Faculty Time-Use Study

Question and Answers

1. ***Why is the survey offered only one day? Won't this skew results? Why  
   not a snap shot of asking them about workload over the past month  
   verses just one day?***  
     
   So it is time prohibitive and unlikely to be able to get faculty to  
   reliably fill out a time diary for a month. We tried this before  
   actually--but were only able to get 111 faculty to work with us on the  
   project. One day time diaries are more accessible and doable for  
   people and although they provide only a snapshot of how we spend work  
   time--they can provide insight into new demands on faculty time that  
   cross sectional surveys do not. We also ask some questions that  
   provide a context for the one day--ongoing commitments such as  
   advisees, course loads and campus leadership roles that provides a  
   bigger picture at the front end of the survey.  
     
   This method is more accurate than reflecting back on your time  
   generally over a year or month, because we ask participants the very  
   next day what they did yesterday and this has been found by time use  
   scholars to be the most accurate way to understand time use because  
   recall is so much better.
2. ***How long has this study been in existence?***  
     
   Time diary studies have been around for a long time, especially those  
   exploring how people spend leisure time and balance work and family.  
   In terms of studying faculty work and time there have tended to be  
   only a few methods: cross sectional surveys that ask folks to estimate  
   time spent on work activities over the last year, analysis of annual  
   faculty report data, and some ethnography shadowing individuals and  
   interviews with small samples. Time diary methods are somewhat newer  
   as applied to faculty. However, I conducted a prior study with Big 10  
   faculty using this method just last year (paper under review).  
   Clemson's ADVANCE program is using this method, there has been some  
   work internationally, and it is likely to become more popular.
3. ***How many institutions (and which ones) have or are participating in the study?***  
     
   We will not be reporting results with names of institutions--but this  
   spring we have about a dozen institutions participating.
4. ***What have the response rates been like in previous studies? What are  
   some suggestions you might have to ensure better response rates?***

We have found overall it is hard to get faculty to complete any survey;  
and those institutions that are most successful have administrators  
and faculty leaders on campus encouraging participation and providing  
local reasons the data could be useful. Also, it is crucial faculty  
understand data is not being collected to evaluate faculty or to be  
used in any critical way but to support them. The degree to which  
faculty leaders and administrators can communicate these things during  
data collection--the better the response rate.  
  
When faculty have not received that message clearly--there have been  
low response rates, in places where the message has been  
stronger--better ones. Most faculty survey response rates are between  
30-50% so that would be our goal with local campus support.

1. ***How will the data be presented back to us? Will there be ways to  
   stratify data based on things like gender, college, departments,  
   faculty status...etc.?***

We will provide a report of findings, reported  
by gender, discipline/college and faculty status to the degree  
confidentiality allows (e.g. we will not report by race if there are  
not a significant number of responses such that confidentiality is at  
risk--the greater the response the more we can stratify.

1. ***Have there been issues related to non-response bias?***

Yes, there is always a risk of this with surveys and we ask for the sample  
statistics so we understand whether the sample is representative as  
well.

1. ***How have universities/colleges that have been part of previous studies  
   used their findings to address workload at their respective  
   institutions?***

We have not been involved in reform at campuses based on  
results to date; though I have been involved in such efforts as  
Director of ADVANCE at UMCP--using different kinds of data to inform  
workload reform. Such information can inform efforts to train mentors,  
think about work climate, and think about whether some groups (e.g.  
associate professors or women) are facing differential demands on  
their time.