



***UPEI At Issue #8***  
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## **WORKLOAD AT THE ATLANTIC VETERINARY COLLEGE**

### **Background**

Workload distribution equity is complicated at all Canadian faculties of veterinary medicine because of the wide variation in academic activities (teaching, research, and service responsibilities) between those faculty engaged primarily in clinical versus didactic teaching. Comparator veterinary colleges have continued to refine approaches to this issue, which often include the appointment of term or permanent (non-tenure) clinical-track faculty, who focus more (up to 85% of their time) on clinical teaching.

### **The University's proposal**

In 2019, a joint committee of the UPEI Faculty Association and AVC administrators began a process to evaluate workload and provide more recognition of the efforts of clinical faculty. The joint committee reviewed models at veterinary colleges in Canada and the US finding a variety of approaches, which use a greater or lesser proportion of the following:

- tenure-track faculty focused on a mix of clinical and didactic teaching, service and research; and
- term or permanent (non-tenure) clinical-track faculty, with a stronger focus on clinical teaching—up to 85% of their time.

The joint committee produced a draft document in 2020 which, rather than promoting a move towards a non-tenure clinical-track, supported continuation of a tenure-track-based model consistent with UPEI culture of valuing teaching among faculty in tenure and promotion processes.

The model included limits on the number of weeks (or credits) of teaching and service required of faculty and used this data in a Distribution of Effort (“DOE”) calculation. The DOE, combined with changes in the tenure and promotion language, would better acknowledge the contribution that primarily clinical faculty make through their teaching and service in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) and Diagnostic Services (DS).

The joint committee had just turned its attention to research, after completing the work on clinical teaching, when the pandemic halted their progress.

The University proposes that the draft document developed in 2020 become an MOU and that the parties continue to work on workload equity issues within the AVC. Further, the University has proposed that AVC DOE be considered for both promotion and tenure in new language in those sections of the collective agreement.

## **The UPEI FA proposal**

The UPEI Faculty Association has proposed that AVC faculty be included, for the first time, in section H 1.4.1 of the collective agreement which governs teaching workload in other faculties. Workload in other faculties equates to five three-credit-hour courses (15 credit-hours of teaching in total) per year. For reference, at AVC, each full week of clinical teaching is considered equal to one credit-hour.

A survey of department chairs at AVC in 2019 found that the credit load per full-time equivalent tenure track faculty member was 29.3, 7.5, 9.1, and 14.4 in Companion Animals, Pathology and Microbiology, Biomedical Sciences and Health Management, respectively. While faculty members in Companion Animals teach an average of 29.3 credit-hours, the expectations on clinical duties are made clear in discussions with them prior to hiring. Section A 8.1 of the collective agreement recognizes that there may be differing principal duties between research and teaching with specific reference to AVC. Having faculty members at AVC fall under section H1.4.1 would lead to them being limited to 15 credit-hours (approximately 12 weeks of clinics plus 3 credits of didactic teaching), which is not feasible within the framework of the VTH or DS.

In addition, the UPEI FA proposes including non-teaching clinical service at the VTH or DS in the calculation at the same rate (one credit-hour per full week of non-teaching clinical service). It should be noted that in addition to the teaching credit-hours, non-teaching clinical service can be substantial for some faculty members in Pathology and Microbiology and Health Management.

The result of the UPEI FA proposals would be that the combination of didactic and clinical teaching, as well as non-teaching clinical service, would be limited to 15 credit-hours (combined weeks of clinical activity and didactic teaching).

The proposals are not consistent with any other veterinary college in Canada nor any other studied as part of the joint committee's work.

## **Consequences of the UPEI FA proposal**

If accepted, the University would have to increase the number of faculty clinicians by 25–30, which would have budgetary, departmental structure, and accreditation impacts.

### *Budgetary*

Adding 25–30 clinician faculty members would cost approximately \$5 million per year in salary and benefits (plus additional costs for support personnel, offices, technology, etc.).

AVC has no access to additional funds through their interprovincial funding agreement; therefore, increasing tuition is the only revenue-generating option. Tuition at AVC generates approximately \$10 million, meaning tuition would have to rise 50% to fund the UPEI FA's proposal. Current tuition at AVC is \$14,072 for domestic students and \$70,570 for international students. An increase of 50% would place AVC in a non-competitive position.

The alternative to raising tuition to this extent is a mix of tuition increases with and extensive cutting of non-clinician positions, which would have serious negative effects on the delivery of the pre-clinical curriculum and certain types of research activity, putting accreditation at risk.

### *Departmental*

- The greatest impact would be in the Department of Biomedical Sciences, where positions are almost exclusively non-clinical with a greater research focus in lieu of teaching (as per A 8.1), with teaching loads often far below 15 credits. Substantial reductions in faculty member numbers (with potential merging of the department with another due to size reduction) would be necessary.
- In the departments of Health Management and Pathology and Microbiology, there are a mixture of primarily clinical faculty members and non-clinical faculty members. Within budget and workload constraints, reductions in non-clinician faculty member numbers would be necessary to fund growth in clinician numbers within the departments and for redistribution of resources from these departments to Companion Animals.
- To achieve a 15-credit-hour target requirement within budgetary constraints, approximately 20 faculty positions from Biomedical Sciences, Health Management, and Pathology and Microbiology would need to be moved into Companion Animals.

### *Accreditation*

Accreditation of veterinary programs requires a balance of teaching (clinical and didactic) and research. During the most recent accreditation cycle (2017) and in subsequent annual reviews, concerns have been raised by the accreditation body regarding declining research funding and supports. Further erosion of non-clinician research faculty in favour of a stronger clinician numbers would undoubtedly raise additional concerns because the resulting teaching and research balance would not be consistent with accreditation standards. Loss of accreditation would severely jeopardize recruitment of international students and impact all our students after they graduate. Students graduating from non-accredited programs have a very challenging pathway to licensure as a veterinarian in Canada and the US.

### **Conclusion**

The current balance of faculty with primarily clinical roles versus those with other duties at AVC is not dissimilar to those at other colleges of veterinary medicine in Canada. For the last decade, the AVC has used a collaborative approach to determine faculty hiring distribution within and between departments. Through revenue growth strategies and resource redistribution, the College has seen significant growth in clinical faculty members between 2015 and 2020.

The UPEI FA has proposed a fundamental departure from practices in other veterinary programs. The University believes that this will jeopardize the financial sustainability and accreditation of the AVC and cause significant restructuring for AVC faculty members and departments.

The University proposes an MOU—building on the previous collaborative efforts of the AVC administration and former UPEI FA executive—to enable continued progress on workload equity issues within the AVC, allow greater recognition of clinical teaching and service DOE in the tenure and promotion process, and recognize the values and culture of the University.