IRC Research Working Group Report

Summer 2024

Background

During the spring of 2024, based on the findings from the 2022 IRC task force, the AVC for Faculty Affairs, in collaboration with UCDALI, authorized a summer working group to explore IRC faculty research and creative work on campus. The working group consisted of Vivian Shyu from CLAS, Jenny Steffel Johnson from CAP, and Rachel Stein from SEHD. Specifically, the group was charged with understanding more about: (a) IRC faculty workload distributions, retention and promotions related to research, (b) existing best practices around IRC research, and (c) available and needed campus supports for IRC faculty research. The group responded to that charge and did our best to answer these questions below, while acknowledging that few best practices appear to exist.

Introduction

Instructional, Research and Clinical (IRC) faculty bring enormous value to the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), contributing to the mission of institutional and educational excellence. IRC faculty comprise the largest segment of the CU Denver faculty (63.6% in 2021), and are the most student-facing faculty members, teaching 67% of student credit hours and 86% of core course sections (IRC Task Force, p. 2). Further, IRC faculty are diverse in both background and experience, enriching the academic environment and providing varied viewpoints and role models for students. "Regardless of background, [IRC faculty] are unified in their passion for teaching, support of students, and commitment to mentoring the next generation of professionals" (IRC Task Force, p. 2). Additionally, IRC faculty contribute to the university research mission through collaborations, creating research opportunities for students, bringing in funding, and increasing the university's overall research productivity.

This document addresses the research-related concerns and needs of Instructional Series faculty who have "research/creative work or scholarly activities" as part of their contracted time, specifically faculty on the Teaching Professor Track (TPT) and Clinical Professor Track (CPT). However, we wish to acknowledge at the outset that active engagement in scholarly work is important for the professional development of all faculty. Future attention to questions of the relationship between research and creative activities, active engagement with one's field, and teaching excellence will help us better address the responsibility of all faculty "to maintain competence [and] to devote themselves to developing and improving their teaching, scholarship, research, creative work, clinical activities, writing, and speaking" stipulated in Regent policy 5.B.2(A), and the expectation that all instructional faculty "demonstrate continued professional growth in their fields"

(APS 5060). However, despite recognizing that all faculty benefit from activities that allow them to stay current with their discipline, build their professional network, integrate the latest research findings and innovative practices into their courses, and hone the most effective pedagogical techniques, the scope of this report is limited to individuals with contracted research time,

IRC faculty members with research as part of their time allocation are expected to engage in scholarly activity, creative work, or research in their underlying discipline or the related pedagogy. For most full-time IRC TPT faculty, this expectation is reflected in their baseline workload distribution of 80% teaching, 10% service, and 10% "research/creative work or scholarly activities" (Campus Administrative Policy 1019D). Henceforth "research/creative work or scholarly activities" are referred to as "scholarly activities" for brevity.

IRC faculty members may negotiate a differentiated workload in order "to enhance their professional knowledge, competence, and effectiveness" (Regent Policy 5.C.3, section B.1), and data collected from across campus suggests varied expectations depending on a faculty member's discipline and unit (see Appendix A). Ultimately, flexibility is necessary, due to different types of research and creative activity, varied faculty expertise, goals, and expectations, all of which necessitate that faculty time is allocated thoughtfully. In sum, the contributions of IRC faculty's scholarly activities are valuable and important for the university's research goals and mission.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

There is a wide range of activities, products, and evidence that can comprise the potential portfolio of scholarly activities of IRC faculty (see Appendices A & B). The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) as an area of research bears special mention. SoTL is the systematic inquiry of teaching and learning, paired with the dissemination of findings. SoTL's aim of understanding, evaluating, and improving the teaching and learning experience naturally aligns with IRC faculty, given their major role in teaching at CU Denver (Culver, 2023). By supporting SoTL as a scholarly activity, particularly for IRC faculty, CU Denver can improve student outcomes, show commitment to its teaching mission, and demonstrate that the university values the unique contributions of its IRC faculty.

Scholarly Activities and Workload Considerations

As summarized in the table in Appendix A, there are a wide range of scholarly activities counted in annual reviews and as criteria for appointment, promotion, and reappointment across the IRC TPT and CTT lines at CU Denver. For example, in the College of Architecture and Planning, there is no distinction made between the expectations for tenure-track faculty and IRC faculty. Alternatively, in the School of Public Affairs, the scholarly activity of IRC faculty is defined broadly and expected to align with their 10% workload. In many

primary units, scholarly activity expectations for IRC faculty are not specifically defined as a distinct set of criteria aligned with the IRC faculty role but are instead constructed as quantitatively scaled-down versions of tenure-track expectations.

In some ways, the variability in criteria related to scholarly activity is important and necessary, given the unique values, practices and priorities that exist across disciplines. However, adherence to a practice of scaling down from the scholarly activity parameters determined for tenure-track lines often neglects the distinctions between faculty lines. While scholarly activities focusing on the creation of original knowledge and dissemination of peer-reviewed products is a hallmark of tenure-track research, the focus of scholarly activity may be qualitatively different for primarily instructional faculty. On Instructional Series lines, faculty should be tasked with conducting work that "centers on inquiry and active engagement in the discipline to maintain currency, (infuses one's) teaching practice with current knowledge of the field, and with no requirements to generate new knowledge [nor] requirements to disseminate, publish, or produce" (IRC Taskforce report, p. 17). Building a body of research publishable in peer-reviewed journals is one path an IRC faculty member might choose, but it should not be required. Depending on the percent effort and time allowed for scholarly activities, IRC faculty members should be expected to demonstrate a body of scholarly activities that result in active engagement and participation in their discipline or its associated pedagogy, which will serve their primary role as educators bringing well-rounded, expert-level scholarship to their teaching.

Current Supports and Systems

> "To sustain their work in the mission areas of scholarship, teaching, and service, faculty members must sense there is institutional value in their work. To ensure both faculty and institutional success, institutions must implement policies and actions that support faculty effort in all types of scholarship" (Franks & Payakachat, 2020, p. 1170).

At the primary levels (e.g., unit or department), professional development (PD) funding for IRC faculty varies across CU Denver and is typically used for dissemination of scholarly work or attending events rather than conducting research. For example, in Sociology, each faculty member has a budget of $750 available for conference presentations, instructional workshops, and training with analytical software. The Communication department provides annual PD funds, awards, mentorship opportunities, pedagogy workshops, and support for sharing research, reviewing drafts, co-authorships, and co-grant applications. Mathematics has limited annual funds, generally aligned with tenure-track requirements. Psychology allows applications for shared departmental funds to support travel and conference attendance and is dependent on fund availability.

Some schools/colleges offer additional funding support to all faculty, including IRC faculty. For example, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) offers Advancing Curricula and Teaching grants of up to $5000 for research, including SoTL. Additional small research launch or completion grants up to $1,000 are available to all CLAS faculty with research and scholarship in their contracted workload. Similarly, the School of Education and Human Development (SEHD) offers PD funds and, as the budget allows, faculty are offered $1000 grants for research or professional development. The College of Architecture and Planning offers Teaching Professor Track faculty $1500 per year and Instructors $1000 per year in PD funding, which can roll over for up to two years.

At the campus level, some funding opportunities are available to support IRC faculty scholarly activity. The Center for Faculty Development and Advancement's (CFDA) Professional Development Grants for IRC faculty offer up to $1,000 for conference participation, professional development training, and purchasing resources. CU Denver also offers eight fully funded spots, valued at $5,050, to participate in the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD) Faculty Success Program, which is available to any faculty member with research responsibilities. The CU Denver Office of Research Services (ORS) provides grants up to $10,000 for research-focused projects, available to faculty with research responsibilities in their appointment; these awards require evidence that they will be used to apply for eventual, larger external grants.

As illustrated above, there are some campus mechanisms to support the professional development and scholarly activity of IRC faculty. However, these internal funding opportunities are limited, mostly provide small amounts, and are often geared towards professional development rather than scholarly activities. Additionally, guidance and recognition for SoTL work are minimal, despite its natural alignment with IRC faculty roles. Moreover, many of the resources recognized as best practices for supporting scholarly activity are limited or unavailable to IRC faculty, such as start-up funds, research space, and access to skilled research assistants. There are also no equivalent opportunities for deeper discipline-specific scholarly dives like sabbaticals for tenure-track faculty. Mentorship and training structures are also sparse for IRC faculty, with uncertain access to existing programs like the CFDA's "mentoring circles."

Finally, the fact that IRC faculty are typically limited to having 10-20% of their workload allocated for research limits their ability to take on large-scale scholarly projects. Thus, ORS grants intended to leverage larger external applications may be challenging or inappropriate for the IRC level of effort/time for research activities. Similarly, while some IRC faculty have taken on roles as principal investigators for external grants, the limited dedicated time and support makes this untenable for most IRC faculty members.

Summary

The information gathered in this report demonstrates that it is crucial to align primary unit criteria for merit, appointment, reappointment, and promotion to recognize the distinct role of scholarly activity by Instructional Series faculty. The following four core ideas emerged through the development of this document and guide the recommendations and next steps laid out below.

1. The university should honor and recognize IRC scholarly activities and provide support and mentorship to enable IRC faculty to successfully undertake this work given their contracted workload expectations.
2. Activities that are "counted" as scholarly activity for IRC faculty must be wide ranging but should provide evidence of active engagement and participation in the discipline or pedagogy, achievement, leadership, and/or influence on the profession, on the campus, or beyond.
3. The scholarly activity of IRC faculty may relate to their underlying discipline itself or to pedagogy (e.g., scholarship of teaching and learning; SoTL).
4. IRC faculty are expected to engage in scholarly activity at a level that is commensurate with the time allotted to them. However, IRC faculty who would like to engage in more research, within the bounds of meeting job expectations, should not be limited from doing so.

Recommendations and Suggested Next Steps

Given the importance of IRC faculty's engagement in scholarly activities, it is imperative that CU Denver better recognize and support IRC faculty members' scholarly activity. Existing "best practices" are sparse, allowing CU Denver to lead in supporting IRC faculty research to promote faculty development, enhance teaching, and align with CU Denver's research mission.

1. **CU Denver should establish and promulgate principles about the value of IRC faculty scholarly activity.**
    a. Articulate the principles that guide IRC scholarly activity expectations in alignment with the four core ideas outlined above.
    b. Document the scholarly activity contributions of IRC faculty at CU Denver. There is currently limited data tracking IRC faculty scholarly work. Gathering information using a range of qualitative and quantitative metrics (e.g., amount of external funding, SoTL reports, community impact, etc.) would be helpful for establishing recognition of IRC faculty scholarly work.

2. **Increase support for IRC faculty scholarly activity.**
   Examine current research support opportunities at CU Denver to identify where and why IRC faculty are included or excluded. Determine the additional supports IRC faculty need to successfully undertake scholarly activity, such as:
   a. Provide funding opportunities to support scholarly activity projects that are aligned with the 10-20% time allocation of most IRC faculty. For example, make available annual grants of up to $10K for smaller, publishable studies or creative works, without requiring that the grants leverage larger, external funding sources.
   b. Host grant application workshops focused on attainable funding sources most relevant for IRC faculty.
   c. Create more robust mentoring opportunities for IRC faculty. This is important for scholarly activity as well as other domains of IRC expectations and promotion processes. Mentoring provides an opportunity to support IRC faculty excellence using "in-house" resources and to foster a supportive environment.
   d. Implement opportunities for professional development leave for IRC faculty as recommended in the IRC Task Force Recommendations and called for in Campus Administrative Policy 1012 – Differentiated Annual Workloads.

3. **Ensure that expectations for IRC scholarly activities are clear and equitable across campus, and evaluation metrics are appropriate for IRC faculty's contracted workload expectations.**
   Clarity, while maintaining flexibility, is warranted around IRC scholarly activity, just as it is for tenure-line faculty research. Appendix A summarizes current criteria for IRC faculty scholarly activity across campus and demonstrates the variability and inconsistency therein. There are several ways that expectations could be improved:
   a. Clearly define IRC faculty's scholarly activity expectations in alignment with the principles called for above. Each primary unit must define what scholarly activity may look like for their IRC faculty in alignment with their contracted levels of time.
   b. Support faculty who would like to undertake more scholarly activity than expected (while maintaining job expectations in all contracted areas) by supporting the negotiation of differentiated workloads.
   c. Clarify how active engagement in the profession is captured within IRC scholarly activity metrics.
   d. Use criteria and metrics that are inclusive of a broad range of scholarly activity, including the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), when determining how research is "counted" and evaluated.

e. Clarify review cycles and promotional practices related to IRC scholarly activity in primary units. The principles of flexibility and equity must be consistently upheld in expectations and practices.

4. **Collect additional information directly and comprehensively from individual IRC faculty across schools/colleges/library and primary units.**
   To operationalize the above recommendations, as well as clarify and learn more about IRC faculty's experience of undertaking scholarly activity across CU Denver, faculty members should be surveyed to collect information such as:
   a. How do IRC faculty perceive their scholarly activity expectations?
   b. What challenges, if any, do IRC faculty encounter when engaging in/trying to engage in scholarly activity?
   c. What supports do IRC faculty need to enable them to successfully undertake scholarly activity?

Appendix A

Summary Table of Scholarly Activity Criteria for IRC Faculty across CU Denver

Primary Unit	Default or Typical Work Allocation	Acceptable Types of R/SA/ C Work	Specified Amount of R/SA/C Work	Expectation for Peer-Reviewed Work?
School of Education and Human Development (2013)	(Negotiable) 70% Teaching 20% Service 10% R/SA/C	A record of scholarly products (e.g., technical report, newsletter, research brief, lecture, keynote, presentation, website); outlet options include school, district, community, state, national For promotion: A record of scholarly products; impact and advancement of knowledge to the discipline, field, and/or practice	A consistent pattern of scholarly products that reflects the candidate's workload For promotion: Not numerically specified; qualitative indicators of an impactful pattern of work	Not required
Library (2020)	80-90% Teaching 0-10% Service 10% R/SA/C	May include books, articles, chapters, reports, conference presentations, workshop papers, manuals, guidebooks, handbooks, research data, websites, blog sites	A scholarship plan for the future consistent with a 10% R/SA/C load. For promotion: Scholarly products build over time and extend to broader and more diverse audiences.	Not required
Business School	(Negotiable) 70% Teaching 10% Service 20% R/SA/C For CTT faculty who produce two or more academic peer-reviewed publications every five years: 60% Teaching 15% Service 25% R/SA/C			

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	(Negotiable) 80% Teaching 10% Service 10% R/SA/C	Differs by primary unit; may include: **Publications** • Publications and creative works • Publication of research or creative work • Scholarly output and research publications • Collaborating with colleagues in papers or workshops • Editing anthologies or curating exhibitions **Presentations** • Conference presentations and workshops • Presentation of papers or creative works at conferences • Invited presentations and participation in panels, seminars, and workshops • Development and dissemination of innovative courses or programs **Research Activities** • Ongoing research collaboration and mentoring of research students • Participating in conferences or seminars • Leading workshops in areas of expertise • Awarding of internal or external grant money **Funding** • Seeking internal and external funding **Additional Involvement** • Participating in roundtable discussions • Curating museum exhibitions • Supporting students in completing capstone projects • Attending local and national scholarly conferences • Chairing panels at conferences • Publishing research or expository articles	Statement describing and providing evidence of completed R/SA/C work; plan for subsequent years; evidence to support Dossier required every 3 years; reviewed at unit, college, and Provost levels; letters of recommendation required	Differs by primary unit and appointment level
College of Architecture and Planning (2015)	(Negotiable) 60% Teaching 20% Service 20% R/SA/C	"Citations and norms for the field or discipline; memberships on editorial boards or review panels; keynote addresses; book awards; other awards; number of downloads of	"Quantitative Measures: Publications or productions in other media, including	Implied

		open-access publications and other products; impact on practice; significant professional collaborations; success of student collaborators; unfunded projects that had impacts on the field; and indicators of the quality of journals, such as their rankings."	refereed journal articles, refereed presentations at professional conferences, non-refereed articles, books, book chapters, published proceedings, etc. If appropriate for the discipline, amount of external funds obtained for research, and sources of the funds, and other external validation such as, design awards, honors, and professional recognition."	
College of Arts and Media (2018)	80% teaching (3 classes per semester) 10% service 10% R/SA/C "Primary units and chairs can request changes from this typical appointment with approval by the dean"	"Professional and/or research activity for the CT faculty should be clearly tied to the classroom experience."	Not clearly articulated	
School of Public Affairs (2012 officially, but "recently" updated?)	80% teaching 10% service 10% R/SA/C	"Meeting expectations" is having an actively scholarly research agenda with output to match one's contractual obligation. Types of specific deliverables that would count: scholarly refereed and non-referred activities, external funding, collaboration with students, evidence of impact, evidence of originality, evidence of impact on the mission of SPA and the university, supporting SPA students with funding, community engagement through research activities such as contractual research or issuance of reports.	None specified, but with CTT faculty's obligation being only 10%, almost anything can count as research or creative activity, but anything that is counted here cannot be double counted in the "teaching" category.	No
Engineering				

Includes: Civil (2015), Mechanical (2021), Computer Science and Engineering (2022)	80% Teaching
	10% Service
	10% R/SA/C
	(Other workloads may be assigned by the Chair, subject to approval by the Dean and Provost.)
		General Expectations:
		• Maintain a clear research agenda
		• Publish in peer-reviewed journals
		• Write proposals to external funding sources
		• Develop patents, software, or reports that advance the discipline
		• Present research findings at conferences
		• Serve as master's or PhD student advisor
		Meritorious Activities:
		• Write proposals to external funding sources
		• Publish in appropriate journals (some primary authorship)
		• Participate in national conferences
		• Develop patents
		Excellent Activities (in addition to meritorious):
		• Serve as PI/Co-PI on externally funded projects that support students
		• Maintain sustained external funding efforts
		• Actively publish in upper-tier journals (some primary authorship)
		• Demonstrate significant impact of research on the field
		Purpose of Research:
		• Grow in teaching areas by maintaining technical competency, which includes:
		  • Serving as committee member for graduate students on technical research projects
		  • Attending technical research workshops, conferences, or symposia
		  • Acting as Co-PI or Senior Personnel on research grant
			Civil Engineering: for the default CTT workload of 10% research, the expected number of criteria to be demonstrated is one quarter that for TT/T faculty (assumed 40% research).
			
			Mechanical Engineering: "Excellence" (in addition): some, but not necessarily all, of the following:
			• Collaborator with other faculty on research projects
			• Co-author or author on technical research publications in conferences or journals
			• Senior Personnel, Co-PI, or PI on externally funded technical research grants
			• Industry-related technical activities, such as patents, software, or reports that contribute to the discipline
			• ASEE publications or related conference proceedings or journals
			• PI on educational research grant
			
			Computer Science and Engineering: "If the CTT has a workload other than 80-10-10, the quantity of expectation will be commensurate to the workload for their appointment."	

Appendix B

Examples of Possible Research/ Creative Work/ Scholarly Activities for IRC Faculty

Awards and/or accolades
Contributions to the Profession
Professional consultation
Outreach activities or professional contributions to service organizations and civic groups
Significant professional collaborations
Creative Activities
Built design work
Curated exhibitions of creative content
Exhibits of design work
Patent applications
Production of videos or other multi-media materials or applications
Podcasts
Software development
Funding
Grants applied for
Grant amounts received
Presentations
Presentations at workshops offered for professional practitioners
Presentations at local, state, regional, and national professional meetings and conferences
Presentations at academic conferences
Invited presentations/ talks
Development and dissemination of innovative courses or programs
Participation in / facilitation of round tables or panels
Moderating conference panel presentations
Publications

Edition of multi-author publications or anthologies
Publications in peer-reviewed or non-peer-reviewed journals; topics may include but are not limited to - research findings - discussion of techniques/practice - methods of professional or academic practice - standards of professional best practices - Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Published books
Published book chapters
Published creative work
Published tutorials or handbooks
Reports that advance the discipline
Research
Primary research
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Research with students
Research collaborations
Significant professional collaborations

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