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Date: Thursday, October 6, 2022 at 4:38 PM
Subject: Potential Change in Associate Faculty Flex requirements?

Note: This below email was originally sent in 2022, and in March of 2026 it has been slightly edited for grammar and clarity.

Dear Senate and AFA colleagues, As you know, Anne [Donegan] and I have been working hard to streamline the Professional Development accounting processes on campus, and in the process, we have identified an area of potential improvement that falls squarely in both AFA and Senate purview. (I've pasted relevant sections from the contract and professional development website at the end of this email, below the signature line.)

It is our judgment that the current procedure our institution uses to determine associate faculty Flex obligations (a) generates significant inequalities & gaps in professional development among associate faculty, (b) causes unnecessary confusion and stress, and (c) causes unnecessary work for our classified colleagues.

Right now, whether and how much Flex associate faculty members are obligated to complete each semester is determined by a calculation of how many hours they teach/work on a given set of days of the week (different days in the Fall semester and Spring semesters) and only applies to associate faculty teaching full semester-length courses. Here are the problems that arise from that.

(a) Inequity and PD gaps. Associate faculty members who teach fully online asynchronous classes, or who teach classes in half-semester formats, or teach, for instance, only on Mondays, are never required to complete Flex. Some associate faculty members who teach in person are required to complete much more flex compared to other associate faculty members who teach the exact same amount in person, based solely on the accident of what days their departments scheduled them to teach. Combined, this means that professional development demands on our associate faculty members is significantly unequal.

(b) Confusion and stress. Because the calculation of flex obligation owed by associate faculty is calculated on the basis of complex inputs, it is difficult for an associate faculty to know, when they are accepting an assignment, how much flex obligation will come with that assignment, and whether that obligation has been properly calculated. It is easy for them to miss the fact that they owe Flex until they receive a notice that their Flex is missing and their pay may be docked. It is also hard for those who might help associate faculty understand their obligations (chairs, fellow faculty members, etc.) to provide that help.

(c) Because of the complexity itself, and the confusion caused by it, classified staff members are doing a bunch of behind the scenes work to determine Flex obligations for associate faculty members, to field questions about Flex obligations that differ from instructor to instructor, and to help trouble shoot and enforce requirements at the end of each semester for associate faculty so their pay doesn't get docked.

Our understanding is that the current system came about because the District thought that associate faculty whose classes fell on a professional development day, and thus did not meet with students, would essentially be "*getting paid for nothing*" on that day. And, so, they require associate faculty to complete the flex requirement *in lieu* of the teaching they would have done if there had been no professional development day. (Perhaps they thought state law requires this? Does state law require this? In any case...) ← [Update, March 2026: The Chancellor's office offers guidelines on how these are supposed to be calculated.](#)

*This reasoning is based on an outdated notion of the relationship between effective teaching and 'meeting with students'. We are all responsible for teaching the same content to our students regardless of how many hours we spend with them in a classroom. And in fact, it is often MORE work to teach students when you have less face-to-face time with them. So, if some associates meet with their students for 1.5 hours fewer in a semester than another associate faculty member teaching the same course, they are not working **less**, they are just working **differently**,*

and sometimes **more**. Hence, when the district requires them to complete professional development hours in lieu of the class time they didn't teach because of a professional development day, they are not swapping professional development duties for teaching duties, they are adding extra (unpaid) work onto those associate faculty members. And they are doing this unequally -- burdening some associate faculty with lots of unpaid PD requirements and others with none.

We think a much simpler and more equitable way to determine associate Flex obligations would be to tether the obligation (whatever it is) to the percentage load assigned in a given semester (just for example, associates owe 1 hour Flex for each .20% load they are assigned in a semester). The practical questions this would raise for the Senate and AFA and the District are: How many Flex hours should be required of associate faculty? How many Flex hours would the district agree to pay associate faculty for? And, of course, there are values questions behind these....how does an institution that values top notch instruction put those values into practice? Here are some scenarios...

- **No cost (or cost savings) option for the district:** Release all associate faculty from the current (unequal) system. Require no professional development from any associate faculty. Do not pay associate faculty for professional development. [We could still invite associates to participate and allow them to report Flex professional development through their portal to create a record in case it would be useful for them.] Cost savings would come in eliminating the behind-the-scenes accounting for and enforcing of associate flex.
- **Small cost option for the district:** Do not require any professional development for associate faculty but offer to pay associate faculty for up to (x hours) / (percent load) of optional professional development at their hourly rate.
- **High-cost option for the district:** Require all associate faculty to engage in professional development for (x hours) / (units taught) and compensate them for this time. (Or, if you can get the Chancellor's office to change how they administer the Flex program, perhaps you could get the state to increase pay in line with this PD requirement?)

These above scenarios are not meant as recommendations, but rather as examples of scenarios that would be less time-consuming for staff, less confusing for associate faculty, and more equal for everyone compared to our current system.

Pres. Chong recently asked us all to consider what work we are currently doing that we shouldn't be doing anymore. Enforcing an unequal and outdated system of professional development obligations for associate faculty seems like one such workstream that should be retired.

We hope the Senate and AFA will be willing to take up this question, and to solicit in particular the feedback from our associate colleagues about which system would best support them in providing high quality instruction. Please let us know, at your convenience, how we should proceed in pursuing this.

Relevant AFA contract language: 22.03.C. Adjunct Faculty Flexible Calendar Program Obligation

1. Adjunct faculty members may be required to participate in approved professional development activities during the current semester.

- a. Only those adjunct faculty members who have semester-length instructional assignments are subject to this requirement.
- b. The number of hours required will be equal to the number of total hours of the faculty member's daily assignments for those days of the week on which the mandatory institutional and designated flexible activity days occur during the semester. (These days are designated in the approved academic calendar.)
- c. Each adjunct faculty member **will be compensated*** for his/her required professional development activities. The compensation is equivalent to his/her compensation for daily assignments that fall on the

days of the week of the mandatory institutional and designated flexible activity days for the semester. An adjunct faculty member who does not complete the required hours of professional development activities for the semester may file a Notice of Absence form; failure to file a Notice of Absence form by the dates established by the District related to the last payroll deadline of each semester will result in the loss of this compensation.

*Alexa's commentary: It is disingenuous to call this compensation as I am reading it. See my italicized note above. Please correct me if you think my reasoning is wrong.

2. To fulfill professional activities obligations, adjunct faculty members may participate in mandatory institutional day activities or in flexible activities (section 22.03.B.1). 3. Contract faculty members with overload assignments do not have any additional mandatory or flexible activities obligations due to those overload assignments.

Info as presented on the Professional Development website (<https://pd.santarosa.edu/flex-program>):

WHAT ARE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND AM I REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THEM?

SRJC has identified rotating flex days on the Academic Calendar for professional development. These days are paid working days and, as such, **must be accountable to the state auditors***. Thus SRJC must require participation in Faculty Professional Development Flex Activities and document how those days are used. Please refer to the faculty contract/MOU for updated information regarding the Academic Calendar and paid working days for associates.

*Alexa's commentary: What does this mean in an age of multi-modal and asynchronous teaching? What exactly does the state require of us?

HOW IS MY FLEX OBLIGATION CALCULATED?

[Note, the below language was current as of 2022 but is no longer current]

Associate Faculty (including Unit A, not including Unit B):

Associate faculty flex obligations are equal to the total number of hours taught in **full-semester** classes on the designated days each semester. Refer to the Board approved Academic Calendar. The designated days for this Academic Year are:

Fall - Wednesday and Friday
Spring - Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

Co-taught classes may generate pro-rated flex hour obligations for associate faculty members. Contact Professional Development if you co-teach a full-semester class to determine your obligation.

- Go to your Faculty Portal to “Check Your Flex” obligation and monitor your flex account status on a regular basis.
- Associate Faculty will be able to fulfill their obligation on the institutional day or through flex activities that take place during the semester in which they teach. Flex credit can be earned for pre-approved activities that take place during summer (beginning on July 1) for the fall semester or beginning during winter break for the spring semester.
- Please note: Associate faculty run the risk of not being paid for flex hours completed in advance of the semester, if a change to their teaching schedule results in a change (decrease) to their flex obligation.