

Legislators examine university efficiency, professor workload

By EVAN BERLAND
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Public higher education and professors' workloads are coming under increased scrutiny in several states as legislators look to trim the fat from state budgets.

Legislators in South Carolina, North Carolina and Ohio want studies done to examine how hard professors work and how efficiently universities are run. But faculty members fear legislators will look only at the amount of time they

spend in the classrooms.

"You cannot measure the workload by a professor's contact hours with students in class," said George Reeves, interim provost at the U. of South Carolina.

"That would be like saying you can judge a lawyer's hours by how much time he spends in court. There's a lot of work behind the scenes."

The "assessment movement" is a result of public skepticism about the work that goes on at universities, said Pat Hutchings, director of the American Association of Higher

Education's Teaching Initiative.

Hutchings said professors can be evaluated, but legislators must examine all facets of their work. "The number of hours in class is just the tip of the iceberg," she said.

"I work seven days a week and put in at least nine to 10 hours a day," said Harold Laude, professor of management at Bowling Green U. He said some professors might leave academia in lieu of teaching at institutions that de-emphasize the importance of research. "I work as hard now as I did as a senior executive for General Motors," he said.

Graduation

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At Emory U., a private school in Atlanta, the majority of students finish their studies within the traditional four-year period, said C. R. Nicolaysen, Emory's registrar.

"Our conclusion is that this is primarily because of the nature of Emory University. We are a highly professional, degree-oriented program," Nicolaysen said.

Emory doesn't offer many night school programs, he said. Part-time students enrolled in such programs tend to lower a school's rates by taking longer to complete their degrees.

Ann Corbett, registrar at the U. of Maine, said because of the high number of non-traditional students at her school, a four-year student there is rare.

"Most students take an average of 6.5 credits per semester, so it takes about double the length of time to get an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree," Corbett said.

The four-year student at California State U., Fresno, is so rare the school doesn't even calculate a four-year graduation rate, said Jeannine Raymond, acting director of institutional research at CSU, Fresno.

Raymond said 36 percent of the entering class of 1984 graduated in five years. Sixty-one percent finished after eight.

In contrast, the numbers are consistently high at Brown U., a private school where graduation rates range from 77.8 percent after four years to 94.2 percent after six.

And at the U. of Notre Dame, the four-year rate is even higher — about 88 percent, said Mary Jean Johnson, director of Notre Dame's institutional research department.

But some students say staying in school an extra year or two has its advantages.

"I'm glad I'm in school," said Frank Endom, an Emory senior who is in his eighth year of college. "I get to stay in school and wait the recession out. Nobody I know has real jobs. I'm three courses away from completing three majors."

The recession and poor job market also played a role in Clint Coover's decision to spend five years at K-State.

"I'm still in school because I know I can't get a job," Coover said. "I could have graduated a semester earlier than I will, but I decided to go ahead and take nine hours my last semester and just stay in school because it's cheaper to stay in school than it is to go out and try to find a job."

Blaine Elliott, a student at the U. of North Carolina at Greensboro, said he would be lucky to graduate in six years, partially because of financial considerations.

But the extra time doesn't bother him. "I'm in no big hurry, and I have no problem taking (my) time," Elliott said.

■ *Mark Engler, The Kansas State Collegian, Kansas State U., and Mary Beth Jannakos, The Campus Press, U. of Colorado, contributed to this story.*

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