

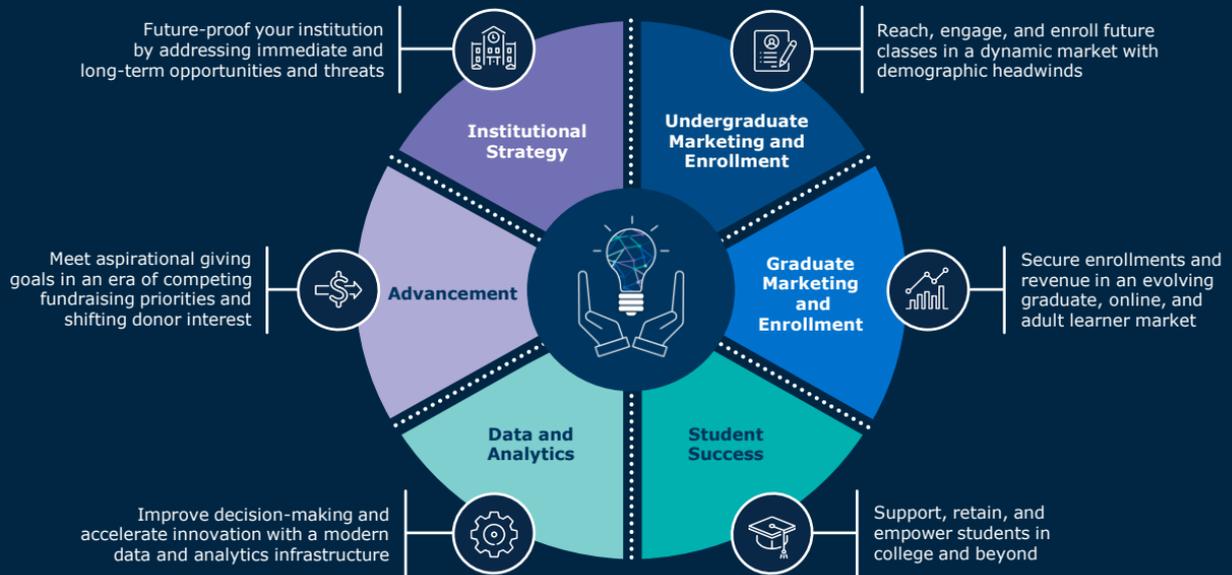


EAB

# How Academic Leaders Can Help Combat Burnout and Support Well-Being

Melanie Overton, Ed.D.  
Research Advisory Services  
[moverton@eab.com](mailto:moverton@eab.com)

## Insight-powered Solutions for Your Top Priorities and Toughest Challenges



We partner with **2,800+** institutions to accelerate progress, deliver results, and enable lasting change.

**95%+** of our partners return to us year after year because of results we achieve, together.

# Joining You Today



## Melanie Overton, Ed.D.

*Director, Research Advisory Services*

[moverton@eab.com](mailto:moverton@eab.com)

Melanie's nearly 20 years of administrative experience includes tenures as Chief Student Affairs Officer, Vice President of Advancement, and Vice President of Enrollment, and she led the network of United Methodist-related colleges from 2011 to 2016.

Melanie holds an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership and Policy from Vanderbilt University, where her research focused on the interplay of student and institutional success, particularly in stressed colleges.

# Opening Question, via Slido



Slido.com: Enter code #4218002

- 1 Identify Most Salient Drivers of Faculty Burnout
- 2 Review Strategies to Mitigate Burnout and Foster Well-being
- 3 Determine Your Next Step

# What Is Burnout?

## Maslach's Definition of Burnout

"a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, ...defined by three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy."

The Three Dimensions of Burnout:

- 1 **Exhaustion** of one's emotional or physical resources
- 2 **Cynicism** or an excessively detached response to various aspects of the job
- 3 **Inefficacy** or feelings of incompetence or lack of achievement at work

**Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context** and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

## "A Workplace Problem, Not a Worker Problem"

Burnout is...

“...systemic, a product of workplace cultures that **value productivity above all else**”

“...**a product of higher ed**, a culture where productivity infuses everything we do, and where the longest CV wins”

“...feeling ashamed for needing help because **work environments don't support slowing down**”

“...when **productivity becomes toxic**”

# Maslach's Six Drivers of Burnout



**Workload**



**Control**



**Reward**



**Fairness**



**Community**



**Values**



## Characteristics

- Excessive overload
- Mismatch between work and skills
- Work that requires people to display emotions inconsistent with their feelings

## Examples of **Workload** Drivers in the Academic Affairs Workplace:

- Faculty feel pressure to care for student mental health amidst rising need & staff shortages or lack of capacity
- Increasing expectations to pivot pedagogy to fit evolving student needs and preferences
- Pandemic impacted scholarship, leaving faculty to feel they need to make up for lost time to stay on ideal career tracks
- Rising outside of work responsibilities such as adult caregiving and/or childcare



The **increased workload** and anxiety is something I don't think non-teachers can quite grasp...for me...to **teach effectively and thoughtfully requires about twice the time**, and there's a **constant sense you're never doing enough.**"

- Dr. Louis Mackenzie, Associate Professor, University of Washington

# Burnout Driver #2: Control



## Characteristics

- Insufficient control over the resources needed
- Lack of authority to pursue the work in what they believe is the most effective manner

## Examples of Control Drivers in the Academic Affairs Workplace:

- Increasing pressure on faculty to accommodate at the same rate as they did during the pandemic
- Increasing influence of outside entities, such as mandates imposed by federal, state, and local government
- Perceived 'erosion of shared governance'
- Obligations to adapt course format to fit evolving student preferences and needs



*Students Demand Endless Flexibility – but Is It What They Need?*



*Florida bill would end diversity programs, ban majors, shift power at universities*

# Burnout Driver #3: Reward



## Characteristics

- Insufficient financial rewards
- Lack of social recognition or reinforcement
- Reduced sense of efficacy, fulfillment, and direction

## Examples of Reward Drivers in the Academic Affairs Workplace:

- Growing student disengagement erodes sense of meaning and accomplishment in the faculty role
- Opportunities to achieve career growth seem less and less accessible or achievable
- Failure of compensation to keep pace with inflation
- Perception that trustees, voters, many politicians do not value faculty work



*'Higher Ed Is a Scam of a Career': Readers Speak Out on Dead-End Jobs*



*Student Disengagement Has Soared Since the Pandemic*



*Public Opinion on Value of Higher Ed Remains Mixed*



## Characteristics

- Lack of perceived fairness in the workplace (*such as inequity in workload or pay, inappropriate handling of promotions or evaluations*)

## Examples of Fairness Drivers in the Academic Affairs Workplace:

- Increasing evidence of workload and compensation inequity
- Bias in faculty evaluation, promotion and tenure processes
- Greater budget pressure and transparency highlight funding differences between disciplines
- Disparate impacts of the pandemic on groups – e.g., disproportionately set back the research of faculty who needed access to a lab; disparate work from home policies



**Faculty of color are more likely to take on full slates of service**, including large advising loads and sitting on numerous committees. **These high service workloads often go unrecognized and undercompensated and can get in the way of promotion and tenure for BIPOC faculty.**

- Joshua Ddamulira, Senior Analyst, EAB



## Characteristics

- Loss of sense of positive connection with others in the workplace
- Chronic and unresolved conflict with others on the job

## Examples of **Community Drivers** in the Academic Affairs Workplace:

- Faculty lost connection in a virtual world and that sense of connection has not fully renewed since the pandemic
- Time spent on campus is packed with student meetings, teaching courses, committee work – leaving less time for connecting with colleagues
- Struggling to find time for formal and informal mentorship opportunities

Faculty Who Agreed the Pandemic **Negatively Affected** Them in Spring 2022 with Respect To:

96%

Networking opportunities

90%

Fostering new collaborations



## Characteristics

- People feel constrained by the job to do things that are not in accord with their own values
- Discrepancy between the lofty mission statement and actual practice

## Examples of **Values** Drivers in the Academic Affairs Workplace:

- Pressure to be more accommodating to students even if that does not lead to greater student success outcomes
- Perception that the university acts more like a corporation than a mission-driven institution
- Over-reliance on educational mission as a benefit or justification for longer hours
- Legislation in conflict with personal values



**There is some sense that there is the espoused values of our institutions and then the enacted values, and that there isn't perfect alignment between those two...institutions are falling short when it comes to really being able to provide evidence...what it has suggested to some folks is that there is a real values conflict."**

- Kevin McClure, Associate Professor, UNC Wilmington

# Poll, via Slido



Slido.com: Enter code #4218002

# How Academic Leaders Can Help Combat Burnout and Support Faculty Well-Being



# 1

**Promote Well-Being as a Divisional Leader**

# 2

**Upskill Leaders to Better Support Emerging Needs**

# 3

**Outline Next Steps**



# Tackling Burnout Requires Cultural Change

Well-Being Initiatives That Encourage “Self-Help” Ignore Systemic Factors

**Efforts to Support Well-Being Target the Individual**



Yoga Classes



Time Management Trainings

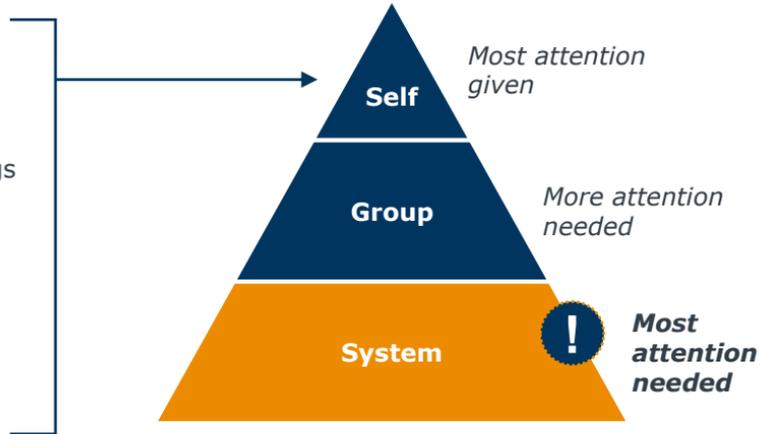


Meditation Apps



Fitness Challenges

**But Systemic Cultural Changes Are Necessary for Real Improvement**



**A major step toward eliminating burnout from the culture of higher ed is acknowledging that only systemic cultural changes will make a significant difference.** Most of the reporting on burnout offers suggestions targeting individuals rather than the culture that led to the problem. Because burnout is endemic to higher education....**individual interventions will not make a dent in the academic culture.**”

- Rebecca Pope-Ruark, *Unraveling Faculty Burnout*

# Culture of Well-Being Is a Framework for Change

## U.S. Surgeon General Releases New Framework for Workplace Well-Being



**October 2022**

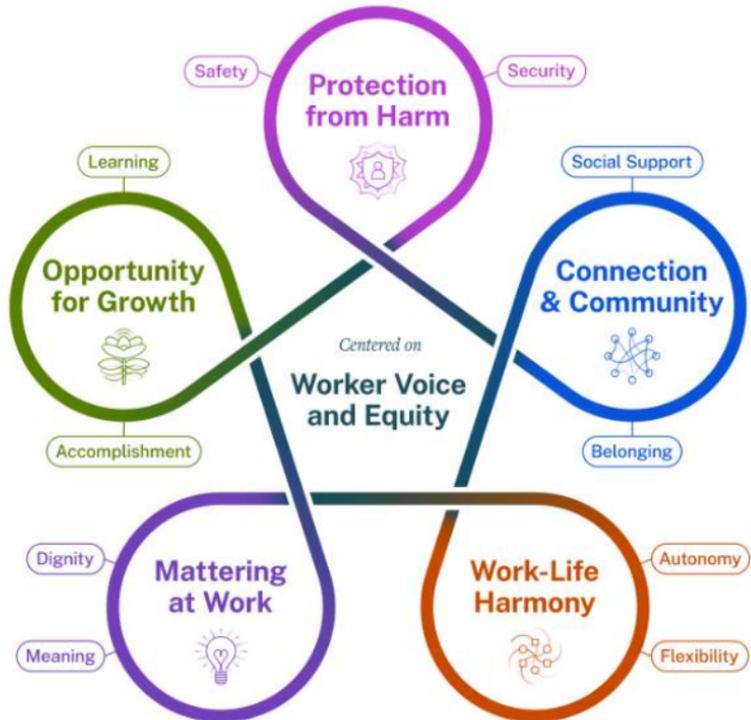
*U.S. Surgeon General  
Releases New Framework  
for Mental Health and Well-  
Being in the Workplace*

— “ —

“As we recover from the worst of the pandemic, **we have an opportunity and the power to make workplaces engines for mental health and well-being**, and this Surgeon General’s Framework shows us how we can start.”

*- Surgeon General  
Dr. Vivek Murthy*

— ” —



## A Leader's Influence

---



**Educational leaders at all levels set the tone for the institutional culture.** As such, they must not only model the behavior they seek in others, but they should also **put in place policies and procedures for creating a positive work environment centered on care and well-being.**

*University World News*

# One Minute Reflection

1. What are some ways you signal the importance of well-being as a priority in academic affairs? *(Examples might include setting reasonable workload expectations or sharing resources)*
2. What are some ways you might be unintentionally signaling that it isn't a priority? *(Examples might include praising colleagues for overworking, emailing on the weekend, etc.)*





# Clarify Well-Being Expectations of Leaders

NYU's Reference Sheet Communicates Well-Being's Value in the Workplace



**NYU**

Work  
Life

## **Best Practices for Managers, Department Chairs, and Leaders**

Empathy and consideration for those we manage has never been more important. There is an increased need for managerial emotional intelligence—to lead with compassion, empathy and trust. Incorporating a work-life perspective into your role can lead to better personal and professional integration for those you manage. Learning how to listen and point to helpful and supportive resources for professional, family, and personal needs will result in less stress for all and a more positive work culture.

**Start with yourself!** The more you seek to create healthy work-life habits in your life, the easier it will be for you to understand and incorporate good practices with those you manage. Identify your work life challenges and take small steps to address them.

- ✔ Sets the tone regarding well-being and its importance in work culture
- ✔ Articulates high-level expectations for empathy and support among leaders
- ✔ Outlines simple best practices to help leaders provide effective support



# Just-in-Time Prompts to Reinforce Well-Being

Plan Ahead to Ensure Well-Being Messaging Is Consistent and Timely

## Build an Annual Communication Plan to Keep Well-Being Top of Mind



**August** Email well-being resources

**October** Attend a well-being event

**January** Resource email reminder

**March** Coffee chat series

### Guidance for Next Steps

Use **EAB's Annual Well-Being Communication Planning Activity** to map well-being promotion next steps to key moments throughout the year

## Common Actions to Promote Well-Being



### Events

Attend campus well-being events to show support for initiatives



### Email Reminders

Emails from the Provost's office about well-being resources for faculty



### Forums

Listen to well-being concerns at a faculty forum

# Take the Guesswork Out of In-the-Moment Support

## Orange Folder Helps Colleagues Recognize Distress and Start a Conversation



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

### Orange Folder

▶ Recognize signs of distress

▶ Respond with concern and empathy

▶ Refer your colleague to available resources

! If a colleague does not want help



### Prioritizes Supportive Conversations

*"Listen actively, ask open ended questions and help them feel heard and understood."*



### Elevates Resources for Faculty and Staff in Distress

*"Early intervention plays a key role in creating healthy and respectful work environments."*



### Provides Explicit Advice on What to Do If a Colleague Does Not Want to Help

*"Respect their decision. Accepting assistance must be left up to the individual, except in emergencies."*

# Orange Folder Guides Colleagues through Next Steps 23

## Imminent Risk of Harm to Self or Others

*"I am concerned about my colleague's safety, or the safety of others."*

- Active thoughts of suicide, w/ a plan or attempt
- Behavior that is violent, destructive, aggressive or threatening to self or others

## High Level of Distress

*"I'm concerned about recent behavior that is out of character for one of my colleagues."*

- Substance use concerns
- Loss of touch with reality/severely disorganized thinking

## Low-Level Well-Being Concern

*"I am concerned about the general well-being of my colleague. I'm not sure if it is serious but I would like to offer them support."*

- Low/irritable mood with change in energy, appetite, sleep, and/or concentration, impacting daily functioning
- Interpersonal conflict

## Steps to Take Immediately:

1. First, Call Emergency Services: 911
2. Then, Call Campus Security:  
Vancouver: 604.822.2222//Okanagan: 250.807.8111

## Resources and Supports:

EAP: 1.800.387.4765

### BC-Specific:

Mental Health Support Line: 310.6789  
Indigenous Mental Health Counseling & Crisis Intervention: 1.855.242.3310, [hopeforwellness.ca](http://hopeforwellness.ca)

### Canada-Wide:

Crisis Services Canada (24/7): 1.800.784.2433

## Resources and Supports:

### Staff & Faculty Resources & Supports

[UBC Employment Groups](#)  
[UBC Workplace Wellbeing & Benefits](#)  
[Supports for Substance Use & Addictions](#)

### BC-Specific:

[Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca](http://Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca), [HealthlinkBC](http://HealthlinkBC): 811, [healthlinkbc.ca](http://healthlinkbc.ca)



Use **EAB's Orange Folder Tool** to Build Your Own Easy-to-Use Resource for Your Campus

# Reflection

Consider whether and how the following strategies could inflect the specific burnout drivers you identified:

1. Signaling commitment to well-being
2. Setting clear expectations for the individuals who report to you
3. Communicating about well-being resources
4. Implementing an “Orange folder”



# How Academic Leaders Can Help Combat Burnout and Support Faculty Well-Being

**1****Promote Well-Being as a Divisional Leader****2****Upskill Leaders to Better Support Emerging Needs****3****Outline Next Steps**

# Managers Make or Break the Employee Experience

## Deans and Chairs Relied on to Shape Workplace Culture

### Manager Influence by the Numbers

**75%** Of employees who voluntarily **left their jobs** said it was **because of their manager**, not the job itself

**70%** Of the variance in **employee engagement scores** are accounted for by managers

### When Management Goes Well...

*Those who feel supported by their employer are...*

- More likely to have positive views of their workplace and its leaders
- Less likely to underperform and miss work
- More satisfied with their job and more likely to stay
- Less likely to experience mental health symptoms



**Leaders Expect This Support to Come from Deans and Chairs**

**79%**

Of academic leaders feel **deans and chairs are responsible for ensuring faculty are supported**, engaged, and connected



# A Preparedness Gap Among Leaders

## Results in Varying Experiences with Well-Being Support across Departments

### *Difficulty **recruiting** faculty to leadership*

"There just isn't a long list of people waiting to serve as head; it is a challenging role. Most faculty just want to focus on their teaching and research and will need support for this new role."

*Simon Bates, Provost, UBC*

### *Some leaders **dislike** "touchy-feely" work*

"Some chairs just think the touchy-feely stuff is a bunch of bologna."

*Michael McPherson, Provost, UNT*

### *Training for New Chairs Often Sparse*

67%

Of chairs receive **no formal training** from their institution

2 in 3

Chairs with training said it did **not prepare them adequately**

### Top Topic-Areas Covered for Chairs

- 1 Resource Allocation and Budgeting
- 2 Legal Issues
- 3 Promotion and Tenure

### Top Topic-Areas **Needed** for Chairs

- 1 Evaluation of Faculty Performance
- 2 **Maintaining a Healthy Work Climate**
- 3 Obtaining and Managing External Funds

# Compassionate Leadership: A Growing Expectation

No Longer 'Nice to Have', Emotional Intelligence is a Vital Leadership Skill

## Compassionate Leadership Impacts Performance Outcomes and Retention



*Leaders Don't Have to Choose Between Compassion and Performance*

**Forbes**

*5 Reasons Why Compassionate Leadership Is The Key To Workplace Success*

**"Compassionate leadership is the new requirement of modern-day leaders** who want to navigate their people and organizations toward sustainable success...

**Today's leaders must treat their people with greater care and kindness**, while respecting everyone's unique qualities that they bring to the team or organization."

*John S. Todorovic,  
Head of People Success  
FilAm Software*



**82%**

Of employees said they would resign to work for a more empathetic employer.

# UBC Helps Leaders Prepare for Complex Challenges

Leadership Challenge Simulator Encourages Leaders to Fine-Tune Approach



## The University of British Columbia's Campus Resource Treasure Hunt



Convenes resource experts from across campus and 30+ new academic leaders participating in the Academic Leadership Development Program (ALDP)



Academic leaders receive realistic **leadership challenge case studies**



Scenarios must be addressed by consulting with resource experts



**Offered annually** since 2014



**Facilitators:** The Director of the Academic Leadership Development Program and the Director of Faculty Relations

## Case Study Examples

### Faculty and Staff Morale in Your Unit

- Overburdened workload complaints
- Recent wave of staff resignations

### PR and Freedom of Speech

- Professor wrote controversial op-ed
- Now receiving threats and hate mail

### Conflict and Power Dynamics

- Untenured faculty member concerns over tenure prospects due to committee involvement
- Classroom environment amid student protests

### Indigenous Scholar Feels Marginalized

- Has received inappropriate comments
- Tenure-eligible, but considering leaving
- Inequitable service workload

# UBC's Campus Resource Treasure Hunt In Action

Academic Leaders Consult with Experts in Real Time and Propose Solutions

## Step 1

*Leaders Receive Scenarios*

**Leaders are split into teams**



Groups have 20 minutes to discuss cases and create a plan using **provided directions**:

- List issues in scenario
- Identify information needed
- Determine which resources may be helpful
- Keep notes to summarize for full group at the end

## Step 2

*Consult Campus Experts*

Teams have **1 hour to consult with campus experts**



Faculty Relations



University Counsel



Human Resources



Equity & Inclusion



Office of the VP, Students



Media Relations

## Step 3

*Debrief Scenarios*

**Teams present their plans to address the case:**

- New academic leaders **receive feedback** from campus experts

Activity **concludes with reflection exercise**

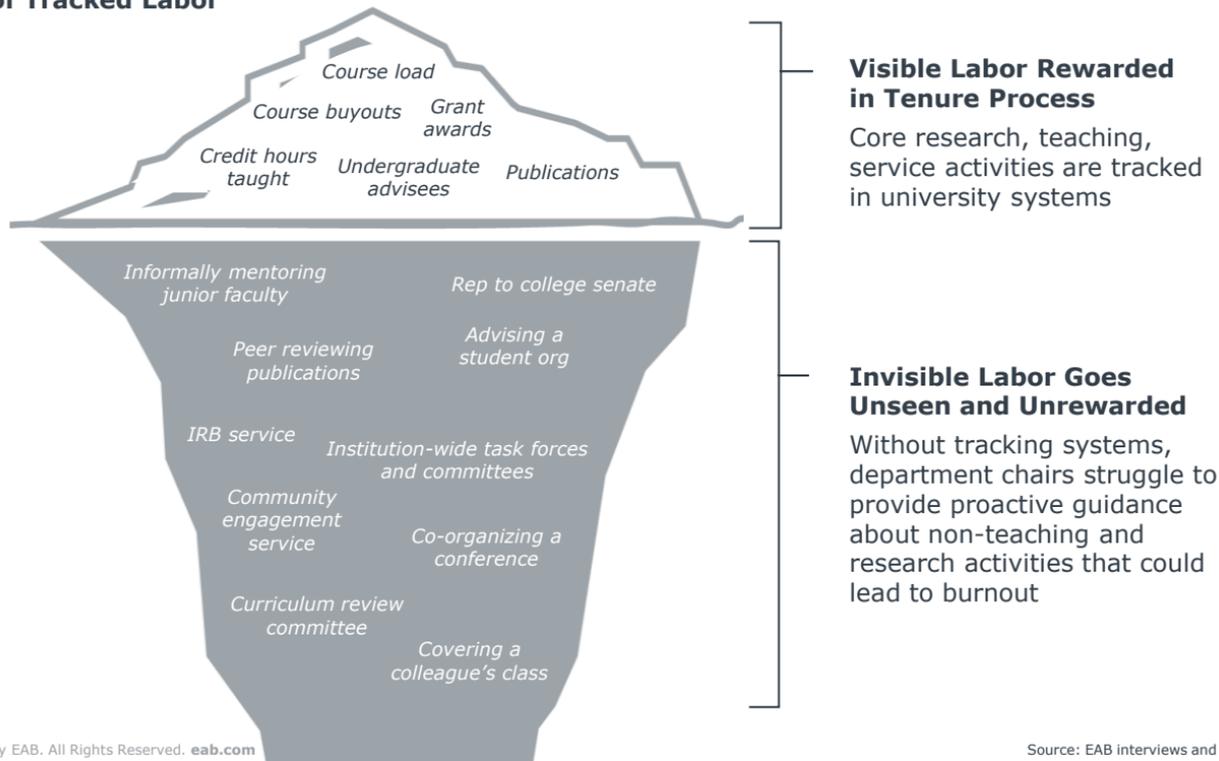
- Leaders discuss their experience and what they learned through the activity
- Concluding remarks reiterate top learning objectives



# The Invisible Labor Problem

## Upskill Leaders to Enhance Performance Evaluation

### Tip of the Iceberg: Department Chairs Only Aware of Tracked Labor





# UMD's Rubric Puts Parameters on Workload

## Expectations Rubric Clarifies Inputs at Different Performance Levels



### Excerpted Associate/Full Professor Rubric

	Teaching/ Mentoring	Research	Service
Below Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach <i>less</i> than 5.5 courses per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0-1 peer reviewed publications per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair 0 department and/or other committees</li> </ul>
Meets Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach 5.5 courses per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 peer reviewed publications per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair 1 department committee</li> </ul>
Above Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach <i>more</i> than 5.5 courses per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 or more peer reviewed publications per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair 2 department and/or other committees</li> </ul>
Far Exceeds Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach <i>more</i> than 6.5 courses per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 or more peer reviewed publications per year in top tier journals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair 3 department and/or other committees</li> </ul>

Role-specific rubric provides necessary context

Grouping creates clear understanding across responsibilities

Concrete numbers and specific activities make expectations concrete

Full view of levels provides snapshot of what faculty workload can, and should, look like



# Self-Audit Prompts Workload Conversations

## Proactively Identify Areas of Overwork to Prevent Faculty Burnout

### Faculty Service Audit



#### Faculty Service Expectations

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Assistant Professors              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serve on 2 college/university or department committees</li></ul>  |
| Tenured Associate/Full Professors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chair 1 department committee</li><li>• Serve on 2 other college/university or department committees</li></ul>         |
| Instructional Faculty             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chair 1 department committee</li><li>• Serve on 3 or more other college/university or department committees</li></ul> |

*Please identify which service roles you are playing this year that continue into the following academic year.*

*Please check boxes of any service roles you would prefer to play in the future. We encourage all faculty to check at least some boxes.*

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Merit Review Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum Review  | <input type="checkbox"/> Budget & Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions & Fellowships          | <input type="checkbox"/> Workload Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Rep to University Senate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rep to College Senate             | <input type="checkbox"/> Research & Grants  | <input type="checkbox"/> IRB Representative       |

*Are you interested in chairing any committees? If so, which ones?*



Faculty reflect on where their workload burden comes from



Faculty and chair discuss current and future workload



Faculty reminded of work needed to meet expectations at top of worksheet





# The Outsized Burden of Committee Work

## Three Common Committee-Related Workload Pain Points



1

### Excessive Number of Committees

---

"We've been hit hard by faculty departures in our department, we have **so many committees and not enough faculty to go around.**"



2

### Unclear Expectations

---

"I feel like **I'm left guessing how much work I should put into each committee.** Some committees seem to require a lot of time and effort, while others are barely active."



3

### Unequal Service Burdens

---

"I don't think it's fair that **some faculty take on so much committee work while others barely show up** to meetings or take on assignments."

# Comparison of Committees Reveals Inefficiencies

Identify Opportunities to Reduce Inefficiencies by Conducting an Inventory

Identify areas to cut or merge committees with overlapping purpose statements

**Committee Inventory**

		<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Meeting Frequency</i>	<i># of Members</i>	<i>Roles</i>	<i>Intensity</i>
Merit Review	Make recommendations for merit; guidance for merit review	3 meetings in April each year	4 faculty	Chair, 3 members	High	
Curriculum Review	Review, make recommendations, and oversee curricular policies	1 meeting to review the process; ad hoc meetings over 6 weeks	3 faculty	Each faculty member rotates	Medium	
Research & Grants	Recommend ways of enhancing the research function of dept.	3 meetings a year	3 faculty	Advisory group roles	Low	

Use metrics to gauge level of member effort required, and identify opportunities to right-size resources



**Audit template** available in post-event toolkit



# Capture Workload Data on a Department Level

Viewing Faculty Members' Workloads Side by Side Illuminates Inequities

## Example Department Workload Dashboard

Each faculty member's workload listed as percent of total

**ACE**® American Council on Education™

Rank	Faculty ID	Research		Teaching			Service	
		Units	Percent of Total	Fall (SCH)	Spring (SCH)	Percent of Total	Units	Percent of Total
Assistant	F-28	7	10	3	3	28	21	40
Associate	F-21	18	30	4	4	36	25	47
Full	F-11	35	60	5	3	36	7	13
Sum	N/A	60	100	12	10	100	53	100

Faculty names are blinded to peers but visible to department chair to preserve confidentiality

Service and research activities are translated into work units for apples-to-apples comparison

# Reflection

Consider whether and how the following strategies could inflect the burnout drivers you identified:

1. Equipping leaders with compassionate leadership skills (or some other emotional intelligence framework)
2. Offering a leadership challenge simulator
3. Addressing workload inequities/invisible labor
4. Addressing workload inefficiencies/committee assignments



# Closing Question, via Slido



Slido.com: Enter code #4218002

# Self Reflection



**Workload**



**Control**



**Reward**



**Fairness**



**Community**



**Values**