



**James E. Rogers**  
**Chancellor**

**Nevada System of Higher Education**

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 22, 2008

**TO:** NSHE Board of Regents

**FROM:** James E. Rogers  
 Chancellor

**RE: RESPONSE TO FACULTY WORK LOAD**

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It is interesting that all of us have the same feelings about someone else's work. We tend to think that everyone other than ourselves is not very bright, didn't learn anything in school, has bad judgment, is lazy, and is totally unproductive. We also tend to believe that if someone is paid more than we, are that person must be overpaid regardless of the person's education and experience. I have found that one of the allegations of inefficiency made against higher education is that "the university professors don't do any work. They only teach six hours a week. And the rest of the time they either do nothing or contemplate and analyze issues that are of no importance." To dispel that belief, which I have found to be without merit, I'm sending you the story that was told to me by the president of a major university and an analysis made by the Chancellor's staff of the workload of college professors.

This is a true story.

In a city that houses a major university, a television anchor in that city went to a press conference held by the university president. After the president had finished his talk and was asking for questions from the press, the news anchor said the following to the president: "I have done extensive research on the amount of time that your full professors with Ph.D.s in their specialties actually spend in the classroom. My findings are that your professors who have been there at least 10 years, only teach six hours per week. Assuming that they spend 30 weeks a year in the classroom that means they are actually in the classroom 180 hours. Your average full professor makes a salary of \$120,000 a year. As I calculate it they are paid about \$660 an hour for their time. Don't you think that is absolutely outrageous?"

To this the president responded: “It’s funny you should bring up the subject because I’ve had our communications department analyze how much time you, as the main anchor on your station, are delivering the news for which we understand you are paid \$300,000 a year. You appear five days a week in two 30-minute news programs. In a 30-minute news program, there are seven minutes used for ads and promotions. Of the 23 remaining minutes, sports uses three minutes, weather uses four minutes, and special reports by your other primary news gatherers use a total of four minutes. That leaves 12 minutes. Of the 12 remaining minutes when you and your co-anchor are on the air reading the news, which you may or may not have written, you use six minutes to inform the public and your co-anchor uses the other six minutes. That means that each day, you’re actually spending 12 minutes reading the news. Twelve minutes per day times five days is one hour per week. At \$300,000 per year, for 50 weeks, you make \$6,000 per hour.”

To this startling response the news anchor replied, “You don’t understand. It takes 40-50 hours a week of research and preparation, and years of experience to be able to present the news each night.”

To this the president replied, “You get my point, don’t you?”

Before those on the outside make accusations of the lack of production by university professors they should look at the facts, among which are:

- 1) The professors are at the top of the intellectual scale. The great majority of the public could never do what the professors do.
- 2) After the university professors receive their bachelor’s degree, they spend at least another six years in college finishing their Ph.D.s, including writing their dissertations. For the 10 years they spent in college, other than the odd jobs they had, they paid their own way and had no substantial income. Ten years at 40 hours per week for 50 weeks a year is 20,000 hours. How many outsiders ever invested 20,000 hours to learn their occupations? Once in the academic arena it took years of hard work, research, and dedication to go from assistant professor to associate professor to full professor. And other than in exceptional cases, for example medical school professors, less than one percent with Ph.D.s will ever earn \$300,000 per year or an amount even close to that.
- 3) If we analyze how many hours it takes to teach a one-hour class, one has to consider the preparation necessary. For the average three-credit class, it requires a professor six weeks to prepare the syllabus: that is creating the course of study and reviewing the literature to determine what has been published recently that is relevant and seminal. If the professor has taught the course before, it may require only four weeks, but an effective professor always updates his or her syllabus. During the semester, a professor must prepare for each lecture anew, grade assignments, and often meet with students.
- 4) Full professors have high expectations and requirements placed on them for research, publishing, community service, and advising. The following is the

bird's-eye view of the minimum hours that most professors work in an average week teaching, conducting research, supervising graduate students, advising, and publishing.

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Weekend</b>
Class- 1 hr	Class – 1.5 hr	Class – 1 hr	Class – 1.5 hr	Class – 1 hr	
Class prep and grading – 1 hr	Class prep and grading – 1 hr	Class prep and grading – 1 hr	Class prep and grading – 1 hr	Class prep and grading – 1 hr	
Meet with students – 1 hr	Meet with students – 1.5 hr	Meet with students – 1 hr	Meet with students – 1.5 hr	Meet with students – 1 hr	
Lab – 2 hrs	Lab – 2 hrs	Lab – 2 hrs	Lab – 2 hrs	Lab – 2 hrs	Lab – 3 hrs
Study to stay current in research & teaching – 2 hrs	Study to stay current in research & teaching – 2 hrs	Study to stay current in research & teaching – 2 hrs	Study to stay current in research & teaching – 2 hrs	Study to stay current in research & teaching – 2 hrs	Study to stay current in research & teaching – 2 hrs
Writing for publication – 1 hr	Writing for publication – 1 hr	Writing for publication – 1 hr	Writing for publication – 1 hr	Writing for publication – 1 hr	Writing for publication – 2 hrs
University/ Department meetings - 2 hours			University/ department meetings – 2 hours		

A random survey of faculty of how many hours each week they worked indicates that it is over 80 hours. You may find this to be new and shocking news, but my estimate is based on what I see professors doing. I believe that 53 hours per week, shown in the table above, is an underestimate. The innumerable hours of study, research, and writing make these professors the professors we want to be teaching at our institutions.

Many excessive expectations and requirements are placed on the faculty for the salary they receive. If you talk with most of them, you will find they are never NOT working. Faculty workload studies have been commissioned in state after state, and taken together, the studies indicate that faculty members are working harder than ever. The System is fortunate to have outstanding scholars who work far more than 40 hours per week because they are scholars, not clock-watchers. They have a genuine interest in raising the quality of higher education in Nevada.