

Moonlight and Sunshine¹

“You really have to do something about this,” says your friend and your department’s most productive colleague. “We have a problem in the department that Charlie never was willing to face. But now you are our new Chair, so I’m coming to you. You know what I’m taking about, too, don’t you.”

And you do. Your friend, one of those who is always present for students and always willing to pitch in on any project for the sake of the common good, has shared these frustrations with you before. While Charlie was Chair both you and your friend were quick to talk about wanting to fire two of your other colleagues.

“I voted for you for Chair because I knew you would finally do something. I’m having a hard time motivating myself to work as hard as I do when I know that John is moonlighting at the private college down the street and Mary is constantly away from campus doing her private consulting thing.”

You remind your friend that the faculty contract allows Mary to engage in private consulting for up to eight class days per semester, provided that she fulfills all her regular faculty duties. And as you speak, you know in your heart that Mary has not only missed several department meetings, but has put so much of her creative energy into her consulting that her publishing has fallen way off in the past three years and that her student course evaluations are dipping noticeably. It’s not that she does not promise to take on various departmental projects. But while Charlie was Chair he never insisted. The rest of the department came not to rely on Mary’s being around to do things. You all thought of her more or less as missing in action someplace.

Then there is John. He’s a full time faculty member and he teaches in the campus summer program and the continuing education program up to the maximum number of extra courses allowed. With his household of teenagers, he needs the money. Good thing he’s a dynamo, with energy to spare. Students rave about his courses and you can count on him to handle the most challenging curriculum your department offers. But, again, the faculty contract strictly prohibits your full time faculty from doing any teaching whatsoever at any other private or public post-secondary institution. It is considered a conflict of interest situation. John isn’t blatant about what he’s doing. In fact, he’s never mentioned his other job.

“Look at these things,” says you colleague, passing you some papers. “This is a copy of the schedule of classes at the private college. See, here’s John’s name. Right now he’s teaching the same course there that he’s doing for us. And look at this. Here’s a copy of Mary’s flight schedules for October and November. She was in a hurry and must have left the original in the copier by accident. So I ran off another copy for you. It shows that she has taken six trips and been away from campus nearly fifteen class days already this semester. I realize that Charlie never did anything about this kind of thing. But that was then and this is now. You are the Chair and these abuses are happening on your watch.”

Questions:

1) What are your various obligations at this point, and to whom?

¹ All characters, situations, and stories described here are fictional. No reference to actual persons, events, or institutions is intended or assumed. Drs. Peter and Noreen Facione developed and refined these hypothetical cases based on the experiences gained through their many decades of service as faculty, administrators, workshop presenters, and leadership consultants to colleges and universities throughout the nation.

2) Will you talk to Mary and to John? If so, what will you say? If not, why not?

3) Are there people with whom you must or should consult?

You do speak to Mary and then to John. Each first says that they were not aware of the policies limiting their extra-mural activities. Mary promises to cut back to the eight day per term limit and John says that his course at the private college only has three more weeks to run, so he asks permission of the dean to finish that course on the condition that he not accept any more teaching there. The Dean very reluctantly agrees for the sake of the students.

It is now spring term and, hardly remembering the problems of the previous fall because of the urgency of the current set of problems on your desk, your phone rings. It's someone saying they are the department Chair from another college in town, not the one where John was working last fall, and that John has applied to do some adjunct teaching in their summer session. The Chair saw that John worked in your department and wanted to know if you would recommend him as a good teacher. Yes, John is scheduled to teach two summer courses, the maximum his contract allows, for you as well.

Questions:

4) What do you say to that other Chair?

5) Do you talk with John once more; is he violating his contract by taking on extra teaching at another college in the summer time?

6) If you turn the matter over to the Dean it is very likely that John could lose his job. What are your responsibilities at this point?

7) While you are at it, do you check up on Mary's absences from campus during spring term?