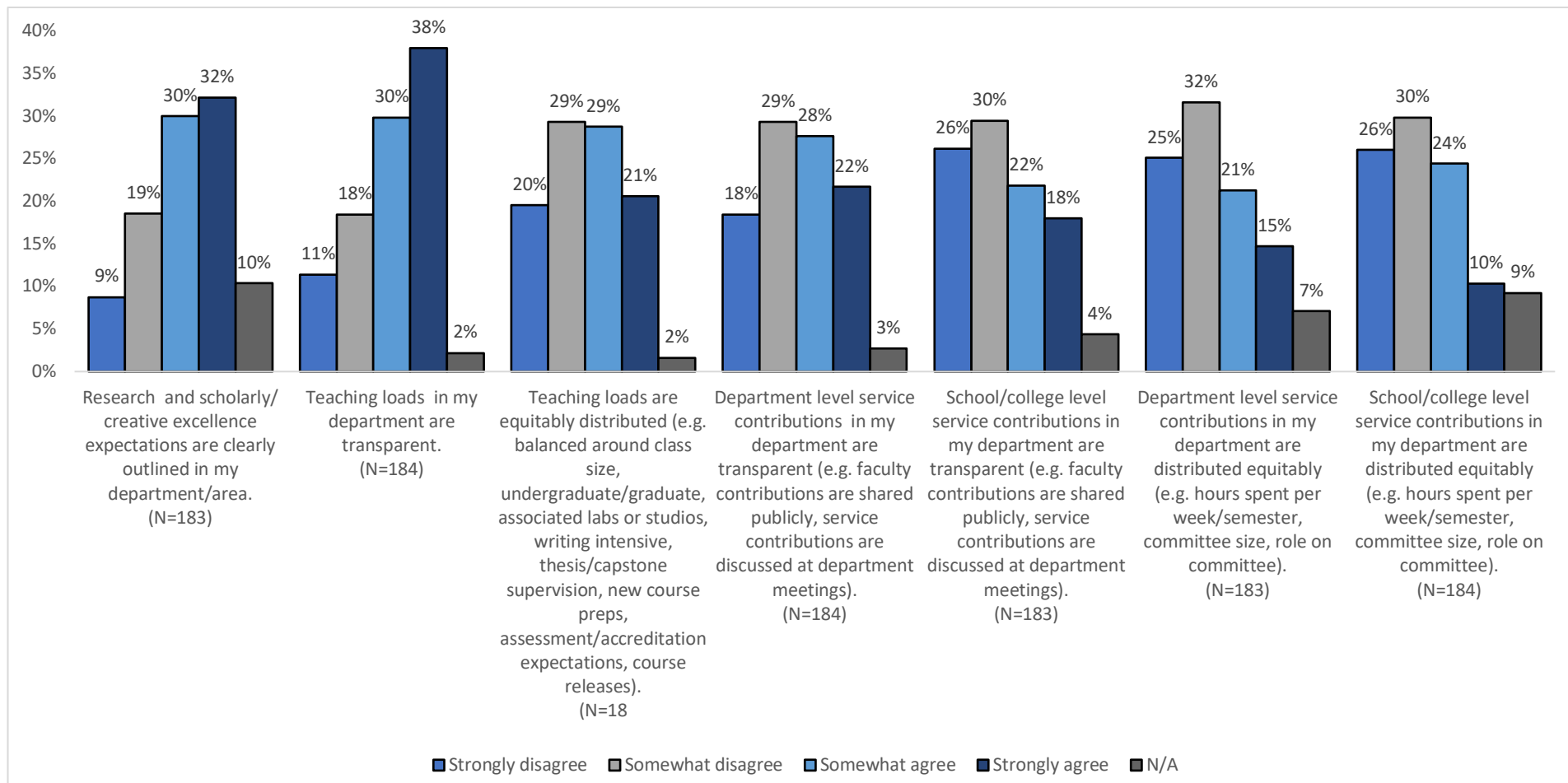
- With regards to teaching, most respondents (68%) expressed that they somewhat or strongly agree that "teaching loads in my department are transparent." However, respondents were split on their agreement (49% disagree vs. 50% agree) that "teaching loads are equitably distributed…" A finding that suggests further reflection on the distribution of teaching loads by departments.

Relationship between transparency and equity. In the open-ended responses around the transparency and equity of the workload procedures, faculty respondents seemed to either feel there was transparency (e.g., "We are aware of each member of the faculty making contributions across these dimensions") or that there was little to no transparency (e.g. "There isn't much in our department that is transparent"). For those noting transparency, there were still deeper conversations needed around equity, as well as how to structure the conversations within departments, particularly with regards to service and teaching/course loads: "I think we need more routines for actually talking about workload and expectations around how to address inequities." As one faculty member noted, "The transparency is there and the policies are clearly stated and published. However, there is not equity among course loads." Another faculty member shared: "Service seems to be assigned and expected predominantly from the same people/faculty, mostly women who tend to do the job at the expenses of their research time/contributions." From these comments, transparency is a first but insufficient step towards equity.

More clarity needed around usage of procedures. Other faculty had concerns around how the workload procedures would be utilized. Several noted that they were told that the workload procedures would not be used in annual merit review or in promotion and tenure cases, but this led to confusion. For example, one faculty member noted, "I have been told they are meant to impact my teaching, research and service load, but not my promotion and tenure. This seems contradictory to me since my teaching/research/service load are part of my promotion and tenure." Another faculty member shared, "I don't see how you can avoid it influencing the annual review process and P&T."

For the open-ended responses on how workload procedures were being utilized within departments/divisions and/or colleges/schools, the faculty responses largely echoed what emerged from the other open-ended questions regarding needing additional conversations around equity and transparency. From the responses, faculty seemed either to feel that the workload procedures are being utilized effectively in their departments (e.g. "as far as I can tell, the updated policies and procedures were followed in my Department;" "I used them rigorously alongside FARS and informal reviews to estimate and structure course loads") or not at all (e.g. "I did not see anything regarding workload procedures;" "Given their novelty I am not aware that they are yet used;" "not at all, there is no discernible difference").
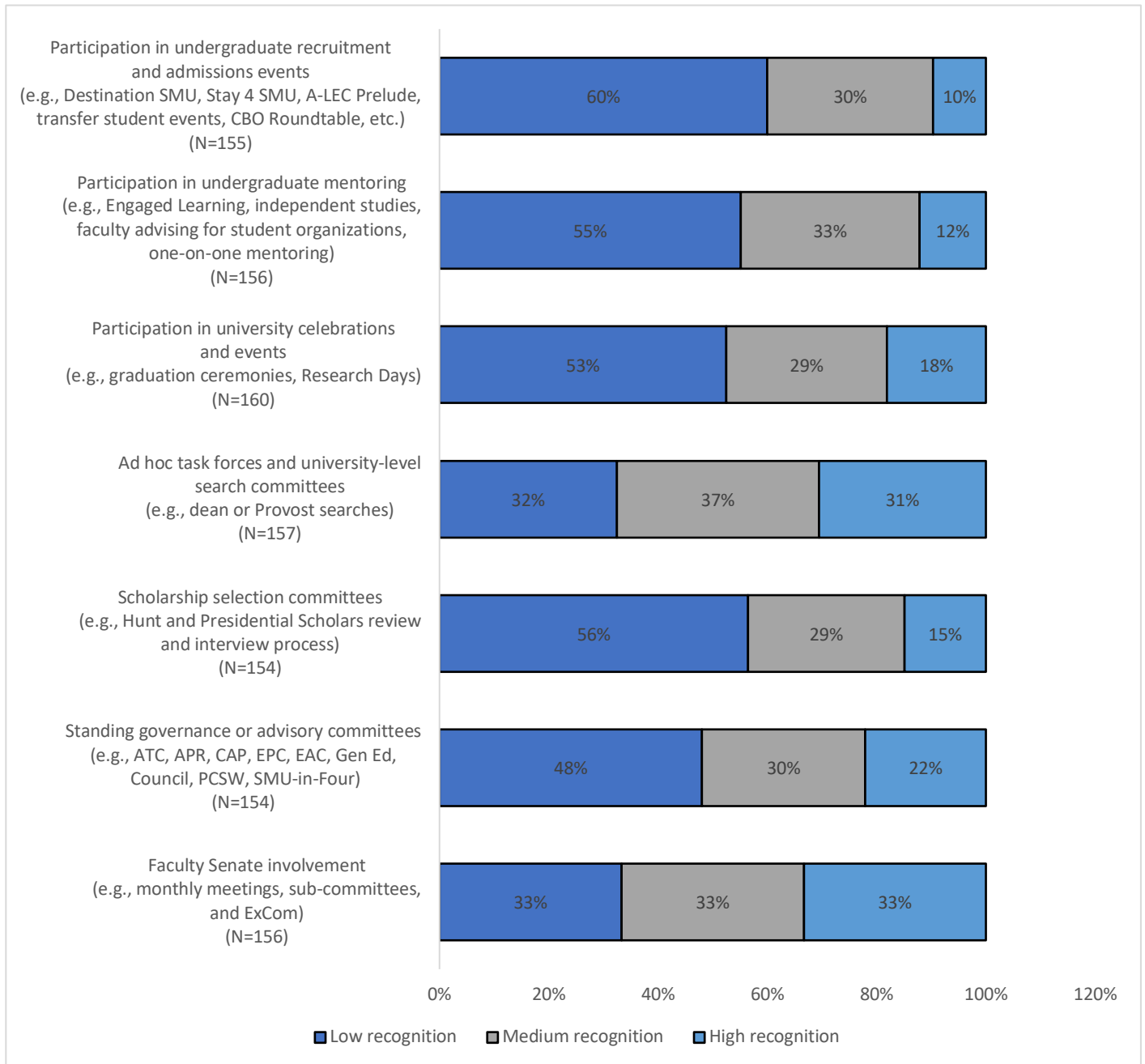
University-Level Service

Efforts are being made to better understand the full inventory of the types of service faculty contribute, as well as the distribution of such service. Consistent with the research base, service in higher education is frequently categorized into four types: university-level service, School/College-level service, department-level service, and profession/discipline-oriented service. For the campus-wide survey, we focused questions in this section of the survey only on the *university-level of service* to develop an inventory of types of service at the university level, as well as the ways in which such *university-level service* is viewed by faculty as a) important and b) recognized. This initial inventory is the first step in a larger conversation, which will need to fold in faculty views about the types of service across all four categories, as well as service is distributed and recognized.

Figure 4. Question: Below are various ways faculty participate in service at the university level. Now please indicate what level of importance you personally see that the following university level types of service contribute to a university system with strong faculty representation.
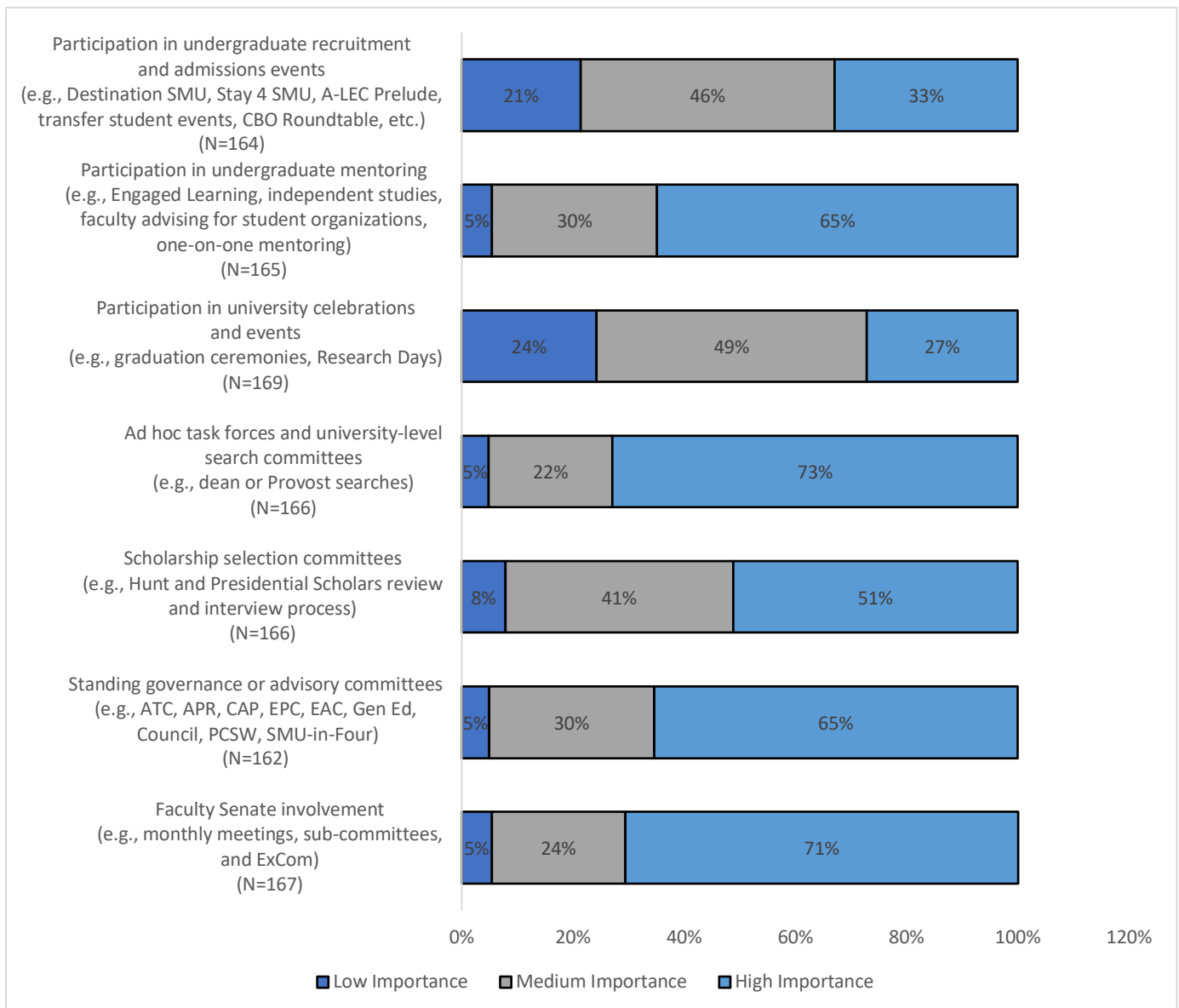
- The majority of respondents assigned a medium or high level of importance to all service activities presented.

Figure 5. Below are the same ways (as seen above) faculty participate in service at the university level as displayed above. Now please indicate what level of recognition the university gives to the following university level types of service contribute to a university system with strong faculty representation.

- The majority of respondents assigned a low or medium level of university recognition to all service activities presented.
- The stark misalignment of level of importance of service activities to the level of recognition given to service activities by the university as seen by respondents suggest an opportunity for improvement.

Misalignment of Importance and Recognition. In the open-ended responses on university-level service, faculty conveyed that additional conversations were needed around this misalignment between recognition and importance. Several faculty noted that, while service is important to university life, it remains the least recognized component of faculty work. This mismatch was captured by a faculty member who noted, "Doing any of these types of service WELL requires a significant commitment of time, and high-quality and extensive service is generally not rewarded by the University in a way commensurate with its value to the institution." Multiple faculty members mentioned that service is not a key factor in the promotion and tenure process. As one faculty member shared, "Has anyone ever been denied tenure or promotion because of poor service performance? No! But, yes for poor teaching and/or research. Hence, service becomes an 'after-thought' for most faculty in my school and probably throughout the university." Another echoed this thought, "Overall, it is very difficult in the SMU policy to reconcile that service is not listed as a designated time allocation for P&T and yet we all know someone has to do it or the department, college, and/or university would not exist."

The mismatch between the level of importance of university-level service activities to the level of recognition given by the university is a charge for better alignment in AY 2022-23. These conversations about where faculty focus their time, and the extent to which their efforts are recognized and equitably distributed, will necessitate reaching within and across department-level organizational units, as well as engaging with other bodies on campus, including the PCSW, Faculty Senate, and BUF.

Next Steps

The survey around workload procedures and university-level service contributes to a larger conversation across campus – a conversation with the Black Unity Forum (BUF), the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Faculty Senate, the Deans, and the Provost's Office to increase transparency and equity with workload procedures (research and scholarly/creative excellence, teaching, and service). As noted in other campus reports and committee recommendations, the PCSW and BUF are particularly interested in determining the prevalence of, and addressing racial and gender inequities in, faculty workloads. The findings from this survey contribute to our understanding of how faculty workloads are distributed and conceptualized on campus, but additional data needs to be collected, including whether this understanding informs an equitable distribution at the unit level (typically, the department or School). The Provost's Office has allocated performance-based funding (PBF) this year to establish a taskforce comprised by faculty administrators of all schools/college to meet regularly and ensure communications and forward

movement in the year ahead. Data from this first campus-wide survey indicates that we have additional collaborative work ahead to help guide how we implement our workload procedures to meet the goals of greater transparency and/or equity. This first survey serves as an invitation to consider how we move forward with a deeper examination within schools and departments and across other organizing bodies.