

Minutes for the UHD Faculty Senate Meeting
March 1, 2022
Via Zoom

Members of Senate in Attendance: Edmund Cueva, Krista Gehring, Ronald Beebe, Nathan Neale, Ayden Adler, Godwin Agboka, Stephanie Babb, Nina Barbieri, Maria Bhattacharjee, Alexander Bielakowski, Kasi Bundoc, Franklin Allaire, Amy Baird, Scott Davis, Austin DeJan, Prakash Deo, Lucas Fedell, Paul Fulbright, Don Holmes, Heather Goltz, Cynthia Lloyd, Jean Nganou, Angelica Roncancio, Danya Serrano, M. Nell Sullivan, Candace TenBrink, Adriana Visbal, Julie Wilson

Members Absent: Nathan Neale, Lucas Logan, Michael Lemke, Sam Sen.

Guests: Akif Uzman, Interim Provost; Jerry Johnson, Associate VP for Academic Affairs; Patricia Ensor, Executive Director of UHD Library; Christine Stempinski, Assistant Director of Library Services; Hossein Shahrokhi, UHD Chief Information Officer; Said Fattouh, Executive Director of Information Technology; John Lane, Director of Technology Learning Services; Darlene Hodge, Faculty Senate Administrative Assistant; Sandra Dahlberg, Professor of English and Faculty Ombuds; Kulwant Singh, Lecturer of Computer Science; Rachel Hudspeth, Assistant Director of Assessment; Stalina Villareal, Assistant Professor of English; Meritza Tamez, Dean of Students; Mike Duncan, Professor of English and former President of Faculty Senate.

Meeting convened at 2:30

FS President Cueva convened the meeting at 2:30 and deferred the approval of the minutes for the February 15, 2022, meeting until the March 22 Senate meeting because they had not yet been circulated to Senators. Because FS Secretary Neale was unable to attend today's meeting, Cueva asked Sullivan to take minutes.

Interim Provost Uzman on Budget Priorities and Faculty/Staff Compensation

Provost Uzman announced that the Planning and Budget Development Committee (PBDC) would be meeting Friday 3/4/22 to consider everything but the Academic Affairs budget priorities, and those would address Monday 3/7/22.

- The budget will be defined [delimited] by enrollment.
- No tuition increases are likely for AY2023.
- Adjustments stemming from the Faculty/Staff Compensation Study will continue and will consume most of the budget increases.

Questions and comments ensued.

Cueva asks about the increases taking up most of the budget. Are there any new initiatives that President wants to accomplish? Uzman responded that the majority of the budget goes to items that are already mandated.

Cueva asked whether the new money cover the salaries of all the new administrators. Uzman stated that President Blanchard has indicated that he won't use any new money to cover the new administrative positions and that perhaps the money will come from unfilled staff positions to make room for that in the budget through the procedure of "staying action"—temporarily not filling an empty position and using those unused funds.

Senator Baird asked about possible increases in the raise for tenure and promotion. Uzman responded that an increase in the raise for promotion to Professor was considered.

Sullivan asked about the salaries of those already in the Professor rank being further compressed by these raises that are not matched by commensurate raises previously promoted professors' salaries. "It depends," Uzman responded. Compression is being looked at. But there is not much hope because everything depends on money. It's a matter of priority. There is one pot of money for the newly promoted and another pot for compression. Due to an error mysteriously made without human agency, only promotions to Associate Professor, not to Professor, were increased under Link, and Uzman felt obligated to continue the increase for subsequent cohorts of newly promoted Associate Professors.

Dahlberg pointed to the previous salary study, when decisions was also to focus on associates rather than full professors. Uzman stated that the Administration is looking at compression and salary inversion across ranks. The salaries of high-performing professors will be looked at. Uzman is hopeful that the President will continue to engage with the compensation issue. President Blanchard would like to see the correcting salary compression and inversion embedded in the way we do budgeting at UHD.

Cueva asked if the next set of salary adjustments were not merit related? Uzman responded that the 3rd year adjustment is merit-related. He further noted that evaluations are weighted over multiple years to ensure people get credit for achievement even in years when there is no raise. Dahlberg reminded him that the weighting only covers 3 years, but faculty usually doesn't get a raise every year, and sometimes not even every 3 years, so the weighting is not an effective remedy. Uzman reminded everyone that we are obligated by state to do evaluations.

Cueva asked Uzman to address the 40% of faculty who didn't get an increase last year.

Uzman stated, "I hesitate to guarantee a yes." He will "interrogate" the spreadsheet to see where the compression occurred and where inequities occurred. The University determined through the study the minimum salary that faculty should earn, and the focus was on addressing that first. It took a lot more money than expected to achieve that goal.

Sullivan stated that in 2015, during the previous SACSCOC accreditation process, there was an issue with not *all* administrators being evaluated in written form. Given that faculty members have to be evaluated and the state of Texas says the only way faculty can get raises is through merit determined by their evaluations, what assurance is there that Administrators are being

evaluated (with the same level of scrutiny) to justify their elevated salaries and raises? Uzman says to his knowledge, administrators are evaluated in writing. Provost, Deans, and Chairs certainly are. He did not, however, speak to the evaluations of the many non-academic administrators.

Cueva thanked Uzman and noted the Senate's appreciation for Provost Uzman

John Lane, Director of Technology Learning Services, on Panopto

Lane reminded everyone that Panopto was replacing Mediasite for creating and housing course videos. He noted that Panopto offered many benefits over Mediasite. March 29th is the last date to move videos from Mediasite over to Panopto. Lane invited everyone to email him questions. (lanej@uhd.edu) and reminded faculty about the training available ([IT Training - UHD Calendar](#)).

Ron Beebe asked why is the switch occurred in the middle of the semester. Lane noted that IT needed to meet the deadline for making summer course shells available by May 1st for summer and May minimester. The midsemester deadline would allow video links for Spring courses to be maintained and copied over for summer courses.

Paul Fulbright praised the Blackboard team for helpfulness and noted the quality of support from the Blackboard team at UHD is excellent. He also praised the speed of Panopto, noting that the upload process is very fast.

Cueva thanked John Lane for addressing the Senate.

The Workload and Committee Survey

Ed Cueva shares the report on the Workload Survey conducted by the Senate in February. Cueva announced that on March 22, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Jerry Johnson will present on the Workload issue, which is a point of concern in the 2021 Climate Survey. Cueva thanked Dr. Dyer for helping to prepare the report (appended to the end of this document).

The overall average number of committees UHD respondents serve on: 5.72.

There will be a more in-depth discussion on 3/22/22.

The charts presented the data in somewhat granular detail. Several senators suggested that the Senate create a chart showing the aggregated data.

Noting the significant number of faculty reporting committee work in the summer months, one senator asked about whether Chairs were the ones doing so much work during summers.

One senator asked whether the Senate would look at the data by department or department size. She noted the issue with faculty in smaller departments having to serve on more committees per capita.

Ron Beebe on Amending the Constitution to Require a Lecturer On FSEC

Beebe noted that the issue of Lecturer representation had been raised with respect to amending the UHD Senate Constitution, Article Four, Section 2. To ensure that representation, FSEC had discussed the potential for adding this language: “**Additionally, when possible, one member-at-large should be a Lecturer.**” Beebe stressed the need for a lecturer voice while recognizing that requiring a lecturer to serve in this capacity complicated the workload issue since not all lecturers are expected to do, or rewarded for, service. He noted the importance of representation across ranks.

Baird questioned whether this amendment would mean that a lecturer nominated would automatically be one of three at-large reps on FSEC. Discussion ensued on goal to ensure that a lecturer is on FSEC if one is willing to do serve. Baird noted that the language perhaps should be “We strongly encourage lecturers to nominate themselves.” She suggested the way to solve the dilemma would be to make one seat a dedicated seat for a lecturer. Goltz agreed. Baird noted the desirability of having reps from across colleges, so perhaps language to that effect could also be added as part of the amendment process. Beebe noted the need to be cautious in wording in case no lecturer is willing.

Goltz noted that lecturers are doing the service already. She suggested special elections for an at-large lecturer if no current lecturer on Senate is willing.

Baird suggested a stipulation with the following wording: “**One at-large seat is held for a lecturer. If no lecturer volunteers, this seat can be held by a T/TT faculty member.**” One of the three at-large seats is held for a lecturer.

Visbal noted the inequity in the evaluation of lecturers. Faculty Senate service may not count in annual evaluations for lecturers in some departments.

Luke Fedell moved and Adriana Visbal seconded adopting Baird’s language to amend the Constitution.

The Senate agreed to hold the vote on this amendment on March 22nd. If 2/3rds of Senate approve the change, then it will be sent out to the faculty at large for approval.

The State of Tenure in the State of Texas

The Senate is considering this issue because of threats to academic freedom and tenure as represented by comments made by State government officials (especially Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick) about eliminating tenure in Texas, essentially phasing it out, by not granting tenure to new hires. The purpose behind this change would be to quell academic freedom and freedom of expression.

Cueva noted 3 statements issued on this subject are pertinent to UHD:

1. **UH System statement:**

The UH System is committed to fostering a learning environment where free inquiry, expression and debate of competing ideas are encouraged. We look forward to working with the Lieutenant Governor to find ways in which we can support diversity of perspective while protecting academic freedom.

2. **UH's Executive Committee of UH Fac Senate, 2/25/22:**

WHEREAS the importance of academic freedom as noted in the 1940 statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors constitutes a foundational pillar of UH research and educational mission, and

WHEREAS under principles of academic freedom, faculty are empowered to conduct their research, explore novel concepts, and teach their particular subject following the professional standards set by their disciplines, where decisions about curriculum and subject matter should rest on the faculty who have expertise without influence from outside political entities; and

WHEREAS a diversity of views and an atmosphere of respectful and civil discussion on potentially sensitive subjects including race and discrimination in America is the bedrock of a university classroom; and

WHEREAS the recent statements of Texas state officials opposed to tenure and teaching about issues of race in the classroom are detrimental to the reputation of higher education as a whole and Texas institutions in particular and have important implications in a variety of domains including the hiring and retaining of top faculty and students and the attainment of the goals of the UH Strategic Plan;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate of the University of Houston reaffirms the principle of academic freedom in our research and within our classrooms.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we reaffirm the stance of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, American Association of University Professors, and scores of other higher education organizations, including several institutions in the state of Texas, that faculty should make the decisions about scholarship and teaching.

3. **Texas Council of Faculty Senate's statement.**

The Executive Committee of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates is alarmed by Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick's comments about faculty tenure at a press conference on February 18, 2022. A politician of his stature who expresses the desire to end tenure for Texas colleges and universities should recognize this action would weaken Texas higher education. It would place Texas at a disadvantage in recruiting high caliber faculty

worldwide and dampen the free expression of ideas in Texas classrooms. Dan Patrick misunderstands and misrepresents critical race theory and mischaracterizes faculty and the educational environments we cultivate. Tenure exists to protect teaching, learning, and research from the whims of politicians, regardless of their political stripes. Dan Patrick may view his course of action as smart politics, but it unfortunately leads him down a treacherous path of waging a war against thinking.

Cueva asked if we need to put out our own statement. He noted that UHCL and UHV Faculty Senates don't want to "poke the bear" by making a statement.

One senator noted that neither UH nor UHS statement mentions Tenure. She noted UHD faculty need to aver the value of tenure, noting that UT and A&M's statements are stronger. Concurring with these comments, Beebe referenced German theologian Martin Niemöller's well known statement as a warning about not speaking out ("First they came for... And then they came for me...").

Another senator agreed that a response is needed, but cautioned that the situation is tricky.

A guest noted that revocation of tenure has also been threatened for teaching Critical Race Theory.

Duncan suggested adapting or reaffirming the Senate's 2017 resolution, Resolution# SR-17-01.

Whereas earning tenure requires an individual to clear several hurdles with respect to teaching, scholarship, and service and that, once earned, tenured faculty are still subject to merit-based annual reviews. Whereas eliminating tenure will make UHD less competitive with its peer institutions that retain tenure. Whereas "...every dollar spent tracking "productivity" in order to ferret out a small handful of bad actors is one fewer dollar available to go to actual instruction."¹ Whereas eliminating tenure may significantly reduce any university's ability to attract external research dollars. ² Whereas eliminating tenure may preclude students from learning about all sides of today's multi-faceted world. Be it resolved that, in light of legislative actions in other states, the faculty at the University of Houston-Downtown remain resolute in their support of tenure as a public trust in the State of Texas, as one of cornerstones of the academe, and as one of many tools utilized by the faculty to further the mission of UHD.

Another Senator asked to include language about WHY tenure is important, while several senators emphasized that this threat to tenure and academic freedom will affect all our colleagues.

One senator suggested that the tenure opponents are hoping "we will stay home, stand down, won't take moves to protect ourselves."

Because the meeting was approaching 4:00, Cueva called of a motion to extend the meeting to 4:15. A motion was made and seconded to extend meeting to 4:15. Senate approved the motion.

A number of faculty members noted that threats to tenure created recruitment issues. A senator suggested using the language of football to help state legislators understand that tenure is a recruitment tool for academic talent. But he also pointed out that the legislators and politicians raising this issue *want* the controversy to gin up their base.

Another senator recommended to the body the Terri Gross interview: [From slavery to socialism, proposed laws would restrict what teachers can say : NPR](#) .

Senators agreed we would like to have a statement on protecting academic freedom and tenure from political assaults. Cueva invited interested parties to attend FSEC Friday 3/11/22, 11-1. Let Darlene Hodge know if attending to help draft statement.

Closing Comments and Adjournment

Given the events in Eastern Europe, one senator requested that the Senate should make a statement assuring Russians and Russian-Americans colleagues' place in the academy, separating Russians from Putin. Another Senator noted the need to express equal support for Ukrainians, who are being attacked by Putin's forces.

The motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved.

Meeting adjourned 4:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nell Sullivan, PhD
Faculty Senator
Guest scribe

Faculty Committee Survey Results

February 2022

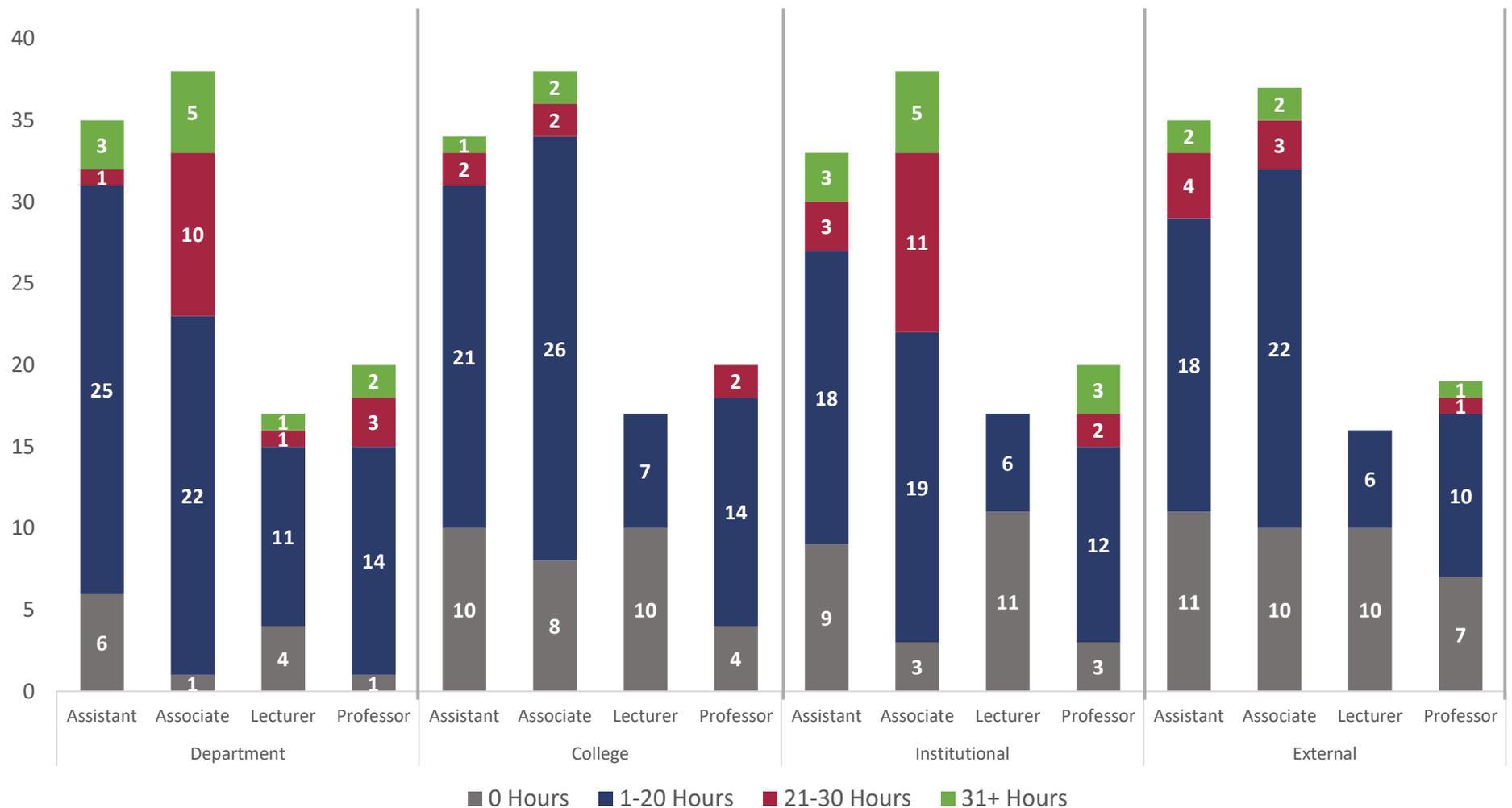
Overview & Insights

- Assistant Professors serve on an average of 5 committees and chair or co-chair 1 committee.
- Associate Professors and Professors serve on an average of 7 committees and chair or co-chair 2 committees.

Which role describes you?	Number of responses	Average # of Committees	Average # of Committees Chaired or Co-Chaired
Lecturer	20	1.85	.10
Assistant Professor	35	5.34	1.14
Associate Professor	39	7.28	2.03
Professor	21	7.43	1.95
Total	115	5.72	1.40

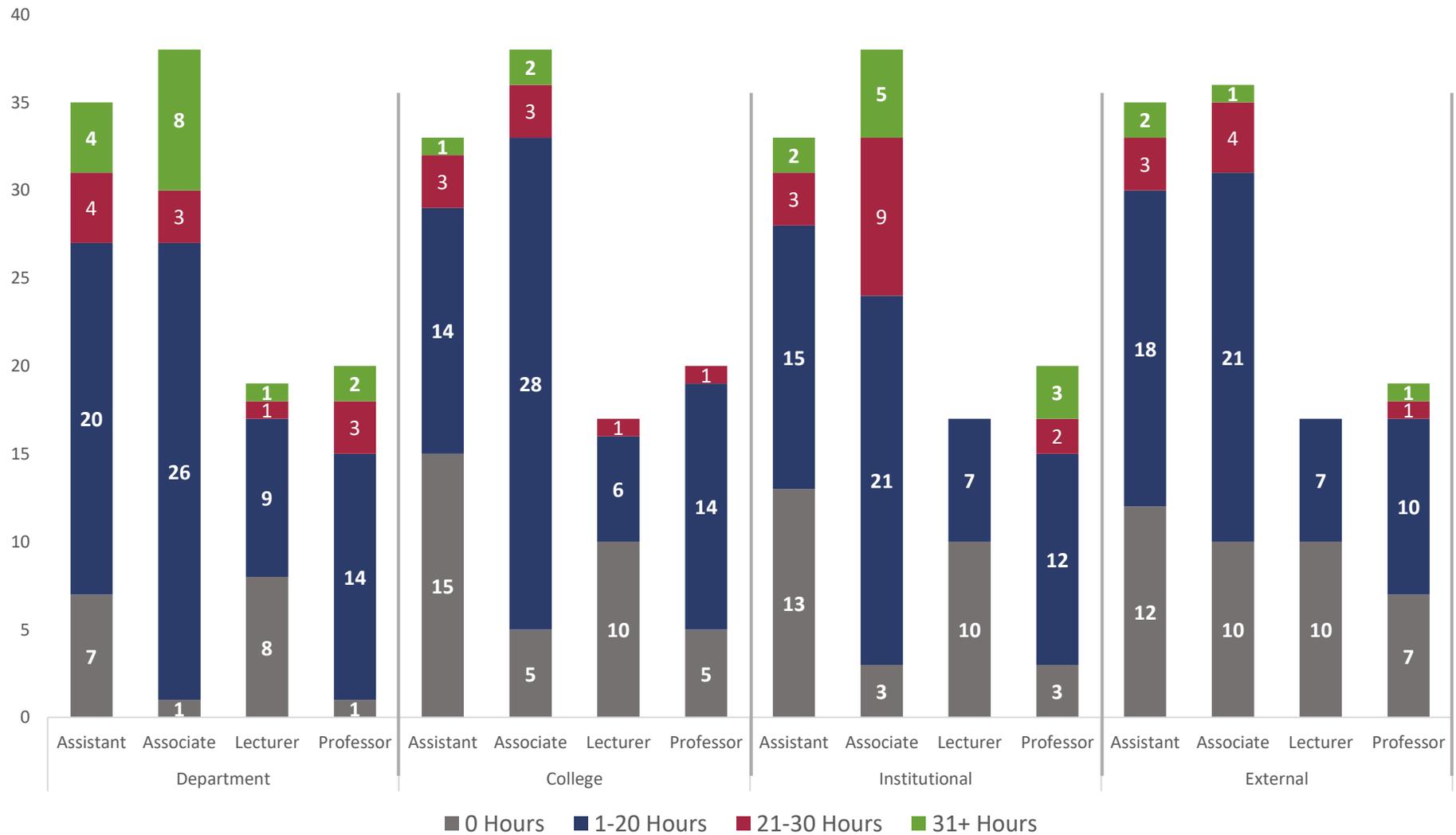
Notes: Examples of committee/ non-teaching commitments included faculty mentoring, search committees, department events

For Fall 2021, most faculty indicated that they are spending between 1 and 20 hours per month on committee work, regardless of type except for lecturers who are less likely to report being involved in committee work.



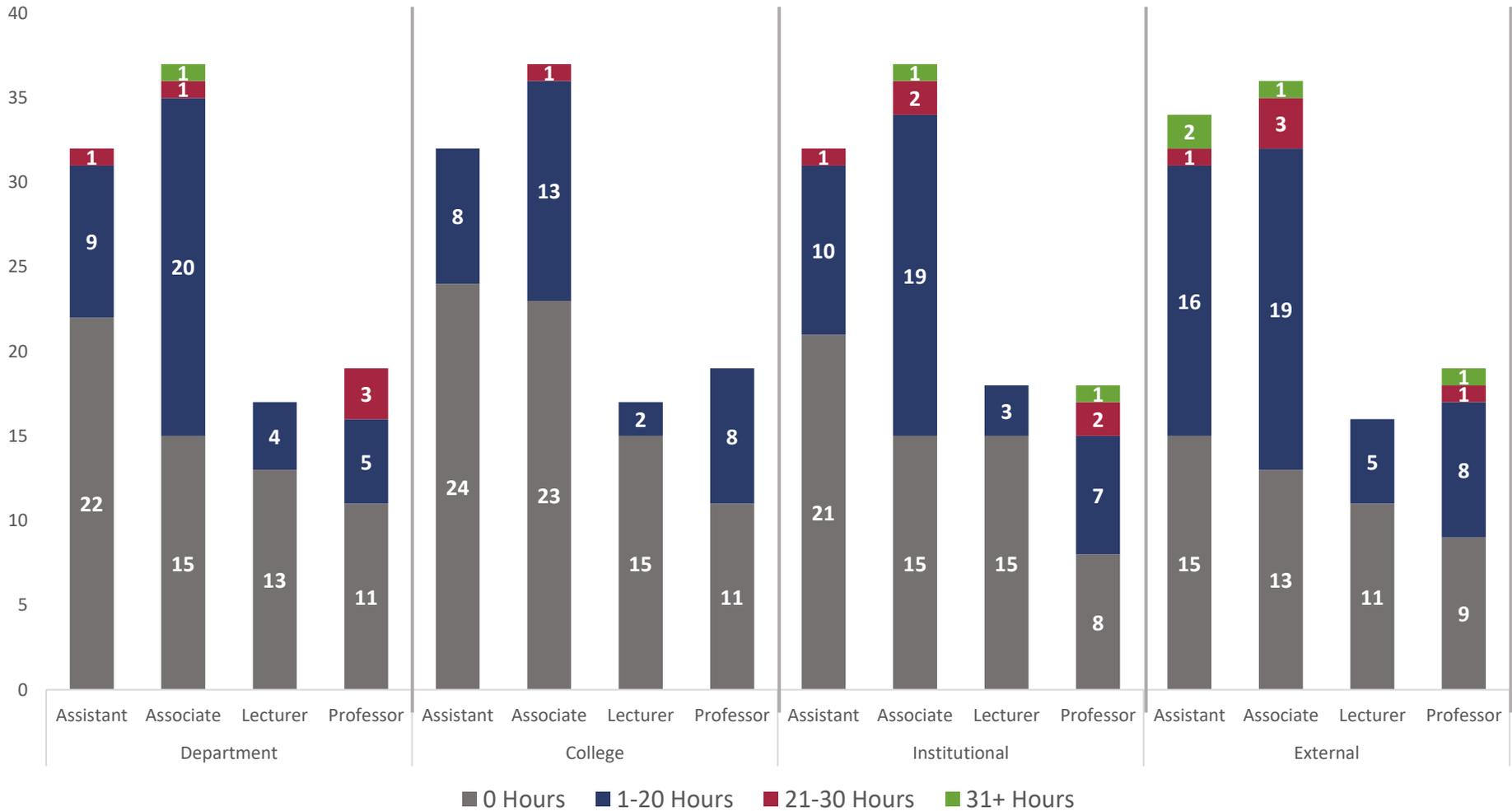
Notes: Numbers in the bars represent number of survey respondents, not percentages.
Total number of responses = 115

For Spring 2021, the same pattern emerged with most reporting they are spending between 1 and 20 hours on committee work, with the exception of lecturers.



Notes: Numbers in the bars represent number of survey respondents, not percentages.
Total number of responses = 115

For Summer 2021, most faculty indicated that they not engaging in committee work, however many Associate Faculty and Professors report remaining involved particularly in department, institutional, and external committee work during the summer.



Notes: Numbers in the bars represent number of survey respondents, not percentages.
Total number of responses = 115