

FTES, FTEF, SFR – Will the Real Numbers Please Stand Up

There are several documents that report Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES), Full Time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF), and Student/Faculty Ratio (SFR) for each academic area and/or the University totals. One would expect complete agreement between these different documents and yet they do not agree department-for-department. What follows is a discussion of several of these documents and the particular slant that each one takes that causes variation in FTES, FTEF and SFR.

From the Faculty Point of View -- The Faculty Workload

The Faculty Workload report calculates FTES, FTEF, and SFR from a faculty perspective. Almost without exception (minus a few part-timers) each faculty has one appointment that is their primary appointment (to their home department). SIS+ and the Workload allow us to input up to three separate appointments for a faculty and that home department appointment always goes in the first appointment field. So from the Workload's point of view, the home department is simply whichever appointment is input in the first appointment field on SIS+.

On the Faculty Workload report, ALL OF THE FTES that an individual faculty generates will be credited to the faculty's home department. That is, if a faculty is teaching an Art class, a History class, and a Math class and the faculty's home department is Sociology, all the FTES generated from the Art, History, and Math classes that this faculty is teaching will be counted in the FTES total for the Department of Sociology.

The FTEF number on the Workload reflects the way we have assigned the faculty on SIS+. If a faculty is teaching courses from areas outside his/her home department, we reassign that faculty an appropriate percentage to the other department. That splitting of faculty positions is reflected in the FTEF number that the FAD generates. This splitting of appointments is informal in the sense that it does not affect the faculty's official appointment through Personnel. Nor does it affect the way the faculty is paid.

From the Department Point of View -- Course Section, Mode and Level, WEB Listings

The FTES listing on the WEB and the Course Section and Mode and Level reports view FTES in terms of how many FTES the courses in a particular department are generating. This count of FTES does not take into consideration who is teaching the course or which department that faculty is from. Whichever department the course belongs to is the department that receives the FTES for that course.

FTES, FTEF, SFR as Reported by Institutional Research

Institutional Research produces a Student-Faculty Ratios (FTES/FTEF) for Fall Semesters report. The FTEF breakdown-by-department on this report agrees with the FTEF breakdown-by-department on the Faculty Workload.

The criteria for the FTES breakdown-by-department on this report is modeled after the Faculty Workload. But because of what happens to our academic planning data, the Student-Faculty Ratios report is not able to split FTES in exactly the same way the Workload does.

We submit academic planning data (upon which the Workload is based) to the Chancellor's Office. That data is processed and comes back to us in a somewhat modified format. Institutional Research uses that processed information to create its Student-Faculty Ratios report. When we submit the faculty data, there is a field on each faculty record that identifies which appointment is first, which is second, and which is third. On our workload we consider the first appointment to be the home department. When the data is processed and returned to us, that field is gone. So when a faculty has appointments to more than one department, it's not possible to tell from this "processed" data which of those appointments is to the home department.

Institutional Research devised a multiple-field-sort to try and order multiple faculty appointment records such that they would come up with the same home department for a faculty as we had used on the Faculty Workload. They sorted each appointment record by Year, Term, Department, College, Instructional Faculty Fraction, Other Support Fraction, and Instructional Administrative Fraction. Then they used the same criteria for assigning FTES as the Workload does. That is, all the FTES generated by a faculty goes to that faculty's home department. But because their sort routine does not, in all cases, end up matching the order in which faculty appointments were entered into SIS, sometimes the faculty's home department on the workload does not end up being his/her home department on the Student-Faculty Ratios report and consequently the FTES split does not exactly match between Workload and Student-Faculty Ratio report.

CSU Academic Discipline Report (ADR) From the Chancellor's Office

The Chancellor's Office recently notified us that they were placing campus FTES and FTEF information on the WEB. We were asked to review the figures to be sure we agreed with their numbers. The FTES numbers for each term are in agreement with our FTES numbers that are generated based on the department the course belongs to (not the way the Workload calculates FTES). The FTEF number is not in agreement with any of our other reports.

Each course generates Weighted Teaching Units (WTU) that are referred to as direct WTU. This is in contrast to Indirect WTU which are generated by a faculty being given assigned time for work done outside the classroom.

The Chancellor's Office ADR report concerns itself ONLY with Direct WTU. It ignores any percentage of a faculty's position that is involved in non-teaching assignments (that would generate AWTU) and it ignores any splitting that we do to the faculty's position in terms of reassigning percentages of a position to a different department. The report takes the faculty's appointment and distributes it to one or more departments based on what percentage of total direct WTU each course represents.

For example, Dr. Smith may be appointed to English for 75%, Biology for 25%. He is teaching two English classes that generate 6.0 WTU, one Biology class that generates 3.0 WTU and is receiving 3.0 AWTU for a special project he's doing for the English department related to remedial English. The ADR uses only Dr. Smith's **direct** WTU which comes to a total of 9.0 WTU. It ignores the 3.0 AWTU.

The 6.0 WTU for the English classes is 67% of the 9.0 total WTU so the ADR assigns 67% of this faculty's position to English, instead of the 75% that he is actually working. It takes the 3.0 WTU for the Biology class and divides that by the 9.0 total direct WTU and takes the 33% generated here and adds it to the Biology FTEF count.

So Which Numbers are the Real Numbers?

While the Faculty Workload report's design may be a given that we have to live with in terms of reporting to the Chancellor's Office, it may not be reflecting data in a way that is useful for making decisions on our campus.

As we work to build a Data Store and Warehouse, it is critical to establish common definitions for things like what an actively enrolled student is at any point in the semester and what is the correct way to count FTES and FTEF. It would appear that this is a good moment to review what we want FTEF and FTES to mean and then perhaps we'll need to develop an entirely new way, or several new ways of calculating these numbers that better reflect how we do things now and that give us information that guides decision making and can be justified and explained.