



**TYCA Working Paper #4:**  
**Two-Year College English Faculty Service Workload**  
 Two-Year College English Association  
 Workload Task Force  
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 Authors: Brett Megan Griffiths, Holly Hassel, Kirsten  
 Higgins, and McKenna Wegner

### **Abstract/Summary**

In Fall of 2019, the Two-Year College English Association distributed a 39-question survey to two-year college English faculty through professional listservs, regional distribution lists, and social media platforms. We received 1,062 responses to questions about workload in the areas of teaching, service, and professional development. This working paper provides an overview of the types of service most regularly engaged by English faculty at two-year colleges (TYC) according to survey results. Categories of service included institutional and disciplinary or departmental. Participant responses showcased inequitable loads of service, with a small percentage of faculty shouldering the overwhelming burden of service at their campuses. Compensation for service varies widely among the respondents' institutional homes. Participants placed a high value on being involved in decision-making. However, they noted that service requirements sometimes interfere with what they identify as the primary component of their contractual employment, teaching. Responses suggested that definitions of what constitutes service, administrative responsibilities, or professional development in two-year colleges remain implicit and undefined, with overlap between these categories and confusion about roles and responsibilities. We suggest this confusion contributes to the perception that service work and disciplinary leadership are undervalued, if not invisible. Implications for this relationship may help us to understand the inequitable and disproportionate service roles highly-engaged faculty adopt.

### **Overview**

This report is one of a series of working papers designed to provide information to faculty, department chairs, deans, administrators, and researchers interested in questions related to workload among TYC English, Composition/Rhetoric, and Writing Studies instructors. The TYCA Workload Task Force aims to support sound, information-rich decision making by providing both quantitative and qualitative data about faculty workload. Relatively little existing scholarship illuminates the conditions and expectations associated with the service-related workload for two-year college scholars. Thus, the TYCA Workload Task Force set out to study TYC faculty workload and how it is structured and viewed, in terms of types of service, contractual load/valuing of service, and perceptions of inequities in requirement or type. This working paper reports the findings related to service.

Service is complex for TYC writing faculty. First, as participants illuminate, the requirements for, types of, and rating or compensation for service are implicit or undefined in many two-year college contexts. Two-year college faculty report that they feel the weight of such expectations, though they are not clearly articulated by contracts and institutional structures. As a result, some faculty reported involvement with multiple, overlapping service and leadership positions, with time commitments far exceeding the averages of their peers; some indicated they were unsure what counted as service for their departments, colleges, and discipline in terms of professional validation or compensation. Analysis from this inquiry highlighted real and perceived inequities both in time and resources. Despite their desire to participate in service, many faculty reported feeling burnt out, overwhelmed, or similar, and many also reported that inequities of expectation are significant within and across ranks and tenure-line status.

## **Literature Review**

Relatively limited research and resources exists on the role and activities of service within two-year colleges, generally, or TYC English faculty members, specifically. Scholars like Ernest Boyer (1990), Leonard Cassuto (2015), and Elaine Maimon (2018) have addressed the definition and scope of teaching, service, and research, aiming to both pinpoint the boundaries and define the nature of teaching, service, governance, administration, and research/professional development. Academic trade publications such as *InsideHigherEd* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* regularly publish features scrutinizing the effectiveness of shared governance and inequities in the areas of committee service, mentoring, and leadership (Chan, 2017; Williams, 2018; Olwell, 2019; Wilson, 2012). Disciplinary scholarship such as articles by Toth, Griffiths and Tirolf (2013) and Griffiths (2017) focus more specifically on the professional activities and identities of two-year college English faculty. None of this published work distills service (committees, governance, advising, mentoring, and other academic work not easily characterized in teaching or research/professional development) as a separate point of analysis. In light of this dearth, it may be helpful to consider the contributions of WPA scholarship that focuses on two-year colleges. There, explorations ask work is done and by whom, raising questions regarding the visibility and perceived validity (or lack thereof) of department-level and campus-level leadership and service by TYC writing instructors (Calhoon-Dillahunt, 2011; Janangelo and Klausman, 2012; Ostmann, 2013; Tinoco, 2018).

## **Methods**

This working paper presents the results of a mixed methods analysis of survey responses about the workload of two-year college English faculty and the effects of workload on educator effectiveness. The survey included six demographic questions, 28 closed-ended items that asked respondents to select from a list of possible responses, and five open-ended items. The survey was distributed to TYCA members and other two-year college instructors during Fall 2019; 1,062 participants completed the survey. The TYCA Workload Task Force conducted a mixed-methods analysis of responses to the survey, using descriptive statistics to analyze closed-ended responses. We also applied iterative thematic analyses of open-ended responses to survey questions using Dedoose (a web-based platform for collaborative coding).

In the service-centered portion of the survey, respondents were asked to answer close-ended questions about the type and nature of their workload related to service, including the contractual obligations for service, the types of institutional service work completed, type of disciplinary service involved, the number of hours spent per week, leadership roles undertaken, and compensation received. Respondents were also invited to further comment on their service

responsibilities with open-ended questions: “What other comments would you like to make about your workload as it relates to service?” This question generated 156 total number of open-ended written responses that were coded iteratively by multiple coders. Thirty total codes were applied, with 532 code applications. The most frequently appearing codes were grouped into categories, and themes were developed. The most common code applications related to the type and value of service, compensation for service in terms of funding or release time, and the impact service activities had on instructors’ working lives (including their teaching and professional growth) and the cost-benefit balance resulting from their efforts.

### **Limitations**

One important limitation to this analysis was the committee’s inability to anticipate the wide range of terms and language necessary to capture the diverse roles faculty assumed. This became clearer to us as respondents offered alternate terms for various roles, including coordinator, lead, manager, etc. for each ad-hoc leadership role, including many as-yet unnamed, unrecognized, and typically uncompensated at their institutions. Our inability to anticipate these variations in the response options we provided necessarily limited our participants’ responses. Throughout our analysis, we emphasize the ways that service roles at two-year colleges remain unnamed and implicit—perhaps much more than at other kinds of institutions. This analysis highlights an overall lack of clarity about what constitutes adequate or appropriate levels of service, what faculty can reasonably expect in terms of compensation and or materials for support, and how connected their service should be to their disciplinary expertise and professional growth. We discuss other limitations in the TYCA Workload Task Force report "[The Profession of Teaching English in the Two-Year College: Findings from the 2019 TYCA Workload Survey.](#)"

### **The Scope of Two-Year College English Service Work: Overall Perceptions about and Performance of Service**

Of the 923 responses to this survey question, 609 (66%) described service as a defined element of their working contracts. An additional 205 (22%) indicated they contributed to their institutions through service even though service was not a defined element in their contracts. Of those 205 respondents, 162 (17.6% of all participants) indicated their service was uncompensated, while 43 (4.7%) conducted non-contractual service for additional compensation.

In an attempt to define categories of service, survey questions distinguished between institutional service and disciplinary service, including disciplinary leadership positions. Multiple-choice responses invited respondents to identify contractual definitions of service at their institution and to select among four categories of institutional committees with an option for adding service work not listed. For disciplinary service, respondents identified service commitments to their institutions that were disciplinary in nature (including those involving placement, developmental education curriculum, writing center administration beyond contractual role) and selected from categories of disciplinary leadership roles they held within their institutions and within disciplinary organizations, whether regional or national. Finally, two questions asked respondents to quantify their weekly time commitments for service. These responses showed that faculty spend an average of 2.15 hours on service per week, with an important subset of respondents (135 or 17%) spending ten or more hours on service per week.

For more specific discussion of the amounts, types, and distribution of service workload, we recommend reviewing the TYCA Workload Task Force report "The Profession of Teaching English in the Two-Year College: Findings from the 2019 TYCA Workload Survey."

We grouped the responses to the open-ended question focused on service, "What other comments would you like to make about your workload as it relates to service?" into four categories: "Types of Service," "Value of Service," "Compensation for Service," and "Impact of Service." Within those categories, we identify trends and emphases in the service workload of the survey respondents.

**Types of Service:** The open-ended question did not specifically ask respondents to identify the types of service they participated in. A summary of responses to closed-ended questions can be found in the [TYCA Report on Quantitative Results of the TYCA Workload Survey](#), which showed departmental committee work comprises the bulk of institutional service, with 680 (32%) of respondents serving on institutional committees and 666 (31%) of respondents serving on department-level committees. We coded open-ended responses according to the scope or context of the service that respondents participate in: institutional (including departmental or divisional); administration, governance, student-focused service, assessment, and community. Most respondents identified institutional service (including departmental) as the largest part of their service workload. In an earlier closed-ended question, institutional service types that respondents could select from included "department committees, program committees, institutional or campus committees, state system committees, or other."

Participation in institutional service was far-ranging, with respondents identifying work comprising service on committees, placement practices, student retention, grant-work, advising, leadership roles, department chair work, hiring committees, and campus initiatives, or as one respondent elaborated: "experiential learning projects, writing across the curriculum, software/LMS development or implementation." Another respondent identified less formal committee service and work that isn't defined as governance or professional development but instead is woven into the daily workload of faculty members who are "expected to serve on committees, attend workshops and meetings, be club sponsors, mentor, develop curriculum, serve on task forces, do PLA assessment, do co-curricular programming, observe adjuncts, and the list goes on and on." Much less frequently represented were service activities that involved administrative responsibilities, governance committees like faculty senates or councils, mentoring or club advising service, participation in accreditation and assessment activities, and community service. Though we included a question on the survey that asked about union membership, there was not a separate opportunity for respondents to select "union activity" as a specific type of service. Further analysis of the data on union membership is a future area of study for the TYCA Workload Task Force.

Responses sometimes had overlapping or perhaps unclear definitions of what constituted what types of service. For example, some respondents identified work that might be characterized as governance, such as department chair responsibilities, as administrative, while others used "administrative" to mean clerical functions. In developing the language of the survey questions, we did not specifically offer definitions for what constitutes different types of service, governance, or administrative work. Though there are some established definitions within the literature of higher education on how to distinguish types of work, they are not used consistently across institution types or structures. We identified some recurring areas of service work that appeared throughout the responses:

- **Administration:** Service categorized as administrative tended to involve a level of leadership or coordination; this might include a developmental writing coordinator, writing program coordinator, chair or vice chair, or writing center director position.
- **Governance:** Service roles categorized as governance included those that might be traditionally defined as governance like faculty or staff senate or councils, but they also could include departmental committees that have clearly spelled out oversight and accountability for an area like assessment, promotion and evaluation, or curriculum management.
- **Student Focused Service:** Activities defined as student-focused service included those duties like mentoring and academic advising or serving as an advisor to student groups.
- **Assessment:** Work categorized as assessment included coordinating assessment of student learning or programs, working on accreditation of programs or courses, and supporting or training colleagues in assessment work.
- **Community:** Service of this type included outreach to community groups or stakeholders, offering courses through continuing education, connecting with K-12 schools, or other service that involved audience external to the institution.

***Compensation for Service:*** While this open-ended service question did not directly ask respondents to state their contractual obligations or compensation, several respondents described their workload in relation to compensation for service. We were able to categorize responses according to the type of compensation given for service work. Participants most frequently described service work as uncompensated. A second set of participants identified the compensation that they received as formal recognition or social capital. A third set of respondents specified that they received time compensation (such as release or reassignment time). Of the responses that identified financial compensation, most responses suggested this compensation was included (implicitly or explicitly) in the contractual salary, with very few identifying additional compensation for additional service.

Within this section, we report on the ways that respondents understood different components of their service work. For example, it was sometimes unclear how instructors understood their work responsibilities, such as the relationship between their appointment and whether service is a required part of it.

***Uncompensated:*** Several respondents indicated in their responses that various types of service work are not compensated. One respondent stated, “My institution requires all full-time faculty to participate on one committee. We are not compensated for that work.” Several of these responses reflect their institutions stated or unstated expectations about service responsibilities. However, frequently respondents indicated this work is uncompensated. Uncompensated service work is defined by a lack of recognition, time, or monetary compensation. Another respondent describing uncompensated work wrote, “Serving on committees—even at the state level—does not generally include a workload reduction for a faculty member at my college.” It was unclear in the responses whether respondents identified service as a component of a salaried position or saw service on committees as a separate component of work that they did not see as part of their primary responsibilities. Many respondents described service work that was completed in addition to contractual obligations. This was coded as uncompensated service. This additional work was not necessarily volunteer-based, as respondents' comments indicated that they felt compelled to do this work in order to ensure appropriate functioning of their departments, programs, or institutions.

***Recognition or Social Capital:*** Some respondents indicated they receive recognition or social capital compensation for service work. Some stated service work is considered for instructors

seeking tenure or promotion. However, respondents again stated there is a lack of clarity surrounding service expectations and how this work is recognized, valued, and measured by administration.

**Time:** Time in the form of course releases (sometimes also called “reassigned time”) was listed as a form of compensation sometimes given to instructors for service work. One respondent stated, “All our ALP instructors get one credit hour of compensated time for program coordination.” Most respondents who received additional time as a method of compensation received it in the form of course releases for departmental service. One said, “My course load is reduced because I am a department head, and I receive a small stipend.”

**Money:** Respondents also discussed receiving monetary compensation for service work. Types of compensation typically included summer stipends, an academic year stipend compensated at the overload rate (for full-time faculty), and non-teaching hourly rates calculated based on typical compensation rates for teaching duties (for adjunct/contingent faculty).

**Value on Service:** Despite noting challenges related to manageability, imposed reforms, and lack of time, respondents also seemed to want to do service, particularly as connected to mission and student-centered work.

**Manageability** appeared frequently as a code in the open-ended responses. Frequent responses noted that service work is exhausting or endless. Thus, one respondent wrote, “My work at the college (I’m sure that you are hearing this with great frequency) is so exhausting that I feel I have nothing left to give” and another noted, “The service work is endless. I feel guilty that I don’t do more because so many of my colleagues are stretched beyond reasonable limits.” Balancing the responsibilities between teaching and service, one respondent noted, is part of their workload: “Service can be an important part of our job, but when it comes on top of the already heavy teaching load, it can feel ‘extra’ and unnecessary.”

**Imposed Reforms or Mandates of Service and Implicit Expectations:** Respondents observed that much of their service emerged from reforms imposed at the administrative or state-level, and that mandatory service obligations are murkily defined. Typical responses illustrating this trend include: “College service expected but not ‘rated’”; “None, but it is expected. We were told not to ever say no if we want to earn tenure”; “The actual day-to-day workload is more than what is written in our contract in terms of time and duties required”; “a heavy expectation on my campus but rather unclear about exactly how much or what kind is best as far as approaching tenure and promotion”; and “The cultural expectations at my college are that you say ‘yes’ to anything that administration asks of you, even beyond contractual expectations.” Common refrains around the contractual expectations and implicit expectations echoed throughout responses.

**Lack of Time:** Perhaps directly related to implied and uncompensated service expectations is the lack of time that TYC English faculty described for service as it relates to other job expectations. One respondent noted that “For the most part, service is what eats up your day, your week, your month, your year. Between all the work we do for students, we fill the day with service things. And that’s where our time goes,” echoed by comments such as “I am so overwhelmed with paper grading, required committee work, and required professional development that I cannot take on additional service,” and “The actual day-to-day workload is more than what is written in our contract in terms of time and duties required.” The relationship between teaching and service duties—and a struggle to balance these two components of the workload—is clearly emphasized in the responses.

***Investment in and Intrinsic Rewards:*** Respondents, despite grappling with the balance between their various workload responsibilities, also noted the satisfaction they derived from service responsibilities. This was reflected in remarks like "I love the work and it's important—I wouldn't do it otherwise," "It does help with the advancement of pedagogical practices as well as the improvement of our courses," and "I enjoy service as much as teaching-I like helping to run things."

***Lack of Institutional Resources:*** The lack of institutional resources to participate in service to the profession or simply outside the campus also showed up among responses. In particular, faculty referenced TYCA (which is likely connected to the fact that TYCA is the organization that distributed the survey). Typical comments included expressing a desire to be more involved beyond the campus: "I wish my college would support (financially, travel etc.) my TYCA work"; and "I wish that I was doing more service at the state and national level. My work at the college (I'm sure that you are hearing this with great frequency) is so exhausting that I feel I have nothing left to give national organizations, save for my role on the journal. And this is a great regret."

***Impacts of Service:*** The code "Impacts of Service" emerged from across the responses that identified both the importance of service to the quality of working environments, and the interaction between the type of service activity and its perceived value to the individual or to the larger program also factored into how respondents perceived their service activities. Some challenges identified included a) how to account for how service is performed as part of one's workload, b) the lack of transparency about what service is being done and who is doing it, c) is recognized by the institution or body served by the specific service task. Put another way, respondents consistently observed that service work is unevenly accounted for and even when there is a system, there are flaws in it.

Further, a theme throughout the data is that two-year college English faculty service workload is very heavy; there's a general sense that service can interfere with or diminish their ability to perform at the level preferred in the classroom/focus on and meet the needs of students. This is illustrated by the result that only 66% of our respondents indicated that service is defined as part of their contract yet 22% indicated that they perform service though it is not explicitly contractual.

Beyond this quantitative distinction, many faculty mentioned concerns about inequities in terms of the level or type of work required as well as the calculation or consideration of workload. Inequities were mentioned as occurring both at the same ranks and across ranks, and both in terms of requirements and in terms of compensation. In addition, some faculty mentioned that their institutions struggle with an insufficient number of faculty, particularly in terms of full-time or tenure-line faculty, to serve on committees. Respondents expressed concerns that these inequities and the service load itself could be degrading the quality of teaching. In addition, concerns about burnout, whether named as such or described in different terms, were high.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

Faculty participants described interest and willingness to conduct service that informed their teaching and/or directly informed students' experiences. Participants described such experiences, including reforming assessment and placement practices, contributing to disciplinary work through TYCA or CCCC, and committee work tied directly to teaching and student support in generally positive terms. However, participants also noted that English faculty

may bear a disproportionate burden for service because English and Math are often tasked with revising curricular elements, including those stemming from their disciplines and those directed down through state-wide and privately funded mandates. More, they described service loads increasing over time in ways that drew on their energies for teaching and supporting students. Finally, participants seemed to suggest that increased pressures to contribute to institutional housekeeping as a form of service, such as creating websites, pulled them from their disciplinary conversations and may negatively impact their teaching.

The survey responses suggest that the service component of two-year college English faculty work is implicit and undefined. More, the boundaries are porous and overlapping. In particular, national and state initiatives increase both the kinds and number of institutional projects aimed at increasing student completion. TYC faculty are increasingly called to lead changes in assessment, placement, developmental reform and pathways reforms, and transfer articulation. Unclear and poorly defined expectations lead colleges to leverage faculty good will and emotional commitment to student experiences. As a result, faculty who are highly engaged in such initiatives are—as this survey suggests—overcommitted with no recourse to address the issue of creeping service obligations and its impact on work experiences and the cost benefit of their participation. Gonzales and Ayers in their 2018 article in *The Review of Higher Education* argue that "community college faculty members are particularly vulnerable to expectations of emotional labor" (457–458), asserting that community colleges may have an implicitly "softened expectation that faculty members act on their passions and commitments, on their vocational sensibilities in the name of serving others or perhaps democratizing higher education" such that this commitment "becomes a resource for fiscally strapped community colleges" (464). Our own survey results suggest there is validity to this observation.

For the two-year college faculty member in English, participation in scholarship may include attending and/or presenting at a conference, and service credit might be granted to the faculty member who presents that work for faculty peers at one's own institutions. The survey results suggest that two-year colleges have diverse and sometimes unclear expectations for and definitions of the range of service, advising, mentoring, and administrative tasks that many survey respondents identified as important components of their work.

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### **Resources for Further Study**

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### **For More Information**

For more information about the TYCA workload project and additional reports, see <https://ncte.org/groups/tyca/tyca-position-statements/>.