

Departmental Senate Minutes  
From: Evan Carton

See Motion to allow English Department Lecturers to serve no more than half time after allotted years of full time service at the rank of lecturer have been used.

At yesterday's meeting, I introduced a motion prematurely and had no time to defend it. Because I am concerned about the impression of my motives and sympathies that my unexplained motion gives, and in the interest of reducing the length and confusion of tomorrow's meeting, I am presenting the motion and its rationale to you here. Only by the motion's passage, I will argue, can we achieve the sole legitimate purpose of our re-evaluation of the position of Lecturer and limitation of the Lecturer's service: that purpose is the achievement, to the maximum possible degree, of a fully enfranchised, meticulously selected and evaluated tenure-track and tenured teaching staff.

The initial EC document does not articulate its commitment to this purpose, and that is the reason, I believe, that so many of us found it offensive. For, if our limitation of the infinite availability of a lecturer pool is not one facet of a multi-faceted campaign to pressure the university administration into providing tenure-track budget lines adequate to our department's teaching obligations, then it is no more than the cynical, arbitrary and disingenuous enterprise that some take it to be. I fully agree with David Jolliffe's goals and criticisms in his memo, "Why I intend to vote against the Lecturer proposal," and precisely because I agree I hope to be able to vote for it. We need to hire 5 or more new assistant professors each year in the foreseeable future and we need to have the kind of fully enfranchised teaching staff that doesn't make a sham of the ostensible goals of our Ph.D. program and doesn't help make a U.T. Ph.D. into a one-way ticket to a perennial lectureship here or elsewhere. Only by a sharp reduction of the Lecturer rank and a corresponding increase in the hiring of excellent teachers and scholars (including those lecturers who are qualified and interested) at professorial ranks can these goals be achieved or even pursued.

I choose to have faith that our lecturer hiring guidelines will help us to pursue these goals. But we must formally commit ourselves to pursuing them simultaneously by other means than the gradual precipitation of a staffing crisis through the disqualification of lecturers. This strategy needs to be accompanied by:

1. Vigorous lobbying for new lines and prompt filling of available ones.
2. Attempts to establish a system by which other departments would share the writing in disciplines and substantial writing component responsibilities.
3. Refusal to staff courses with last minute, underqualified staff. This means a departmental policy to open no new sections of multi-section courses beyond the sections we can staff with high quality, rather than merely available, instructors.
4. A lecturer rehiring policy that determines how many genuinely desirable teachers we have and adapts our course offerings to that criterion rather than one that sacrifices the criterion of desirability to the criterion of "need."
5. Genuine consideration of excellent lecturers for expanded tenure track positions.

This consideration is supported by the fact that we will have many new upper division E.346E courses available for which teachers who combine expertise in composition and in a disciplinary area (as some of our lecturers clearly do) will be well qualified. Let me add, here, that while former lecturers should certainly be made to compete with other applicants for tenure-track positions, their excellent service in the department and their departmental recommendations should be seriously weighted in determining the strength of their candidacy.

With the above preamble, I return to my motion, whose logic is simply this: if we allow the position of lecturer, after its designated full-time run is over, to become an indefinite quasi-full-time (3/4 time) position, then that is precisely what it will become. The entire purpose of limiting lecturer service at all will be subverted. We will find ourselves hiring more, not fewer, lecturers, whose benefits will be even more meager, whose allegiance will be even more ambivalent, whose quality will be less high. The half-time option accommodates those people, committed to Austin or interested in dual careers, who can render the department fine service and who are not interested in full time tenure-track appointments. Their number, however, will be few, and the bulk of our teaching will be done by "fully integrated" members of the department who receive all traditional academic benefits including their yearly 2 1/2% of the salary pie.