A REPORT ON
ADMINISTRATOR
& FACULTY TIME

INTERFOLIO

Hard decisions take time, and that's *(mostly)* OK.

SERVICE IS A PILLAR OF ACADEMIA; IT CREATES the structure and governance for foundational activities, like teaching and research. And, just like teaching and research, it takes time—more time than we might think. A recent study at Boise State found that faculty spent approximately 17% of their workweek day collaboratively in meetings and 13% of the day on email—**that's 30% of faculty time not spent on pursuits like teaching, classroom prep, and research.**[1]

> *"The most surprising finding of our analysis of practices was that faculty spent approximately 17 percent of their workweek days in meetings."*
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> **– John Ziker in "The Long, Lonely Job of Homo academicus" (*The Blue Review*, March 31, 2014)**

In a sense, that's a surprising statistic. Academia is conceived—or rather, misconceived—as an Ivory Tower, where scholars are free to spend the vast majority of their time researching, writing, and disseminating knowledge (in fact, the same study found that primary research and manuscript writing took up only 3% and 2% of the faculty workweek day, respectively).[2]

Seen through another lens, however, the amount of time faculty spend in meetings and on committees is unsurprising. Every major decision that drives higher ed comes from the professional service of faculty members, from hiring to tenure. So it makes sense that committee and service work demands careful time and consideration.

But anyone who has engaged in academic service knows that it's so diffuse and all-encompassing that it becomes hard to quantify for administrators and faculty alike. In another survey of 830 administrators and faculty, **77% reported that time commitment was a significant obstacle to serving on a committee—"in-person logistics" was the second most cited issue at 63%.**[3]

When time is a precious commodity, even important committee-based service activities, like hiring and promotion, can become unanticipated barriers to a balanced work life.

A closer look at one of the most common committee activities shows how service-oriented time is being spent and how to best support faculty as they engage in this critical aspect of their profession.

Obstacles to Committee Service

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1   Ziker, John. "The Long, Lonely Job of Homo academicus," *The Blue Review*. March 31, 2014. (https://thebluereview.org/faculty-time-allocation/)

2   Ibid.

3   From a survey of 830 faculty and administrators performed by District Capital Partners in 2014. Of the 830 participants, 25% were administrators, 57% were full-time instructors, 3% were part-time instructors, and 15% "other," a majority of which were a blend of research, faculty, and administration. (District Capital Partners, November 2014)

Case Study:
Faculty Hiring

A COMMON AND EXTREMELY IMPORTANT expenditure of faculty time when it comes to professional service is faculty hiring. Defining a position and its requirements; collecting and organizing materials from hundreds of applicants; reading thousands of pages CVs, writing samples, and teaching statements; spending time to create a long list and then a short list; meeting with colleagues to discuss candidates; hosting interviews, visits, and job talks: it's no surprise that sitting on a hiring committee takes up a significant amount of time for faculty. But of all these tasks, the most common expenditure of time in the hiring process is spent reviewing applicant materials—**37% of faculty spent at least 21 hours per search reviewing dossiers, and 64% spent at least 11 hours.**[4]

Hours Spent Reviewing Dossiers

Not only is the hiring process time consuming in terms of overall hours; it's also a lengthy process over the course of an academic year. **In a survey** of administrators and faculty, 93% say at their faculty hiring process took at least three months, and 23% say it took over six months.[5]

That hiring would take a long time is not surprising considering the average size of hiring committees—**60% of committees have at least six members, and 16% have over eleven people involved.**[6]

While sitting on hiring committees, the three factors that those surveyed considered "extremely" or "very" important when considering a new faculty member were teaching ability, research accomplishments, and cultural fit. Coming in fourth was academic pedigree, which indicates that easy yes/no criteria were lower in importance than qualitative decisions like fit within the institution's culture.[7]

Information like this helps explain why hiring decisions take time to make. Finding a new colleague to contribute to the research, teaching, and culture of a department—especially with a limited hiring budget—is an involved, considered process with far reaching ramifications.

WE EXPECT PROFESSIONAL SERVICE TO TAKE TIME because it involves complicated decisions that are important to get right. With dozens of people working together for many months on a high stakes decision, technology is perfectly suited to streamline certain aspects of the process. Not to shorten the process or replace it, but to smooth out the administrative details. Simple steps, like eliminating paper and bringing logistics online, can reorient committee work to prioritize the most important, collaborative elements of professional service. ❧

4 From a survey of 426 faculty and administrators performed by Interfolio in 2014 to explore the expenditure of time on faculty searches and tenure review cases. All of those surveyed were sitting on hiring or promotion committees at the time of the survey. (Interfolio User Committee Survey, June, 2014)

5   Ibid.

6   Ibid.

7   Ibid.