

**Roles and Rewards:  
Faculty Work Patterns and Quality of Professional Life  
at Calvin College**  
November, 2005

## **I. Purpose of the Study**

Commissioned by the current Strategic Plan and originating in the Academic Council, this study was designed to determine:

- if and how faculty work patterns and support for work have been changing,
- how the expectations and conditions of faculty work affect the quality of professional life,
- how we might improve the quality of life for the faculty.

More generally, the purpose of this study was to compel ourselves to give ear to the faculty, to flesh out the stories behind data such as the HERI survey numbers, and, most importantly, to initiate responses to what we all learn.

There may be more negative than positive observations cited in this report, but that reflects the purpose of the report: to uncover both concerns and paths to improvement. Calvin is, by almost every measure, a very good place to work,<sup>1</sup> but it will continue to be so (and the college will be faithful to its mission) only if we all continue to seek ways to treat our faculty, staff, and students responsibly. This report, then, aims to initiate conversations and actions that will make Calvin a better place to work, building on strengths and addressing weaknesses.

## **II. Main Topics of the Study**

We who worked to produce this report concentrated attention on four areas: (A) changes in work patterns in the four areas of faculty requirement—and corresponding changes in support for faculty work, (B) compensation and financial concerns, (C) issues of equity, (D) strengths and concerns.

### **II. A. Changing Work Patterns and Support for Faculty Work: Teaching, Scholarship, Service, and Advising.**

The amount of time faculty spend on work has not changed significantly. Faculty members have, since 1995, spent a little more than 50 hours per week at their jobs, with about half of that time devoted to teaching. Within the frame of those two relatively stable features, however, faculty have seen many changes, which we sketch below in terms of the four categories of faculty expectation.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Scientist* recently named Calvin one of the “Best Places to Work in Academia,” along with fifteen other U.S. institutions.

## **Teaching**

Although the stipulated teaching load (21-24 semester hours per year) has not changed since it was initiated (and the 3-1-3 load that preceded semester hours still applies for most faculty), changes in the amount of release from teaching—for scholarly and administrative work—have significantly reduced the actual average teaching load per faculty member. In 1998-99, 19.5 percent of the faculty received release from teaching for either scholarship or administration. In 2005-06 that has grown to 34 percent. In 2004-05 only about half of the faculty taught a full load of 21-24 semester hours (this figure includes reduced-load appointments).

From the fall of 1995 to the fall of 2005, the official student/faculty ratio changed from 16.6 to 14.5. Despite those improvements, HERI data tell us that between 1995 and 2004, the percentage of faculty who felt stressed by the teaching load increased from 62.9 to 74.9 percent.

The number of faculty members has grown from an FTE of 234 in 1995-96 (when the FTE student count was 3814) to 307 in 2005-06 (with an FTE student count of 4064): a 31 percent increase in the FTE faculty as compared to a 6.4 percent increase in FTE students. Those figures would make it seem that our faculty is less burdened by heavy teaching demands (although reductions in teaching are largely offset by more research and administrative demands). However, curricular sprawl, which was noted in the NCA self-study and which the review team affirmed as a serious concern, takes several forms that affect teaching. Just in the past two years, and in spite of conservative pressures applied by lower-than-anticipated enrollments, the college has witnessed a net gain of over 20 new courses. Calvin offered 89 majors and 80 minors in 1995-96; in 2005-06 it offers 103 majors and 98 minors. More courses and more majors mean more time needed for course preparation and keeping current in the professional literature.

Furthermore, the growing variety of teaching methods that faculty use taxes their time. HERI data show that between 1995 and 2004 faculty increased their use of every one of the different teaching methods that the survey asks about (e.g., group projects in 17.1 percent of classes in 1995 and in 33.2 percent in 2004, multiple drafts of papers in 12.9 percent of classes in 1995 and 30.5 in 2004).

## **Scholarship**

Opportunities for scholarship have been expanding, thanks in large part to increased support through sabbaticals and CRFs and support for those applying for external grants. The continued support of alumni grants, summer CRFs, and the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship also offers valuable support.

In 1998-99, 11 percent of the faculty received some release from teaching for scholarly projects. In 2005-06, 19 percent (a 72 percent increase in seven years) will enjoy release for scholarship. The amount of money paid for sabbaticals and CRFs has grown from an average of about \$500,000 per year between 1995 and 2000 to over \$1,000,000 per year since 2003-04.

HERI data show a gradually growing emphasis on research as a measure of faculty members' "primary interests." And the stress of expectations for publication has risen during the past ten years; between 1995 and 2004 the percentage of faculty who indicated that publishing demands were a "somewhat" or "extensive" source of stress jumped from 57.4 to 75.9 percent.

When faculty were asked to choose (in a 2004 HERI supplemental question) which of five options would most reduce the pressure surrounding publication without significantly reducing productivity, about one quarter chose “help in making a scholarly plan” (and the summer seminars in developing five-year scholarship plans have been a great success); slightly more than half chose “accepting a broader definition of scholarly productivity.”

Most faculty in focus groups admitted to experiencing stress because of research demands, but they also explained that their research is highly gratifying—when they have the time to do it well.

## **Service**

As the college conducts new programs for a growing variety of audiences (e.g., Petra, the new institute for global Christianity, Summer Seminars in Christian Scholarship), opportunities and needs for service in support of those programs necessarily expands.

The number of faculty members who get release from teaching for administrative work has increased by 76 percent over seven years (as far back as our database goes). In 1998-99, 8.5 percent received release for administrative work; in 2005-06, 15 percent will receive administrative release.

The total amount of administrative release also seems to be growing. Department chairs, for example, received 30 course units of release in 1997-98; in 2005-06 they will receive over fifty course units.

Curricular sprawl is another factor that affects the total amount of necessary service to the college. Several new interdisciplinary majors and minors that are not under the supervision of any particular department not only require directors and administrative committees, but those directors and committees must also perform work that is roughly equivalent to that of a department. More programs and courses mean more work in proposing and assessing innovations.

A larger faculty and staff mean more ongoing searches and thus more work for committees such as Professional Status Committee and *ad hoc* search committees. HERI data indicate that, overall, individual faculty members are not spending more time on committee work than they did ten years ago, but HERI results also show that the level of stress from committee work continues to rise (and to be considerably higher than at comparison institutions).

## **Advising**

The use of Academic Evaluation Records (AERs) has dramatically improved the efficiency of the advising and registration process. Although a rather dramatic increase in the number of majors and minors has given students more choices to sort through, the technological support developed through the Office of the Registrar seems to have more than offset potentially higher demands on advisors than might have been expected with curricular sprawl.

Early assessment of academic advising indicates a fairly high level of student satisfaction with advising. It is not clear if the increased efficiency of advising has translated into more time being spent in getting to know students and helping them think through vocational issues.

It continues to be the case that academic advising is the area of faculty requirement on which the least amount of time is spent and the least amount and variety of assessment information is gathered. At the same time, informal advising—developing mentoring relationships with students (whether or not one’s academic advisees)—is highly valued by many faculty members.

## **II. B. Compensation and Financial Concerns**

The salary and benefits package at Calvin compares favorably to that at similar institutions. Based on data from the twenty-five schools to which Calvin compared itself in its NCA self-study, Calvin’s average salary and benefits package in 2003 was higher (\$77,300) than the average of the comparison schools (\$75,500). And increases in Calvin’s salary base for the two years since 2003 have been granted at a higher rate than national and local average increases. Calvin’s average salary for full professors may lag behind that at some comparable institutions, but the college grants the rank of professor to a far larger percentage of our faculty, which increases our overall financial commitment to faculty salary and benefits.

Decreasing faculty/student ratios also mean increased financial burden on the college, and this could mean that it will be difficult to continue to increase the salary and benefits package at more than the cost of living. Primarily as a result of decreasing Calvin’s faculty/student ratio, the instructional cost per student has increased at well above the national and local averages, and Calvin’s spending per student now compares with high-level liberal arts institutions. Smaller classes and more time for research may be well worth the costs they impose, but the college cannot forget that these are costly improvements.

HERI survey data indicate that faculty are generally content with financial compensation at Calvin—much more content than faculty at comparison institutions. Calvin faculty are also considerably less stressed by financial concerns than comparison institutions. Yet HERI data also show that the percentage of faculty members who report being satisfied with salary and benefits has dropped significantly during the past ten years (from 78 to 64.2 percent). Given that (1) Calvin has increased salary at a higher rate than most colleges and universities during the past ten years, and (2) the salary and benefits structure is somewhat better than those of comparison institutions, explanations for decreasing satisfaction with salary and benefits do not come easily. But the fact that faculty are still much more satisfied with compensation than comparison institutions may suggest that Calvin faculty suffer the same broad concerns about finances that characterize the nation (e.g., TIAA-CREF accounts for many people have just now returned to the amounts they were when the stock market made its downward turn several years ago).

The cost of Christian schooling, however, is an ongoing item of concern at Calvin. The tuition aid that Calvin offers is greatly appreciated, but many families continue to feel sorely strained. If current patterns of increasing debt accumulation through college and graduate school continue, young faculty members with children may find it even more difficult to manage the costs of Christian schooling.

Furthermore, some colleagues bear a set of financial responsibilities as a function of their cultural heritage. Although the typical American probably does not expect to support aging parents and extended family, some of our colleagues are obliged to send money to family members—here in Grand Rapids and overseas.

Discussions of tuition increases and budgets remain a constant item on the college agenda. The college has, however, experienced some financial relief from external grants and endowed chairs. For those gifts both the faculty and administration have earned thanks.

## II. C. Issues of Equity

Equity concerns merit special attention. One of the functions of administration must be to survey the whole landscape of the institution and spot those places at which inequities appear. Calvin has protected its obligation to treat individuals as individuals and not as faceless numbers, and that means that the college does not treat everyone according to rigid formulae. At the same time, however, the administration must strive for fairness. An institution the size of Calvin cannot ensure perfect equity, but when a situation is unfair, it is likely to fester, and it will eventually erupt.

A note on focus groups. The items listed in this and the following section (“Strengths and Concerns”) were gathered from a variety of sources: individual conversations conducted as parts of various reappointments and post-tenure reviews, committee meetings, dining hall chats. Primarily, though, the items listed here and in the next section were raised in a series of focus groups. Between January and September of 2005 Debra Freeberg and Dean Ward, with administrative and interpretive assistance from Caroline Chadderdon, conducted the focus groups. Fifty-two faculty members participated, with groups divided into faculty who are (1) tenured in the natural sciences, (2) tenure-track in the natural sciences, (3) tenured in the social sciences, (4) tenure-track in the social sciences, (5) tenured in the humanities, (6) tenure-track in the humanities, (7) on term appointments, and (8) minorities from outside the U.S.

We who ran the focus groups are grateful that so many people participated. More importantly, the participants were forthright about concerns, hopeful that the Calvin community can address those concerns, and creative with suggestions.

The items listed are those that were emphasized, by repetition in different groups or consensus within a single group. We apologize for not including every comment; we hope that those listed here represent main items of concern. (Items in the “Responses” column that are marked with asterisks (\*\*\*) are those on which some person or committee is already at work.)

Perceived Inequities	Responses
<p><i>Summer work:</i> --Expectations of the 10-month contract approved by the Board are not clear to all faculty members; work patterns vary dramatically during the summer.</p>	<p>Define and disseminate general expectations of the 10-month contract. [Agent: PSC]</p>
<p><i>Student research supervision:</i> --Supervising summer student researchers is expected in the sciences but meagerly compensated and not equally shared among colleagues.  --Independent studies and tutorials with students during the regular academic year are uncompensated but expected in some departments.</p>	<p>Establish clear expectations and compensation. ***[A proposal from the science division is currently under consideration, and summer CRFs may be used as a means of compensation. Agent: deans, PSC, PPC]  Bank credit to gain course reductions? Reward in reappointment reviews?</p>

<p><i>Inconsistent teaching loads:</i>  --Some individuals are caught in between the old and new metrics for course loads, teaching seven courses that add up to over 24 semester hours.  --Some perceive that a constant load of 24 sh (even with six courses per year) is more work than a load of 21 sh (even with seven courses per year).  --Faculty sometimes quietly claim individual ownership of courses, especially upper-division courses.  --Labs for natural sciences are sometimes as important as the lectures and should be given more credit. But not all labs are equal; some are more work than others.  --Courses with heavy writing requirements demand large amounts of time on grading.  --Class size caps have been assigned too randomly, one instructor may have a total of 30-40 students in a semester while another has 100.</p>	<p>Equally apply standards for measuring loads.  ***[Agent: academic deans]</p> <p>Collect and disseminate accurate information about faculty work patterns.</p> <p>Encourage fair distribution of teaching assignments.  ***[Agent: academic deans]</p> <p>Consider options for compensation [Agent: deans? PPC?]</p> <p>The Registrar and Provost's Offices should review current patterns of class sizes and suggest principles for setting caps.</p>
<p><i>Department administrative work:</i>  Sources of frustration include  --college administration (e.g., assessment reports)  --increasing complexity of chairs' work  --increased administrative load of smaller departments with fewer people to share the report writing</p>	<p>Share committee work more evenly; seek advice from chairs regarding committee assignments; improve the processes of COG.</p>
<p><i>Student assistants:</i>  --No clear criteria have been established for deciding what departments and individuals receive student assistants, and <i>Handbook for Teaching Faculty</i> rules for use of student assistants is not monitored.</p>	<p>Student assistants provide inexpensive administrative help. Study use of student assistants and recommend guidelines for allocating money for and assigning duties to student assistants. [Agent: Human Resources?]</p>
<p><i>Release for departmental chairs and program directors:</i>  --Releases and stipends have been decided on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis over the years without the guidance of overriding principles.</p>	<p>***The Provost's Office has gathered data on the various amounts of release time and/or stipends for administrative work and is working on making this support more equitably distributed.</p>
<p><i>Variable costs among departments:</i>  -- It is unavoidable that some departments will be more expensive to maintain than others, but unequal awards of administrative staff and other support should be avoided.</p>	<p>***Human Resources compiled a data spreadsheet that indicates the average amount of FTE administrative assistance per FTE faculty member, and the deans have been using this information to argue for (or against) changes in staffing. Strategic planning will allow departments (and non-academic divisions) to make well-supported arguments for financial resources.</p>
<p><i>The size of majors:</i>  --Usually the number of semester hours required for a major is determined by forces such as accrediting agencies and professional necessity, but sometimes it seems arbitrary.</p>	<p>***EPC's work on "curricular sprawl" and on departmental strategic planning will emphasize the need for some measure of equity among majors. EPC should also work to protect students' ability to take electives outside of their majors and minors.</p>

## II. D. Strengths and Concerns

This section attempts to get behind the HERI survey data. HERI tells us that we rate high in job satisfaction, but why? What are the rewards that most satisfy? What are the threats to job satisfaction and the opportunities to improve the quality of faculty members' professional lives?

### Strengths to Preserve

In the focus groups we heard remarkable consistency when we asked faculty to talk about the things that bring them energy and delight. Essentially, to the extent that Calvin provides opportunity and support for faculty to do those things that define their sense of vocation, Calvin is a good place to work. Faculty love teaching and learning, students and colleagues, classrooms and libraries and labs and laptops (note that Calvin faculty rate satisfaction with students at about 50 percent higher than do comparison-group institutions in the HERI data pool). There are few surprises in this section, but the following examples highlight what Calvin most cherishes and must work hardest to preserve.

Teaching and learning are Calvin's first priorities and greatest passions. Teaching and learning that are shaped by faith are faculty members' greatest rewards. Again and again faculty in focus groups told stories of how Calvin offers a warm hearth to faculty, a place to be their best selves as Christian educators, challenged and supported by students and colleagues. Individuals cited such gifts as

- struggling students who work hard and succeed
- brilliant students who teach and inspire their teachers and classmates
- personal relationships developed with students through research collaborations, small classes, and off-campus programs
- relationships with colleagues developed through research teams, team-taught classes, and cross disciplinary reading groups
- opportunities to be creative—developing new courses or classroom strategies, researching, writing, speaking, and performing
- sabbaticals, CRFs, and other internal and external grant support
- the native intelligence and wisdom of colleagues
- the Kuiper Seminar
- the Faculty/Staff Dining Room
- formal and informal mentoring
- support for families
- respect for individuals
- the rich diversity of American culture and the promise of *From Every Nation*
- playing with colleagues (music, sports, etc.)

### Concerns and Possible Responses

The following concerns (here divided into the five categories noted in boldface) are the items that we who ran the focus groups agreed were prominent in the conversations—items that we heard frequently or items that most people in a group seemed to agree were legitimate concerns. They do not, of course, represent consensus. The “Responses” are a combination of suggestions made in the focus groups and suggestions that came from various individuals.

This report attempts to retain the tone of the human voices in the groups. This may make some comments sound intemperate; we chalk that up to cost of accuracy in reporting.

(Items in the “Responses” column that are marked with asterisks \*\*\* are those on which some person or committee is already at work.)

Concerns	Responses
<b>Teaching, Scholarship, Service, Advising</b>	
Teaching is the first priority, but the college puts too much weight on student evaluations to assess teaching.	***The PSC is currently assessing recommendations regarding evaluating teaching that were forwarded from a task force at the May 2005 chairs’ retreat.
Departmental scholarship statements have unclear criteria, and sometimes more is actually expected than is indicated in the departmental statements.	***PSC is currently reading departmental scholarship statements as it considers reappointments. Based on what it learns this semester, the committee will recommend revisions in scholarship statements.
Expectations for reappointments need to be clearer (e.g., who is the real audience for faith and learning statements?), and the reappointment process needs to be more consistent (e.g., written standards do not always match the unwritten standards).	***PSC will take up the task of reviewing the <i>Handbook for Teaching Faculty</i> guidance on reappointment processes. Calvin should be very explicit about what it means to sign the Form of Subscription, perhaps suggesting that faculty do so after taking the Kuiper Seminar.
Faculty have too many preps, too many committees, too many reports that no one reads. Multi-tasking is one thing, but this situation is out of hand.	***EPC is currently studying the effects of curricular sprawl. A form could be created to keep track of all of the college and departmental committees on which a person has served.
<b>Relationships</b>	
Relationship building doesn’t count for tenure.	Clarify that mentoring and non-academic advising are parts of what is valued in the categories of “service” and “advising.” [Agent: PSC]
Interpersonal issues in departments are corrosive. Being involved in disputes and lingering friction among colleagues is extremely stressful. (Almost half of academic departments report some significant interpersonal conflict.)	The college needs to learn how to expect and facilitate reconciliation among colleagues. ***Chairs will receive some elementary training in personnel management and conflict resolution and be given follow-up resources.
The lack of common space makes it hard to build community (Faculty/Staff Dining Room is great but open for short hours). Many departments don’t have a conference room to hang out in; they might have only a classroom that’s available for late-afternoon meetings. If the college wants to build community, it must make space for it.	Keep the Faculty/Staff Dining Room open, and have free coffee available. Give faculty members vouchers for free coffee in the Spoelhof Coffee Shop and Johnny’s.

<b>Student Culture</b>	
Students bring prejudices to classes; they are less tolerant of women and minority faculty members.	Study student evaluations to assess the effects of gender and race on ratings. Students may need some kind of anti-racism training even more than faculty.
Students do not seem to take enough chances; they don't see education as dangerous and risky. Passivity characterizes too many students.	
<b>Faculty Culture</b>	
Books seem to be valued more than papers, which devalues the sciences.	Develop means of celebrating papers that are comparable to book receptions.
Few colleagues speak out for fear of upsetting the calm.	Develop better channels for conversation about concerns than "Calvin Matters." Suggest "rules of engagement" for "Calvin Matters."
Mentoring doesn't work "in the hallways." People need to spend time with one another. Mentors shouldn't be evaluators. Some kind of mentoring relationship should carry through to tenure.	***The FDC is considering recommendations for improving mentoring, including those developed by a department chairs' task force.
The message that evangelicals are stupid is coming across—to faculty and students.	
Too much is assumed about what new faculty members should know—everything from deadlines to local acronyms to where to find a decent piece of chalk.	***Biology Department members David DeHeer and Kathryn Jacobsen, have shared their "Notes for New Biology Faculty Members" among chairs—to customize for their own departments. Human Resources has developed a new "welcome" web page that offers good resources to new faculty and staff. And there is a website for new faculty developed and maintained by the dean for instruction. A welcome committee (made up of faculty, spouses, alumni, staff—whoever has the gift of hospitality) could be formed and made available as a resource for new faculty members.
<b>College Culture</b>	
An ethos of devotion to the college's mission translates into the assumption that you should sell your soul to the college. Work is an idol, and there's one-upmanship about who works the most hours.	Encourage discussions of how faculty members can establish appropriate boundaries between their professional and personal lives.

<p>Blandness too often characterizes everything from students to food options, and this works against our efforts to diversify. Projects like the Petra exhibit brought new and different people (and food!) to campus. But the college needs to cultivate diversity of all kinds. Doing that will help in recruiting diverse faculty.</p>	<p>Support serious, ongoing conversations about how to welcome and encourage diversity without compromising mission and confessional identity. MAC and the dean for multicultural affairs will play key roles, but the entire college will need to participate.</p>
<p>There is not enough gratitude—unless it is good for marketing; faculty are eager for a “culture of encouragement.”</p>	
<p>The tone of anxiety, the fortress mentality, is both demoralizing and uncalled for; faculty are generally very dedicated to the college mission and should be trusted with it. Building a fortress around the mission takes the joy and energy out of it.</p>	<p>Cultivate an appreciation for the vitality of the mission so that there can be less worry about its potential corruption. Let the mission nurture its own well-being by emphasizing its power to create positive results.</p>
<p>Calvin culture is non-confrontational, e.g., one in which people seem sometimes unable to correct or criticize one another without giving offense or speaking with condescension; constructive criticism sometimes seems elusive.</p>	
<p>The governance structure is not sufficiently open and transparent.</p>	<p>***The President’s Cabinet and Academic Council are discussing ways of improving intra-campus communications. The vice-chair of Faculty Senate has begun to implement new practices that will make Senate’s work more transparent and more deliberative.</p>

### III. General Observations and Responses

#### III. A. Observations

Among the dozens of items of concern that were voiced in focus groups and conversations, a handful of them were spoken of so frequently and with such passion that they merit special attention. Solutions for these problems are too complex to pop into a table; sometimes they seem too complex to imagine. Nonetheless, those who initiated and conducted the work leading to this report promised not only to listen but to seek resolution. We note five areas that faculty believe require special attention.

#### Relationships

Faculty perceive that they spend more time alone and feel more need to make time and opportunity for developing personal relationships with students and colleagues. Issues relating to the wish for better human relationships were among the most frequently discussed in focus groups. HERI data graph the increasing amount of time spent, for example, emailing—and thereby draw a picture of an increasingly isolated faculty. In the context of the college’s commitment to and spiritual hunger for community, isolation is especially demoralizing.

At the same time, the faculty are task-driven people; they have not responded well to invitations to be more social (though playing together off campus seems to be more appealing than doing so on campus). They have responded well to invitations to work together informally—in low-stakes situations. Cross-disciplinary reading groups (especially when they meet frequently enough for people to develop relationships) are a good example of how faculty mix work and play and improve job satisfaction.

## **Recognition**

Though humility made individuals hesitate to broach this subject, many finally admitted that they would be grateful to hear more signals that they are appreciated. Teaching awards, book receptions, chances to share their research in public settings are all well and good. But the everyday work of preparing classes, grading papers, and writing committee reports is also done by a highly and uniformly dedicated group of people, and the college community needs to find ways to applaud that everyday work. A 2004 HERI supplemental question asked faculty to select from five options the one that could do the most to improve job satisfaction, 40 percent chose “express support and appreciation for work accomplished.”

## **Diversity**

Faculty members report a relatively high level of job satisfaction at Calvin, significantly higher than at comparable institutions. But faculty also remark on the learning curve they must climb when they come to Calvin. Furthermore, they consistently report that the farther one stands from the cultural core, the steeper is the learning curve.

There are more faculty members who are white, male, Dutch, and raised in the CRC than any other single group, and that has long been the case. If one assumes that numbers of people and tradition have great influence on shaping institutional culture, it may be expected that those who are white, male, Dutch, and raised in the CRC would have had more influence in defining the core culture at Calvin than other groups. The more different one is from a core culture, the more challenges one faces in finding a sense of belonging. Racial and ethnic heritage may well be the main reason for feeling different from the core culture, but they are not the only factors.

Attempts to construct a metric of difference, however, will not help. Nevertheless, it seems absolutely necessary for all of us to recognize that a sense of difference, and the pain and challenge it can cause, is real. In the focus groups we heard comments such as “I wish I were free from culture and accent,” “I’ve never felt so alone,” “My wife cried for the whole first year in Grand Rapids,” and “I just knew I had to do more to prove myself to students.” As Calvin seeks to be a community more like the kingdom of heaven, the college needs to find ways to recognize and value difference while preserving, without compromises, the confessional identity and mission that shape and unify Calvin. Most faculty members who spoke in focus groups sincerely believe that the college can do both.

People tend to invoke two models for bringing diverse individuals into the culture of Calvin College. In one the implicit expectation is that individuals will learn to fit in, to be like us (“us” being implicitly defined as the core culture). A second model assumes that people who are different from the core culture should retain their difference, be open about that difference, and thus change the Calvin culture. It is inevitable that both models will influence actions. But it seems clear that only the second model promises genuine diversity. And although the college hopes for such diversity, it has not yet become fully able to support the individuals who bear

much of the burden of effecting change—individuals who are caught in between the loss of their own culture and the implicit expectation that they will be comfortable within Calvin's.

### **Task Sprawl**

A corollary to curricular sprawl is task sprawl. Faculty members are working roughly the same number of hours that they worked ten years ago. They are, however, engaged in a greater variety of tasks—with more new courses and programs on the books, more new types of courses and more varied teaching strategies, more audiences to write for, more new opportunities and locales for service, etc.

If one considers that (1) faculty are doing much more multi-tasking, (2) faculty are a culture of extremely high self-expectation, and (3) the number of hours faculty are able to work remains steady, then it is reasonable to conclude that faculty are doing more things less well than they want and are thus more anxious, guilty, and stressed. The combination of individual perfectionism and an increasing number of different tasks threatens to eat at individuals from without and within. Calvin cannot sustain this pattern.

### **The Costs and Rewards of Mission**

Faculty members are enthusiastically committed to the mission of Calvin College. They believe that their vocation is not only a call to the academic life but to living the academic life at Calvin. But deep commitment to the institution's mission too easily transforms into marriage to the institution. If one then adds the forces of a culture in which faculty praise one another for devotion to work, one can better understand why the community might affirm the person who spends no time with family and friends and look suspiciously at the person who manages a healthy balance between work and everything else (and whose improved overall health may make him or her a highly productive and effective colleague).

Nonetheless, almost every focus group ended with individuals putting their concerns in perspective. In every group we heard some version of "There's a lot wrong with this place, but, overall, I can't imagine anywhere I'd rather be." Because of our mission and confessional foundation, working at Calvin offers the rewards of wholeness. Many individuals reported that Calvin has been the place at which they have been able to discover and live out their full identity as Christian educators. Faculty members do not have to wonder if their work is important; they do not squirm under the pressure to hide or compromise their faith; they do love their students and colleagues and their work.

## **III. B. Next Steps**

All of us at Calvin have much to be thankful for. One expression of our thanks is a promise to do the very best with the resources given to us, and human resources are the college's most precious gift.

In this report we have mapped out the terrain; we now invite you to help cultivate it. If an issue for which you have constructive suggestions has already been assigned to a committee, please send comments to the chair of that committee. If you want to affirm or caution against some of the suggestions that have been reported here but are not yet assigned for action, or if you have additional suggestions for possible actions, send a message to Caroline Chadderdon, who

will forward your message to an appropriate member of the Academic Council (Claudia Beversluis, Jim Bradley, Joel Carpenter, Jan Curry, Barbara Omolade, Tom Steenwyk, Dean Ward, and Uko Zylstra).

Sincere thanks go to all of those who participated in focus groups or otherwise contributed ideas and information for this study. Donna Anema, Jim Bradley, Caroline Chadderdon, Melisa Hubka, Heidi Rienstra, Donna Romanowski, Paul Sytsema, Tom Van Eck, and Amanda Van Til supplied information; the Academic Council provided information, advice, and encouragement, and Debra Freeberg and Caroline Chadderdon made it possible to conduct and interpret the focus groups.

Sources of information: survey data (especially from HERI), Crane Marketing, National Survey of Student Engagement, Council of Independent Colleges' Key Indicators Tool, AAUP Faculty Salary Surveys; faculty activity reports, records of faculty teaching loads, records of grants applied for and received, records of sabbatical and Calvin Research Fellowship support, information in the *Calvin College Self-Study Report* and the NCA's follow-up report; national publications on roles and rewards; Calvin faculty focus groups.

Submitted by Dean Ward, academic dean  
November 7, 2005

## An Outline for a Curricular Audit

Debits	Credits
<p>↑ Increasing student semester hours (the total number of hours taken by all students in an academic year; this number increased when we shifted from course units to semester hours)</p> <p>↑ Increasing number of courses in the catalogue</p> <p>↑ Increasing number of sections offered per year</p> <p>↑ Increasing number of majors and minors offered</p> <p>↑ Increasing size of majors (required number of semester hours for majors)</p> <p>↑ Increasing instructional cost per student</p> <p>↓ Decreasing student-faculty ratio</p> <p>↓ Decreasing average section size</p> <p>↓ Decreasing section caps (maximum_enrollment per course)</p> <p>↓ Decreasing number of electives students take outside of majors and minors</p>	<p>↑ Increasing tuition</p> <p>↑ Increasing endowment (e.g., endowed chairs typically offer some relief to the instructional budget by paying for one or two sections that are regular offerings)</p> <p>↑ Increasing internal and external grants (unless supported by endowments, grants offer little relief to the instructional budget because the courses they buy out still must be taught and paid for)</p>

### Pressures Driving Changes in Resource Demands:

- External: graduate school and professional requirements for specialized training, NCA assessment requirements, NCATE and State of Michigan requirements in education programs, competition for students (the attraction of more curricular options).
- All-college: programs that the faculty have decided are good for the college, e.g., *From Every Nation*, Honors Program, Writing Program, instructional technology.
- Departments: proposals for additional majors, minors, courses, smaller section caps, more courses required for majors.

### Observations:

Task sprawl is a major problem; it is sapping the faculty and increasing stress. It is not, however, a problem that is completely beyond the control of the faculty. Faculty may believe, for example, that their stress is growing, in part, because the amount of committee work is growing, but HERI numbers indicate that faculty are not spending more hours on committee work than they did ten years ago. Assessment adds to faculty load (though one can argue that even if there were no NCA demand for assessment, the faculty would all want to know how to improve teaching and could not do that without some means of measuring how well students are learning; i.e., faculty have always practiced assessment). A large part of the increasing demands on the faculty are driven by faculty in departments (proposing new majors, minors, courses, reducing section caps, requiring more hours for majors). Without substantial increases in tuition or endowments or without reductions in majors, minors, courses, the size of majors, and the increased size of sections, the college will not be able to balance the curricular books.

We can all contribute to the responsible management of resources. EPC can manage this proposed “curricular audit,” but in the meantime departments must also be diligent about managing human resources.