

A Further Statement on the Lecturer Situation  
(have patience . . .)

There seem to be two opinions in the department about what should be properly called academic work. The lecturers feel their work teaching required literature courses and writing courses to students at all levels is academic work. Many other members of the faculty feel that the teaching of required courses alone or of required courses plus upper division elective writing courses is not enough to warrant the title "academic." In the past, when AIs taught and were sufficient to staff most of the required courses, especially freshman composition, there might have been more reason for this attitude. But over the past several years more and more lecturers have been teaching these courses, people with completed degrees and a varying number of years of teaching experience. These people have been needed by the department and the lecturers have needed the employment the department was able to offer them. Most lecturers have a strong commitment to the teaching of writing to students who clearly need this training. Lecturers who have taught these courses a number of years, some as many as six or more, have become experienced and have developed new and better methods for teaching writing. Time, thought and energy have gone into this. I do not know any "burned out" lecturers. People who feel they are doing meaningless work become burned out, and lecturers do not feel they do meaningless work. Challenging, yes. Often frustrating, yes. Because very few lecturers have had the chance to teach other courses, they have channelled their energy and creativity into the improvement of the courses they do teach. This is not at "intuitive" judgment on my part. The MLA has gathered evidence that number of years of teaching experience has a direct correlation to quality of teaching. If the teaching evaluations which we have been using do not sufficiently show this, other methods would. The evaluation method at this university may soon be changed, broadened, and perhaps, if a new method is adopted it will prove to be a more sensitive one.

It would be a shame if a department at this university found itself unable to do what nearly all institutions outside of academia do: reward years of quality service. The university does this for other ranks, so surely it can for lecturers. We must not be continually made to feel we are coming in the back door begging for jobs year by year or semester by semester.

If it is impossible for the Dean of Liberal Arts to get enough budget lines for assistant professors to staff required courses, if the English department feels that an assistant professor must be someone who also regularly teaches other courses and publishes articles, then the department should find a way of making the lecturers it needs more fully real members of the department. The department and the Dean have taken steps in this direction. Lecturers now have separate elections for two of their members to sit on the faculty senate of the English department. There is a lecturer on the committee formed to select a new chairman. Nonetheless, lecturers have been told when they complain about late hiring, arbitrariness--or what they have seen to be arbitrariness--in the ranking procedures, lack of ongoing job security for at least a period of two or three years, that they are "lucky to have the jobs." We are lucky. Most of us feel that. But we are also necessary and valuable members of the department. Because of us more sections of the required courses taken by freshman and sophomores (and with the English requirement change, juniors) are taught by Ph.D.s and people with valuable experience teaching.

Lecturers have earned the right to be considered professional and academic members of this department. Since their work is fundamentally

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necessary to the students of this university and to the working of the department, lecturers who have given quality service should not have to prove and defend themselves year by year, nor should they be pushed back year by year by new Ph.D.s coming in as lecturers. If 50% or more of the ranked lecturers were offered two or three year appointments (by agreement), if 75% of lecturers were hired early (as the E.C. has said it will do), if the hard budget lines for lecturers ~~are~~ increased (as the Dean says he wants to do), we would count this as practical improvement in the condition of lecturers.

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