

## Spring 2023 Faculty Survey: Equity and Transparency in Workload

### Overview

The goals of the five-year Equity and Transparency in Workload Initiative are to create sustainable, transparent, and equitable procedures for faculty and academic leadership to use in balancing contributions across teaching, scholarship/creative activity, and service. The launch of this work in 2020 began a multi-year effort that is described in detail on this information page: [Equity and Transparency in Workload](#). These conversations have been situated within the rich research and broad national discussions in higher education, including the American Council on Education's (ACE) guidance on equity minded workloads<sup>1</sup>.

Numerous faculty groups began initiating conversations around the equity and transparency of workload procedures in 2020, including the Black Unity Forum, the President's Commission on the Status of Women, Faculty Senate, Deans, and the Provost's Office. These initial conversations led to a Provost's Office request for each school, department, and/or unit to operationalize the previously established university-wide policy on workload ([Faculty Workload and Compensation Policy 2.7](#)) into clear and transparent guidelines that were to be contextualized within each disciplinary area (e.g., department or school). The assumptions underlying this original request included an understanding that teaching expectations, research/creative activity, and service loads would likely differ by discipline and should be grounded in local norms and values as examined through extensive faculty discussion.

Findings from a faculty survey in Year 2 of the project (spring 2022) summarized how faculty workload procedures were being conceptualized across campus. The survey feedback highlighted a need for additional information, including a better understanding of the extent to which efforts that year were informing equitable distribution at the unit level. In response to these findings, the Provost's Office allocated performance-based funding (PBF) in 2022-23 to establish a working group comprised by faculty administrators of all schools/colleges who met regularly and ensured communications and forward movement in the same year.

In this third year of the project (2022-2023), the working group met monthly and developed a second (spring 2023) survey to gather faculty feedback about the implementation of the procedures within their units and the extent to which the goals of greater transparency and equity were being met that year.

### Survey Administration and Data Collection:

The survey was administered to all SMU full-time faculty (N=743) in the window between April 5 – April 18, 2023. The call for responses came from direct email invitations from the Office of Faculty Success to all full-time faculty members; additionally, each school/college representative to the committee was asked to help augment communications within their areas. Survey responses were collected from 252 respondents for an overall response rate of 34%. Information about response rates and representation by school are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Survey Responses by School/College**

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

School/College	# of FTF in area	# of FTF responding To survey	% of fac. part. in survey <sup>2</sup>	% of fac. part. in area <sup>3</sup>
Cox School of Business	90	18	7%	12%
Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences	322	105	41%	43%
Dedman School of Law	41	9	4%	5%
Guildhall	13	4	2%	2%
Lyle School of Engineering	69	40	16%	9%
Meadows School of the Arts	126	36	14%	17%
Perkins School of Theology	23	6	2%	3%
Simmons School of Education and Human Development	58	34	13%	8%
Other	1	2	<1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>743</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>34%</b>	

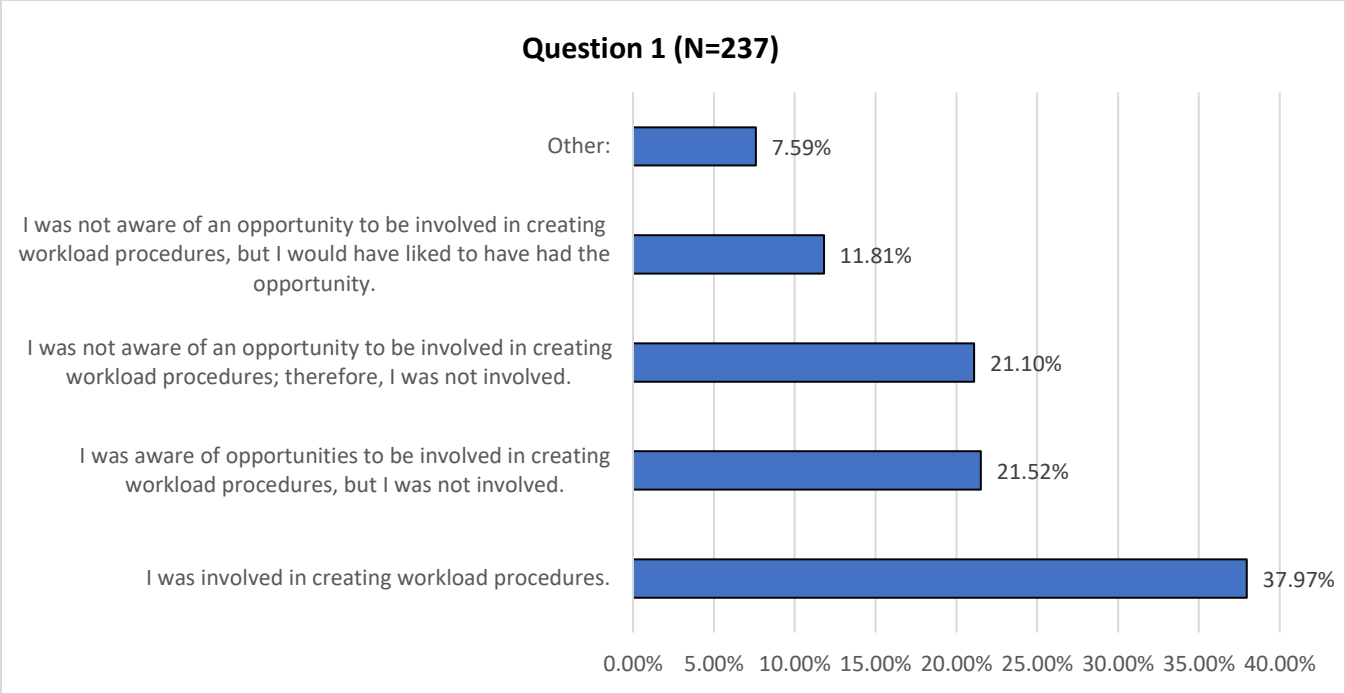
**Results Highlights:**

This report summarizes key findings from the survey, which was comprised of five multiple-choice items and one open-ended response question. Each multiple-choice item included the option to write in comments, rather than select one of the choice options. The information of each of these write-in options is summarized in the context of the corresponding question. All other comments from the open-ended response item are summarized in the last part of this report.

**Question 1. In phase 1, every department/division unit was asked to create operationalized guidelines of the SMU Workload Policy in order to support greater equity and transparency of how workload is distributed within their area. Please select the statement below that best describes your involvement in the creation of workload procedures in your unit.**

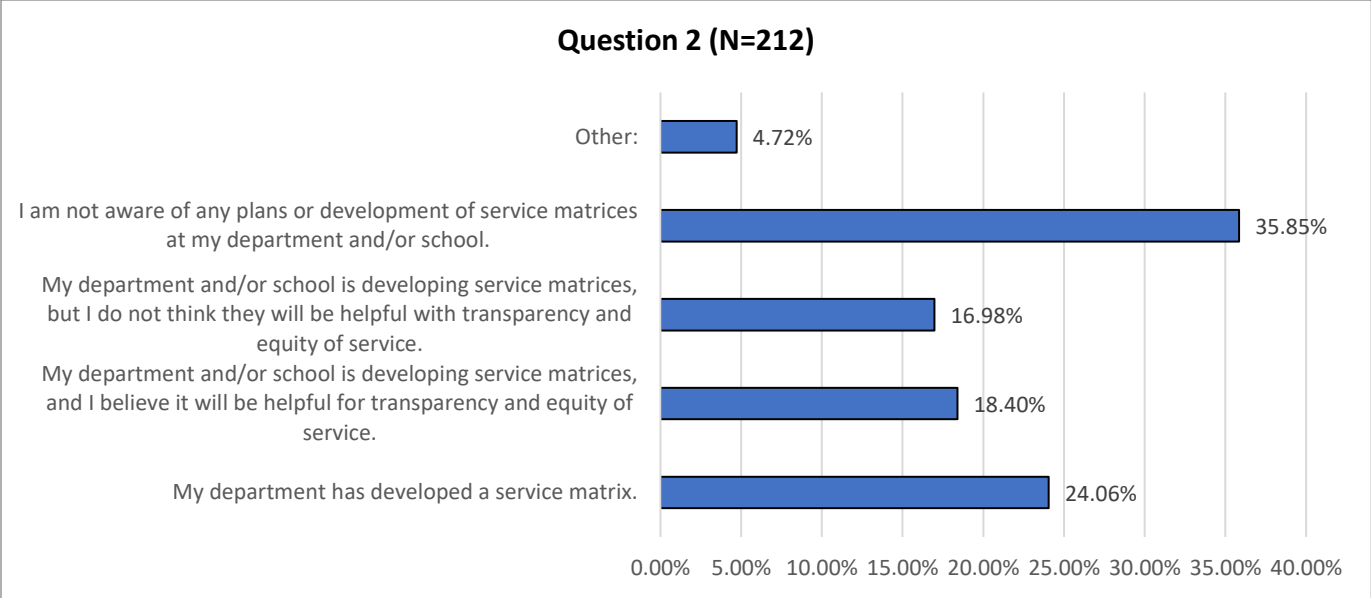
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<sup>2</sup> Illustrates % of survey responses (254) by School/College  
<sup>3</sup> Illustrates % of total faculty (743) by School/College



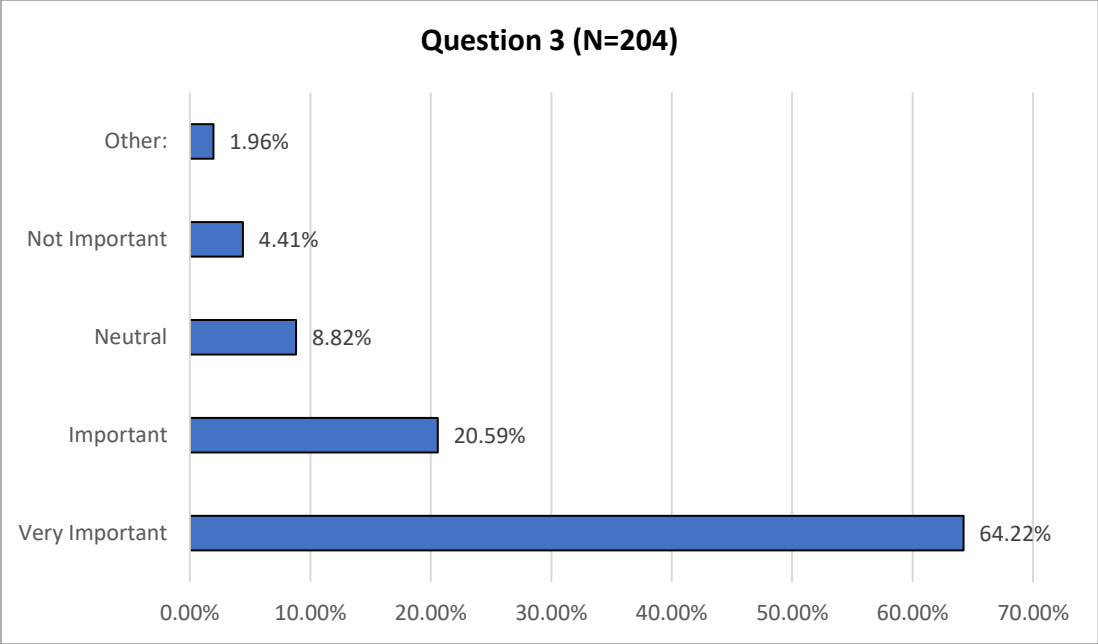
A total of 38% of respondents indicated they were involved in creating the workload procedures. An approximately equal proportion of respondents (43%) indicated they were either a) aware of opportunities for involvement (22%) but were not themselves involved or b) not aware of the opportunity and were therefore not involved (21%). Approximately 1 in 10 of respondents (12%) indicated they were not aware of opportunities to get involved, but would have wanted the opportunity. For the write-in option, comprising 8% of responses, additional comments indicated the following: 1) that the respondent was a new hire or on leave and therefore not able to participate; 2) that there were concerns about the top-down approach used in their area; and 3) that there were concerns about the gap between faculty input during the process and the lack of faculty involvement in the final procedures that were adopted.

**Question 2. Several areas on campus are developing service matrices to help make clear the types of engagement and commitment expected at each (e.g., department, school, university, and disciplinary area). Please select the statement below that best describes your experience with the development of service matrices. If it is helpful, you can click here to view an example of a service matrix from the Meadows School of the Arts from their workload procedures document, which will open in a new window.**



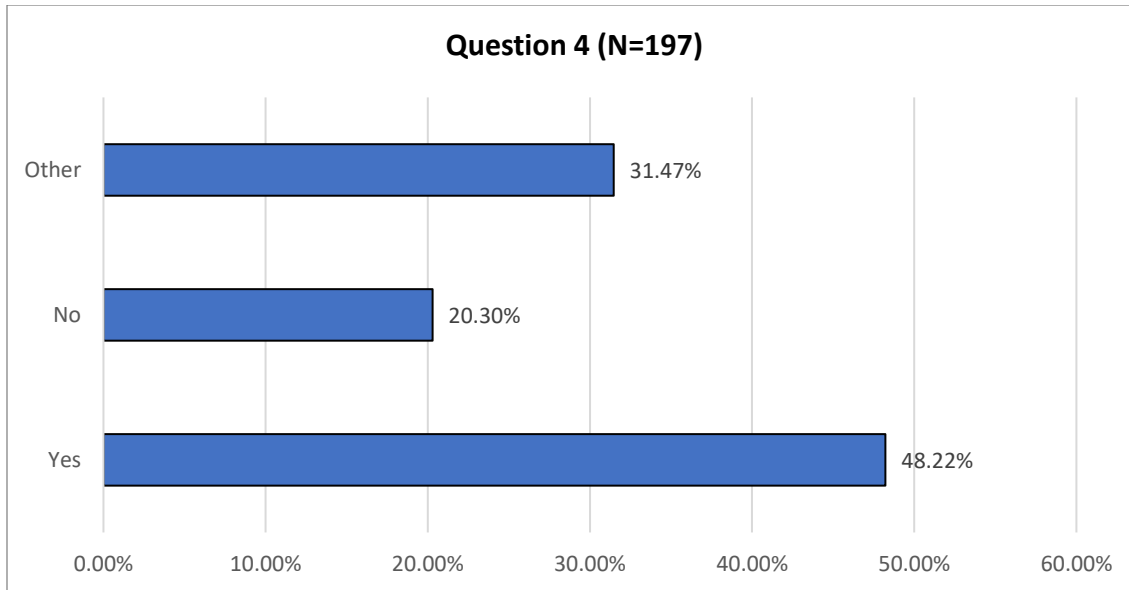
Approximately 1/3 of responding faculty (36%) indicated they were not aware of any plans to develop service matrices; in comparison, 60% of responses indicate that service matrices have either already been developed (24%), or are being developed (35%). Of those latter 35% that are reported to be in development, approximately half of the respondents (18%) indicated they believe matrices will be helpful for supporting transparency and equity in service, and half indicated they do not believe they will be helpful for such purposes (17%). Of the 5% of write-in responses, comments included either focused on elaborations of the other choice options (e.g., “it was talked about but to my knowledge has not been created”), or comments pointed out disagreements with the overarching purpose or necessity of service matrices.

**Question 3. How important is it to you that there are conversations about transparency and equity in workload in your department?**



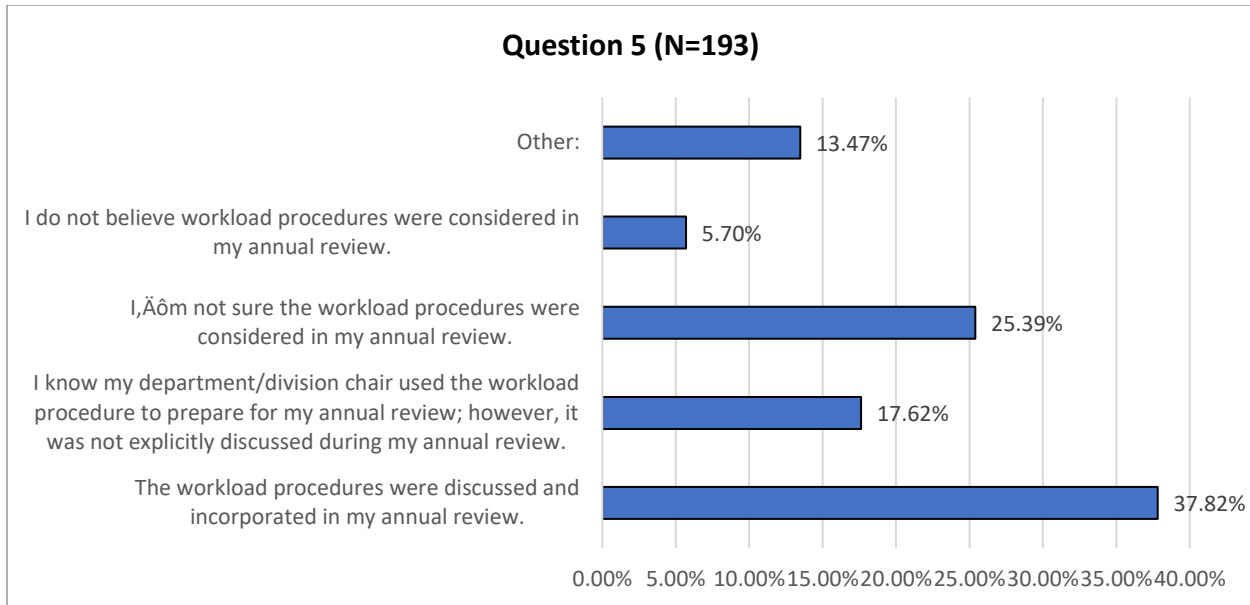
The vast majority of respondents (85%) indicated that conversations about equity and transparency in workload are either very important (64%) or important (21%). Neutral stances were indicated by 9% of faculty respondents, and 4% indicated they were not important. Write-in options (2%) indicated skepticism about the implementation of the procedures.

**Question 4. - Were the workload procedures implemented in your department/area this year in such a way that your in-load was consistent with the established guidelines for distributing in-load across research/creative activity (if applicable), teaching and service?**



Nearly half (48%) of faculty respondents indicated that the workload procedures were implemented this year in a way that was consistent with unit's established guidelines to distribute in-load across research/creative activity, teaching and service. In contrast, 20% of respondents indicated the opposite. This question elicited the highest percentage (32%) of write-in comments, the vast majority of which indicated either that the question itself was not clear, or they did not know whether they were being implemented. Other comments included that the workload procedures continue to be a work in progress or that they are not being written in ways that are inclusive of all faculty (i.e., in some areas, they are focused only on tenure-line faculty).

**Question 5 - In phase 2, faculty leadership teams (chairs, associate deans, and deans) were asked to make use of established workload procedures during faculty annual reviews. Please select the answer that best fits how workload procedures were used during your annual review.**



Just over half of the faculty reported that the workload procedures were used in annual review (55%). However, within this 55%, only 2 out of every 3 responses indicated that the procedures were actively discussed during the review. About one-quarter of respondents (25%) indicated that they were not sure if the workload procedures were considered in my annual review, and 6% believed they were not considered. Of the 13% of write-in comments, the majority of responses indicated that the faculty member either a) had not had an annual review or b) had not received any feedback from the annual review. A smaller number of comments within the write-in option indicated that having workload procedures would not change what has long been the norm; in some cases, the norm was referenced as service already forming part of annual review, and in other cases, the norm was referenced as service distribution never being equitable.

**Question 6: Open-ended response: More information about the 5-Year approach to equity and transparency in workload at SMU is available here: [Equity and Transparency in Workload](#). In the space below, please provide any additional ideas or thoughts on the plans for increasing equity and transparency of workload at SMU.**

Answers to the open-ended responses ranged across the continuum within each theme.

1. **Some faculty expressed being generally in favor of the overall direction of the conversation and gave several examples of ways to continue the conversation:** 1) conversations with the chair/dean: "I appreciate the conversation and efforts toward equity and transparency in workload. Is there protocol for approaching or engaging in conversation with a chair or dean about possible workload inequities?" 2) support in creating clarity around service: "some kind of template is needed for the service matrix"; and 3) greater clarity about nuanced differences in teaching loads: "there is little consistency across campus about teaching loads"; "some departments teach far more students (including more students per course) than other departments in comparable disciplines."
2. **Some faculty focused on complexity and feasibility and noted the need to meet the larger goal of greater transparency and equity in workload.** Some responses indicated that the effort has surfaced some concerns that will need to be addressed: "it surfaced some complexities that remain unaddressed. Adding research to the requirements for clinical faculty promotion without automatically allowing clinical faculty time to do that research isn't fair." Other faculty indicated the effort "seems well-intentioned but creating more effort than it's worth" and that "until these

policies have both teeth and transparency they have no value.” Other comments were doubtful that the effort is needed or helpful at all: “This initiative is a top-down solution to a non-existent problem—all cost and no benefits”; this is an attempt at trying to quantify something which is not easily measured, or cannot be measured, using simplistic and naïve tools.”

3. **Many comments focused on the implementation at the department/unit level.** Some faculty indicated that their department chairs were “attuned to equity and transparency, and diligently working to align with our practices.” Others indicated the opposite, in which faculty indicated “zero support” from their chair. Others indicated that the implementation “has not happened at all.” Some concerns surfaced that this initiative has been largely time-consuming: “This is an example of another manually maintained system that, although well-intentioned and needed in some form, creates additional administrative burden on department chairs, their administrative assistants, and others.”

### Discussion and Action Items

With 85% of faculty respondents indicating that they believe it is *important* or *very important* to have conversations about equity and workload in their department or school, opportunities for such continued discussion should take place in structured ways. A better understanding of the differences in faculty experiences across campus is needed. The qualitative responses, in particular, revealed wide-ranging differences in faculty attitudes and in the approaches toward development and implementation that have taken place within different areas. The survey data reveals that faculty experiences are on a continuum that stretches from having clear opportunities for transparent and constructive approaches, to receiving few opportunities to engage with the process and implementation.

Therefore, during the fourth year of this project (AY 2023-24), each department/school is being asked to make revisions to its procedures and develop more opportunities for faculty input. Performance-based funding (FY24) has been made available for this effort. Each School/College was provided with the raw survey results from its area in late spring 2023. The multiple-choice responses and the qualitative comments from faculty in each School/College can be more clearly understood, as disaggregated from this university-wide summary.

The scope of effort this year is two-fold: 1) revisit the unit Workload Guidelines from their first year of development (2020-21) with a goal of revising as needed based on the feedback from the survey and from the Provost Office; and 2) conduct an inventory of each department, per recommendations and guidance from the [American Council on Education Report on Equity-Minded Faculty Workload](#), that shows how workload is being differentiated in ways that offer clarity and that rely on shared information across the three areas of research/creative activity, teaching, and service. The Equity and Transparency Working Group will convene twice this year to report on progress made on the above efforts and to ensure that feedback on the pilot launch of the standardized faculty in-load report is integrated into the process this year. Each School/College will provide a written report of their efforts by April 30, 2024.