Portland Community College
Subject Area Committee (SAC) Study

SAC Chair Survey Findings
May 2014

Survey Conducted by PCC SAC Best Practices Committee
“SAC Chairs play one of the most critical roles in the college . . . even more important as we move deeply into outcome assessment. To do more than the minimum job, time is required for critical thinking and reflection and for taking a comprehensive perspective on program goals and steps to future improvement.”

--Survey respondent
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Executive Summary

At Portland Community College (PCC), Subject Area Committees (SAC) chairs perform many vital functions. They propose changes to curriculum and gather approval for and implement curricular changes, serve as a point of contact for questions and concerns regarding instructor qualifications, and work with the Learning Assessment Council to ensure that institutional program assessment requirements are met and annual reports submitted. Every five years the SAC Chair also heads up the development of a written program review.

Slightly more than half of all SAC Chairs at PCC are new to their position and on a steep learning curve. The rest have held their SAC positions for three to ten years or longer, some by default as the only faculty person in the department. SAC Chairs most commonly devote three to five hours a week to SAC duties but many spend up to ten hours or more per week.

Due to the limited number of hours available for SAC duties, SAC Chairs juggle a lot of competing responsibilities. Often, the only way to accomplish SAC duties is outside of the school day. Constant changes and increasing requests and expectations from administration exacerbate the challenge. For some, balancing the intensity of teaching with the demands of SAC responsibilities means students periodically take a back seat. Even when SAC chairs manage to keep all of the balls in the air, some feel they are not able to live up to expectations they set for themselves to be great (rather than just good) teachers.

In addition to compensation and release time, several SAC chairs say they need more guidance, mentoring, training, and support from the College to effectively fulfill their role as SAC chair. Specifically, they feel that support and training on best practices, leadership, communication and assessments could increase their effectiveness. Some SAC Chairs also feel that streamlining and even standardizing the SAC processes and paperwork required by administration would make them more efficient.

Despite the challenges of SAC leadership, some SAC Chairs find the position rewarding. One benefit is the increased knowledge and awareness of institutional principles and policies the position engenders. The role also facilitates a better understanding of the department’s mission and objectives and an appreciation of the work of other colleagues. Some say it enriches their teaching process and provides a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum and assessment outcomes.

In response to the survey findings, the SAC Best Practices Committee developed a set of recommendations for supporting SAC Chairs. Key recommendations include:

- Develop and implement an equitable compensation plan for the SAC Chair
- Allow part-time faculty to serve as SAC Chair
- Provide administrative support and resources to SAC Chairs
- Establish a formal written agreement for the SAC Chair position
- Develop an ongoing professional development program for all SAC Chairs
Methodology

The SAC Best Practices Committee developed an online survey in the fall of 2014 to assess the experience of SAC Chairs at Portland Community College in implementing the duties and responsibilities of their chairmanship.

The survey contained 30 questions. Questions were one of two types: descriptive or open-ended (qualitative). The descriptive questions were designed to acquire data from SAC Chairs describing the composition, activities, and people that encompass the 90 Subject Area Committees (SACs) on Portland Community College (PCC) campuses.

All but the five open-ended (qualitative) questions generated quantitative responses that could be reported numerically. For example, survey participants were asked how many years they had served as SAC Chair, how many hours per week they spent on specific duties and how often they delegated duties.

Open-ended questions were used to collect thoughts and reflections on the challenges, impact and support needed as a SAC Chair. These findings are included in the report in narrative format accompanied by supportive quotes that substantiate the findings.

Fifty-five of the 90 SAC Chairs participated in the survey for a better-than-average response rate of 61 percent. Forty-nine different departments were represented.

Respondents completed the survey online and returned it to the chair of the SAC Best Practices Committee. The survey was not conducted anonymously but findings were summarized across respondents and no names attached to responses.

All data generated by the survey—quantitative and qualitative—was entered into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Descriptive (quantitative) data was analyzed using simple frequency distributions and presented in bar graphs and pie charts. Qualitative responses (to open-ended questions) were entered into Excel line-by-line, categorized, and sorted by theme using the Excel “Sort” feature. Findings were then summarized by theme and organized accordingly in the report.

Descriptive Findings

This section includes summary responses to the descriptive questions (responses to the open-ended questions are summarized in the section called Qualitative Findings that follows this section).

Program attributes

Over half of survey respondents (51 percent) described their department or discipline as a Career Technical Education (CTE) program. Another 38 percent were associated with a
Lower Division Collegiate (LDC) program and the remaining 11 percent were part of both.

Forty-five percent of respondents said that their SAC is responsible for multiple certificates, AAS degrees and awards. Examples include Interior Design, Paralegal, Basic Computer Literacy, Office Assistant, Web Assistant, Administrative Office Professional, Aviation, and Library Media Certificates (or Degrees).

Most—62 percent—of the SAC Chair’s that responded described their program as district-wide versus the 38 percent that said they were campus-wide.

Many of the CTE SAC Chairs assume additional duties associated with their programs if they are required to secure accreditation or licensure. Twenty-one percent of SAC Chairs that responded said they have responsibility to secure national accreditation for their programs and 11 percent must meet state licensure requirements. In addition, 55 percent said they work with industry partners for their program’s benefit.

**Faculty attributes**

Slightly more than half of survey respondents said they had held their SAC Chair position for two years or less (nine percent had been in their position for less than one year). Forty-two percent had been in their position between 3 and 10 years, and 7 percent more than 10 years (one, on and off, for 25 years; another for 24 years). Some SAC Chairs have no choice but to assume a permanent SAC Chair position because they are the only full-time faculty in their department.

Generally, the SAC chairmanship rotates periodically so that the responsibility and added workload can be shared among faculty. But smaller departments do not have enough full-time faculty to rotate on a regular basis. Thirty-three percent of respondents said their SAC Chair does not rotate.
Otherwise, most rotations occur every 2 years (20 percent) or 3 years (9 percent). For some, the length of rotation varies from chair to chair depending on the availability and willingness of faculty to assume the responsibility (11 percent).

Though the SAC Chair must be a full-time faculty person, many part-time faculty participate in their department’s SAC activities. Sixty-two percent of SAC Chairs that responded to the survey engage between one and five full-time faculty; 11 percent, six to ten full-time faculty; 18 percent, eleven to twenty full-time faculty; and 4 percent have more than twenty full-time faculty. With regard to part-time faculty, 24 percent engage six to ten part-time faculty; 27 percent, eleven to twenty part-time faculty; another 27 percent, more than twenty part-time faculty; and 18 percent, one to five part-time faculty.

With regard to delegation of SAC duties, more is delegated to full-time faculty than part-time faculty. A small percentage of SAC chairs (7 to 8 percent) only sometimes delegate SAC duties to full-time or part-time faculty. More commonly, 52 percent of chairs delegate SAC duties to full-time faculty and 37 percent to part-time faculty. Fifty-five percent of SAC chairs do not delegate to part-time faculty and 41 percent do not delegate to full-time faculty. One reason is that they have no faculty (full-time or part-time) to whom to delegate.

**Time considerations**

According to SAC Chairs that responded to the survey, most (77 percent) said they spend at least three hours per week on SAC duties (total). Forty-four percent spend three to five hours per week on SAC duties, 22 percent spend six to ten hours per week, 18 percent spend one to two hours per week, and 11 percent spend more than ten hours per week.
SAC Chairs were also asked to break down the total time spent among the various required SAC activities—meetings, curriculum, instructor qualifications, assessment and review. With the exception of instructor qualifications, which required less than one hour per week on average, other duties took up at least one to two hours per week of the SAC chair’s time.

The time consumed by each of the SAC activities is displayed individually in the following graphs. Each is accompanied by the verbatim descriptions of the SAC Chair responsibility as defined by the College.

**SAC Meetings And Communication**

Definition: “SAC Chairs organize SAC meetings as required, announce them in a timely manner to all SAC members, and conduct meetings. The SAC Chair is responsible for ensuring that communication from the college that is related to SAC is communicated to SAC members in a timely fashion. The SAC Chair is responsible for assuring that minutes are prepared and sent to Academic Affairs for posting.”

Nearly half (46%) of SAC Chairs who responded estimated they spend one to two hours a week on meetings and other communication. Eight percent spend more than four hours.

**Curriculum**

Definition: “When the SAC proposes changes to the CCOGs, the SAC Chair accesses the electronic CCOG tool to make changes. If the changes to elements of the CCOG that require committee and administrative approval are proposed, the SAC chair will work with the Curriculum Office to propose changes. The SAC Chair ensures completion of forms necessary to make changes to degrees and certificates. The SAC Chair ensures that forms are completed, signs as the designated SAC representative, and serves as point of contact for the Curriculum Office & Administration.”
Half of the respondents said they spend one to two hours per week on curriculum. Almost a third spend three or more hours.

**Instructor Qualifications**

![Chart](chart.png)

Definition “The SAC Chair serves as point-of-contact to administration when changes are proposed to instructor qualifications. When the SAC proposes changes to the IGs, the SAC Chair prepares the form and sends it to the Administrative Liaison to start the approval process and serves as point of contact for questions or concerns about existing or proposed IQs. The SAC Chair will either represent the SAC or refer back to the SAC if significant changes are proposed during administrative review.”

About a third of SAC Chairs spend one or more hours per week on instructor qualifications. The rest spend less than an hour or no time.

**Assessment**

Definition: “The SAC Chair serves as point-of-contact with the Learning Assessment Council for SAC plans, reports, feedback, etc. The SAC Chair oversees or delegates SAC assessment activities to ensure that institutional requirements are met and is responsible for timely submission of annual reports.”

Nearly 80 percent of SAC Chairs that responded spend one to four hours per week on assessment.

**Program Discipline/Review**

Definition “While reflection and self-assessment for program improvement are ongoing, efforts are summarized every five years in a written program review and presentation. Specific presentations generally begin about a year before the review presentation is scheduled. The SAC Chair coordinates and/or delegates elements of the review process, attends or sends a delegate to at least one Program Review Workshop, ensures that the program review is submitted on time, and serves as a point-of-contact for logistics (location, media, etc.).”
Among respondents that were engaged in the review process at the time of the survey, 42 percent estimated they were spending one to two hours per week in the process. When asked to estimate the total number of hours required for the five-year review process, the most frequent answer given was 100 hours. The range of responses spanned from 25 hours to 175 hours, with an overall average of 83 total hours required for the review.

**Support/compensation**

Despite the significant time commitment required to fulfill SAC chairmanship responsibilities, only a small percentage of respondents said they receive release time or monetary compensation in return for their duties. Seventy-six percent claim no form of compensation for time spent executing required SAC responsibilities—meetings, curriculum, instructor qualifications, assessments, and reviews. Two percent said they are paid for their work as SAC Chair, four percent receive release time, nine percent receive compensation for conducting the five-year review, and another nine percent said they receive special project pay when engaging in SAC activities.

Most of the SAC Chairs that responded to the survey said they receive no administrative support through the administrative assistant employed by their departments or divisions. For 65 percent of respondents, the administrative assistant does not have an active role in SAC related issues/work.
administrative assistant assigned to their department is not expected to play an active role in supporting them or in conducting SAC related work. Twenty percent of SAC Chairs that responded to the survey do not have an administrative assistant in their department. A remaining minority (15 percent) has administrative assistants in their department or division that support them in addressing work and issues related to their SAC role.

Qualitative Findings

Survey respondents were also asked to respond to four open-ended questions regarding their role as SAC Chair. They commented on the:

1) Workload challenges of being a SAC Chair
2) Impact SAC chairmanship has on their faculty/instructor role
3) Best practices they engage in as SAC Chair
4) Suggestions for how the college can support SAC Chairs in their leadership role.

The following section summarizes their responses.

Workload challenges of a SAC chair

The primary workload challenges described by the SAC Chairs that participated in the survey include juggling of multiple responsibilities, time constraints in getting everything done, an uneven SAC workload that fluctuates with review and assessment demands, a moving target of expectations and requests by the College, and poor faculty participation in SAC activities.

Juggling

Many SAC Chairs wear more than one hat. In addition to chairing SAC, they are a full-time faculty person. At the same time, they may also serve as department chair, program advisor, floor monitor, faculty department chair, or any one of a number of other non-teaching leadership roles. As a result, SAC chairs end up doing a lot of juggling. They say it is their biggest challenge when holding the leadership position.

One respondent said she was challenged by, “simply balancing everything . . . especially when sometimes everything comes at once.” Another respondent who teaches seven classes said that, not only was it difficult to “squeeze in SAC duties,” but his office is located in the gym where he is “constantly being interrupted by other teachers, staff, and students.”

To be clear, it’s not that any one of the many balls that SAC chairs juggle has unrealistic expectations; it’s the combined impact of all of them together. One respondent explained: “Time and responsibilities are not unreasonable in and of themselves [except] when they compete with teaching, college and other professional responsibilities.”
Time Constraints

One of the primary reasons for all the juggling SAC Chairs do is the **limited number of hours they have available to devote to SAC duties.** “I have very little time with other responsibilities like teaching, scheduling, textbook orders, and student advising to do all that is required [for SAC],” said one respondent. Even when given release time, it usually isn’t enough, according to another: “Finding time as SAC chair [is hard] while only receiving a .25 workload release.”

More than one SAC chair mentioned the particular time burden associated with assessment and reviews. According to one respondent, there are two main reasons for this: both of these responsibilities “take up a chunk of time” and “very few SAC members have the time to work on them.” In fact, one Chair feels that these responsibilities can only be accomplished outside of the school day: “Program review and program assessment time involves extra hours outside of regular hours. During the fall term 2012, when working on program review, I worked every day except Thanksgiving. The review was on November 30th.”

For some, the biggest drawback of SAC responsibilities is the time it takes away from working with students. Balancing the intensity of teaching and grading with the demands of SAC duties may mean students periodically take a back seat. According to one respondent: “When SAC issues arise, they are usually crucial and must be dealt with in a timely manner which puts my work students second. In my opinion, students should always come first.”

Uneven SAC Workload

Making it even more difficult to integrate SAC duties into the usual regular is the **sporadic nature of SAC duties:**

The work comes in bursts. I try to spread things out but there are definite crunch times. The SAC Chair at the last program review spent a huge amount of time on it in the lead up to our presentation. The SAC Chair workload varies hugely between different SAC chairs depending on when their term falls.

One respondent said, “It depends upon situations and circumstances as they arise. Course revisions from a couple of years ago were very labor intensive and time consuming.” Another explained: “The workload is not real consistent so, depending on what step we are working on, I may have to put quite a few hours in to complete the task.”

Moving Target

**Constant changes and increasing requests and expectations from the College exacerbate other challenges.** One respondent expressed her frustration this way:
Interpreting confusing terminology and ever-changing parameters for assessment, curriculum content management, and program review [is difficult]. Course outcomes . . . program outcomes . . . core outcomes . . . it would be helpful if they were not all called ‘outcomes.’ Assessments of assessments seem to drive continually evolving requests for different types of information. Once a process has been completed, streamlining it to become more efficient for next time is hindered by a change in what has been requested.

Another respondent said:

One of the biggest challenges are the constant changes in what we are required to focus on in the annual report for assessment outcomes. Additional responsibilities keep getting added, for example for the assessment plan, which has taken many hours and is still not complete!

She also said, “Keeping all of the CCOGs up to date and aligned with the ever-changing focus of the college is time consuming.”

Still another respondent said, “The demands from LAC and curriculum committee continue to increase which makes it virtually impossible to focus on the duties as a SAC chair and assist with the development of the SAC faculty.”

**Poor Faculty Participation**

Lack of participation and collaboration from other faculty poses a distinct challenge for many SAC Chairs, especially those from smaller departments. “I am the only one willing to do it (be SAC Chair) who will do the work,” commented one chair. Another claimed, “It’s a challenge to get faculty together as we are all teaching 25 hours a week or more; it’s hard to get faculty to review or produce information for the SAC.”

Even when chairs are able to encourage faculty to participate in SAC responsibilities, getting them to follow through can be challenging. One chair said:

People seem to regard attendance as optional so we have a core group of maybe four or five people that are the same. Some people who teach in the discipline, I have never met. It means the SAC Chair position doesn’t rotate as often and we don’t do much sharing of the workload.

Chairs in smaller departments have less manpower for the same SAC workload: “The fact that we are so small is a challenge. There is not much I can delegate to other faculty yet I still have to do the same workload as other SACs,” said one respondent. Another said, “I lack other full-time faculty to share the load and brainstorm with. The disproportionate full-time/part-time ratio puts more pressure on full-time faculty with fewer options to delegate.”
SAC impact on faculty/instructor role

With regard to the impact SAC has had on their faculty/instructor role, SAC Chairs that responded to the survey said the role provided distinct benefits in knowledge and awareness of institutional functioning. But they also noted major drawbacks SAC duties can have, specifically on the amount of time available to spend with students and in the potential to be great, rather than just good teachers.

Benefits In Knowledge And Awareness

Most respondents shared some of the unfavorable impacts that SAC responsibilities have on their teaching/instructor role. But several others, though they may also feel burdened by the SAC chair role, have found a silver lining in it.

The primary benefit of SAC chairmanship, according to some of these respondents, is the increased knowledge and awareness of institutional principles and policies that the role has helped generate. “It helps me understand the system more; I am more aware of what is happening at the college level and I can advise students of new policies,” said one chair. Another commented: “I feel like I have a much greater overview of the program, the work my colleagues have done and continue to do, and most importantly, of the department’s objectives and mission.”

Other areas in which some respondents felt enlightened by their SAC chairmanship include curriculum and outcome assessment. At least two SAC Chairs feel they are better educators as a result. One said, “It has changed my view on curriculum, outcomes and assessment. It has also increased my desire to be a more effective educator.” The second said, “It enriches my teaching as I have a comprehensive understanding of curriculum and outcomes assessment. It has changed the way I process and it has enhanced my teaching.”

Time Away From Students and Instruction

By far, the biggest drawback of the SAC Chair role, according to respondents, is the time it robs them from teaching and working with students. Nearly half of all respondents shared a comment to this effect when asked (in an open-ended question) about the impact their SAC role has had on teaching and instruction.

Many simply commented that SAC “takes time away from my instructor role,” “takes me away from teaching and the classroom,” or “takes time away from what I could be doing for my students.” More specifically, one respondent explained:

With learning assessment and increased accountability requirements to improve curriculum, I cannot work ahead to improve courses, but tend to quickly make changes from week to week. Although curriculum changes get made, I have less time for direct contact with students.”
Chairs said they are particularly less effective at meeting teaching responsibilities during weeks when SAC duties are most intensive. One individual said, “There are ‘crunch weeks’ such as during planning and reporting for assessment, program review, and preparing for upcoming SAC meetings during which I have to ‘coast’ through classes as I don’t have time to adequately prepare and grade.” Another said:

During program review preparation, I felt none of my projects or teaching got the attention they deserved. On an ongoing basis, the extra time devoted to SAC chair duties limits the thinking, reflection, and revision time I have my classes.

A third respondent said that the unpredictability of SAC duties makes availability to students difficult: “The unevenness of SAC Chair duties make it difficult to predict workload spikes. This adversely affects my ability to be available as a teacher, meaning my focus is indiscriminately pulled from teaching for SAC Chair responsibilities.”

**Good Versus Great**

Even when SAC Chairs manage to keep all of the balls up in the air, some feel they are not living up to expectations they set for themselves to be great (rather than just good) teachers.

“It (SAC Chair role) has made it more difficult to strive to be ‘Great’ for my students. I find I take the easier path due to lack of time,” claimed one respondent. Another said, “I have less time to do my job well; I feel like I am pulled in many directions with all of the responsibilities I have.”

Specifically, when in the SAC leadership role, faculty have less time for planning and implementing the innovative, forward-thinking activities that take their teaching from good to great.

“I do less development of my classes when I’m SAC Chair,” said one respondent. Others mentioned having less time for, “innovating classroom activities,” “materials research,” “preparing materials,” “developing new curriculum,” “creating slide shows,” “exploring assignment ideas,” and “coming up with new projects.”

**SAC best practices**

When specifically asked to do so, survey respondents suggested several best practices to support the role of SAC Chair. The list below includes every one of their suggestions, in no particular order. Of note, approximately one-fourth of all respondents said they did not know what the question referred to or did not have any suggestions.

- Include Advisory Committee members on all major program changes.
- Establish by-laws to guide more collegial decision-making among members.
- Engage in frequent communication with SAC members, department chairs and SAC liaison.
• Develop subcommittees.
• Engage part-time faculty (after intense training and mentoring) to assist in SAC duties.
• Be inclusive in SAC: engage people with good ideas but no opportunity to engage in dialogue.
• Consult with other faculty and previous chairs and co-chairs.
• Attend meetings from other SACs to inform your own process.
• Be familiar with college roles and responsibilities.
• Manage and prepare for meetings (limit discussion, take notes, facilitate).
• Use consensus-driven decision-making.
• Pilot test a program before implementing it.
• Create meaningful work and training for SAC members.
• Broaden participation in SAC.
• Share responsibility and delegate to other faculty.
• Get organized; stay on top of scheduling/planning/delegating; keep it simple.
• Make participation on SAC projects voluntary rather than mandatory.
• Use a work-study student to ease the workload.
• Attend available trainings on curriculum development, assessment and Course Leaf.
• Use the SAC Chair webpage to inform actions.
• Take advantage of the support offered by the Curriculum department.
• Keep abreast of industry changes affecting program curriculum.

Suggestions for College support of SAC Chairs

When asked how the College can better support SAC Chairs, respondents brought up compensation (especially for part-time faculty), release time, and administrative guidance. Importantly they also requested that the College recognize and acknowledge SAC Chairs for the additional work they do.

Compensation

By far, the most frequent suggestions made by SAC Chairs responding to the survey were for, 1) compensation, and/or 2) release time for performing SAC duties.

The majority of requests for compensation were with regard to compensation for part-time faculty that share in SAC duties. Extra compensation for SAC Chairs was also mentioned by respondents, but not with the frequency and intensity of requests for compensation for part-time faculty. One respondent explained, “If part-time faculty are truly meant to be part of assessment there needs to be more funding to pay them. Otherwise, I question the meaning of assessment since a large percentage of our courses are taught by part-time faculty.” Another said:

As we begin to look at tackling assessment issues (plans, reports, etc.) in this program, we can see that without part-time faculty support beyond attendance at
SAC meetings, there really will be no way to complete program assessment in the manner currently being requested by the LAC. While I feel that additional compensation for the SAC Chair role is more than warranted with the quantity of work required, it is even more critical for college accreditation that either part-time faculty in SACs be granted compensation or else that some other organization of assessment be developed that does not depend on a group of faculty from the department assessing degree outcomes.

More than one respondent made it clear that the ten hours currently allotted for part-time faculty to assist with assessment is inadequate. One Chair commented: “I’m fortunate that I can hire a part-time faculty (at the special project rate) to assist with SAC projects, particularly program review and annual assessment. Without that, my time would be almost doubled, and assessment time, more than doubled.”

**Release Time**

Over half of all suggestions regarded release time. One respondent explained that, “there seems to be an increasing number of tasks associated with the SAC Chair role and no additional time to work on it.” Another said, “I believe that SAC Chair workload issues cannot be solved by adding more ‘online accessibility’ or the creation of new protocols. Release time is the only solution.” Others mentioned that release time is most critical in program review years.

With regard to release time versus additional compensation for SAC duties, one individual said:

Release time for me is preferable to extra monetary compensation. I want my personal time back! It makes me a better teacher when I’m happy, and I’m happy when I have time to exercise, pursue hobbies, read, travel and explore my field.

Another said, “I think SAC Chairs deserve release time, especially those without full-time faculty. Several simply asked for release time or additional compensation. But one respondent said, “I would just prefer less extraneous expectations.”

**Administrative Guidance, Support, and Communication**

Several individuals said they need more guidance, mentoring, training and support from the college to effectively fulfill their role as SAC Chair. “It would be great to have a yearly plan of SAC responsibilities from the administration,” said one respondent. “I don’t really understand the role of the SAC Liaison, especially when they change so often.” Another said that more training/mentoring is needed, especially for new SAC chairs:

Provide training on SAC Chair best practices and leadership. Most SAC Chairs are thrown into the role and may have no idea how to facilitate a large meeting. That PCC assumes everyone is ready for this role is foolish since SAC work
drives the direction of the disciplines. If the leader is ineffective, it is likely that the group will also be.

One individual suggested an annual Winter Quarter SAC in-service day.

Assessments are another area in which SAC Chairs would like more support. One respondent referred to assessment as a “developing process that has grown into a huge statistical analysis that takes more hours each year.” Another said, “I think the College needs to recognize how much more work the SAC Chair has to do with all this assessment. Practically all of our meetings are spent dealing with assessment, which, thus far, has been hoops to jump through and not meaningful discussions of pedagogy.”

Still others mentioned how helpful administrative support would be if provided: “It would be great to have administrative support: writing minutes, creating and tallying polls, and filling out forms would be much easier with some administrative support.”

Some respondents noted that one of the best ways administration can support them is not to waste their time with meaningless bureaucratic tasks and unnecessary mandatory meetings. Some feel that SAC processes can be streamlined, specifically with a standardized template for reporting. Others asked for flexibility in implementing SAC requirements, especially among smaller programs: “Recognize the obstacles that some SACs may have and make exceptions based on those obstacles, i.e. small size, LDC/CTE combination.”

Communication between administration and SAC Chairs could also be improved according to a few respondents. “[I would like] more timely announcements of SAC issues. I typically get a pile of emails asking the SAC to address issues a few says before our meetings.” One individual suggested a calendar or schedule of events for SAC Chairs and “clear basic instructions for the things we need to do.” Another said:

SAC duties are generally seen as unglamorous or worse, tedious and affecting workload creep. So anything that can make duties and responsibilities seem more specific, measureable, and clear would go a long way toward alleviating that.

Recognition

Perhaps most importantly, SAC leaders seek acknowledgement and recognition for the work they do. Chairs want the college to recognize all of the things that take time away from their primary function as instructors. They also want recognition for the overlap between SAC Chair and other chair duties, especially for SACs with a single full time faculty member. One respondent said this is especially true for CTE SAC Chairs that, “have a lot of ‘extras’ to do such as emails, meetings, networking events, and outreach to the community. These don’t automatically get recognized as SAC duties, but ultimately they can be the most important SAC duties.”
One respondent eloquently articulated this sentiment, probably speaking for many of her colleagues:

Recognize that SAC Chairs play one of the most critical roles in the college, which has become even more important as we’ve moved more deeply into outcome assessment. Recognize that to do more than the minimum job of SAC Chair, time is required for critical thinking and reflection, to take a comprehensive perspective on program goals and steps to future improvements. Recognize that as we move to a ‘completion agenda’ there’s likely to be more work for SAC Chairs to oversee or do themselves. Recognize that SAC Chairs perform a critical function in educating and developing faculty in the areas of curriculum, outcome, and assessments.

SAC Committee Recommendations

The SAC Best Practices Committee was organized in fall 2013 to study the position of the Subject Area Committee (SAC) Chair at Portland Community College. The recommendations that follow are a result of a nine-month study into the position and are based on the survey findings found in this report. The recommendations are presented in two separate categories: Compensation and Communication/Guidance. Rationale derived from the findings in this report accompany each recommendation.

**Compensation**

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<th><strong>Recommendation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rationale</strong></th>
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| 1. Develop and implement an equitable compensation plan for the SAC Chair position to be effective fall 2015 that includes but is not be limited to:  
  - Release time  
  - Stipend  
  - Paid training associated with the SAC transition of chairs  
  - Delegation  
  - Administrative support  
  Make the compensation plan reflect the model of the Faculty Department Chair compensation plan developed 2006-07. |  
  - 76% of survey respondents do not receive any compensation for their SAC Chair duties.  
  - 9% receive review pay (for program review only) and 9% receive special project pay  
  - “There seems to be an increasing number of tasks associated with the SAC Chair role and no additional time to work on it.” |
2. Allow part time faculty to serve as SAC chair upon the approval of the Division Dean and the Faculty Department Chair. The establishment of a formal written agreement (see Communication/Guidance recommendation) with compensation would make it possible for part time faculty serve in this leadership position.

- “If part-time faculty are truly meant to be part of assessment, there needs to be more funding to pay them. Otherwise, I question the meaning of assessment since a large percentage of our courses are taught by part-time faculty”
- 33% of the SAC Chair respondents answered that their position does not rotate.
- 11% of respondents are a one-person SAC.
- 27% of the SAC Chair responders engage more than 20 part-time faculty in SAC.

3. Provide administrative support and resources to SAC Chairs proportional to SAC duties.

- 65% of the SAC Chairs who responded answered that their departments’ administrative assistant DOES NOT have an active role in SAC related issues.
- “It would be great to [have] administrative support: writing minutes, creating and tallying polls, and filling out forms would be much easier with some administrative help.”

### Communication/Guidance

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<td>4. Establish a formal written agreement for the SAC Chair position.</td>
<td>“The SAC Chair workload varies hugely between different SAC Chairs depending on when their term falls” (i.e. when assessment reports are due or program review is required)</td>
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<td>5. Include SAC Chairs in the quarterly Campus Leaders meeting.</td>
<td>“[I would like] more timely announcements of SAC issues. I typically get a pile of emails asking the SAC to address issues a few days before our meetings.”</td>
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<td>6. Engage Division Deans in the SAC Chair process.</td>
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7. Release a monthly newsletter from the VPASA office that provides information on curriculum changes, current discussions, coming events and changes in protocols.

8. Make it a policy that directives to SAC Chairs come through the managerial chain of command.

   - “I really don’t understand the role of the SAC liaison, especially when they change so often.”
   - “SAC duties are generally seen as unglamorous or worse, tedious and affecting workload creep. So anything that can make duties and responsibilities seem more specific, measureable, and clear would go a long way toward alleviating that.”

9. Develop an ongoing professional development program for all SAC Chairs. This would include training for first year SAC Chairs.

   - “Most SAC Chairs are thrown into the role and may have no idea how to facilitate a large meeting…if the leader is ineffective, it is likely that the group will also be.”