



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

November 14, 2011

2011-R-0382

FACULTY COURSE RELEASE POLICIES

By: Terrance Adams, Legislative Analyst II

You asked for information about faculty course release policies in Connecticut's public colleges and universities, including any associated fiscal impact.

SUMMARY

Course releases are reductions to a faculty member's standard teaching load in exchange for service outside the classroom, such as advising students or chairing a department, among others. They do not include buyouts, which are teaching load reductions given in exchange for a sum of money paid to the university, typically from a research grant.

Connecticut's public colleges and universities have varying course release policies. At UConn, reductions to standard teaching loads appear to be handled at the college or department level and must conform to broad university guidelines. The Connecticut State University System's (CSUS), collective bargaining agreement with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) identifies several duties for which faculty may earn teaching load reductions. In the community-technical colleges (CTC), releases are mostly limited to department chairs and program coordinators.

The institutions also have varying estimates of the fiscal impact. UConn stated that course releases had at most a minimal fiscal impact, while CSUS reported an impact of about \$4.5 million. CTC could not determine the exact fiscal impact because not all of its course release time results in a replacement cost.

COURSE RELEASE POLICIES

UConn

UConn has broad guidelines for faculty workloads. The university's bylaws provide only that faculty be assigned "duties that are reasonable and consistent with good and effective practices in teaching, research, clinical care, and outreach.... [Course assignments] will be made by the appropriate deans and department heads consistent with university policy."

The school's 2007 accreditation self-study noted that faculty workload is established on an individual basis, considering factors such as "generally nationally recognized disciplinary teaching loads, the type and percentage of faculty appointment, and faculty productivity and activities in teaching, research, and service/outreach." Additionally, the bylaws state that "consideration will be given to unusually heavy responsibilities for student advising, chairing committees, research projects, unusually large courses, and assigned administrative duties."

CSUS

CSUS requires full-time faculty to teach 12 load credits per semester (one course is generally worth three load credits). Article 10 of the system's agreement with AAUP lists duties for which faculty may earn load credits. They include, among other things:

1. student teacher supervision;
2. teaching a class with more than 40 students;
3. specialized assignments (e.g., a social work practicum, field experience, etc.);
4. independent study direction;
5. master's thesis direction;

6. administrative responsibilities (e.g., serving as the department chairperson);
7. other non-instructional work;
8. research;
9. curriculum development, faculty development, and instructional enhancement; and
10. initial development of a distance learning course.

CTC

The CTC system requires full-time faculty to teach 24 credit hours each year (one course is generally worth three credit hours). They must also perform additional responsibilities equivalent to the preparation and teaching of an additional three-credit course or an average of nine hours per week for each semester within the appointment year. The system's collective bargaining agreements list numerous examples of these additional responsibilities.

Releases in the community-technical colleges are generally limited to faculty members who serve as either department chairs or program coordinators. Release time may also be awarded on an ad hoc basis for certain special assignments, such as writing an accreditation report, but colleges are asked to be judicious in awarding such time. Generally, release time for program coordinators and ad hoc projects averages approximately one course per semester while department chairs earn two course releases per semester.

IMPACT

UConn

UConn reported that its faculty course releases have little if any financial impact, as the university covers replacement costs in very few situations. An example is the AAUP chapter president, who has a contractual one-course reduction. UConn also funds course releases for faculty members who take on heavy university responsibilities, such as chairing the general education curriculum committee, for example. The cost of hiring a replacement adjunct is about \$5,000 per course.

Otherwise, departments must cover replacement costs from within their existing budgets. UConn also noted that faculty who are granted course releases are often performing duties essential to the university's operations (e.g., serving as a department chair), and as such allowing faculty course release time to perform these functions does not constitute an added cost.

CSUS

CSUS estimated a replacement cost of \$4,522,068 for faculty release time in the 2010-2011 academic year (see Table 1). Overall, the system awarded 3,284 load credits, and its part-time faculty rate is \$1,377 per load credit (\$4,131 for a three-credit course). The different costs among the universities are likely due to their different sizes, as Central and Southern have substantially larger enrollments than Eastern and Western.

Table 1: CSUS Load Credits and Estimated Costs, 2010-2011

University	Load Credits	Estimated Cost
Central	1063	\$1,463,751
Eastern	445	\$612,765
Southern	1210	\$1,666,170
Western	566	\$779,382
Total	3284	\$ 4,522,068

Source: CSUS

CTC

Overall, CTC awarded 2,496.34 load credits in the 2010-2011 academic year (see Table 2). As with CSUS, the differences among the colleges are likely due to their varying sizes.

CTC could not precisely determine the replacement costs of faculty release time. The system pays adjuncts \$1,437 per credit hour (\$4,311 for a three-credit course) but stated that not all release hours are assumed by adjuncts. In some cases, a course may be reassigned to a regular faculty member as part of his or her regular teaching load, or it may be cancelled. It is therefore unclear how many of the load credits resulted in an added cost.

Table 2: CTC Load Credits, 2010-2011

College	Department Chair	Program Coordinator	Other	Total
Asnuntuck	18	21	60	99
Capital	60	78	103	241
Gateway	72	213	73	358
Housatonic	60	15	21	96
Manchester	117	119	143	379
Middlesex	48	87	13	148
Naugatuck Valley	113	73.5	54	240.5
Northwestern	0	24	31.5	55.5
Norwalk	111	120	62	293
Quinebaug Valley	0	48	54.5	102.5
Three Rivers	79.5	84	117.34	280.84
Tunxis	78	42	83	203
Total	756.5	924.5	815.34	2496.34

Source: CTC

TA:ts