

LECTURERS: A REALISTIC LOOK AT THE TWG SOLUTIONS

A good deal of the discussion in the Senate concerning the plight of the lecturers has been carried on repeatedly in an unrealistic vacuum. At the departmental meeting on Thursday, certain cold and hard facts ought to be in the atmosphere of the discussion. Let me attempt to take a look at some of the facts involved in each of the two major competing solutions.

I. THE SENATE DOCUMENT OF APRIL 6, 1984.

A. UNREALISTIC. Item 5, requesting the administration for five additional tenure-track lines (over and above replacement of losses each year beginning with 1984-1985 recruitment is simply a pipe dream. The chairpersons of the College of Liberal Arts have been told by Dean King recently that there will be no more new lines for the college in the remainder of the decade. To expect us to get enough to replace the lecturers, who will number at least 70 at full strength year after next, is sheer fantasy--at least as a immediate policy.

Item 2 establishes a revolving door for future lecturers. This assumes that the EC can routinely replace one-third of the lecturers every year after several years. This corollary of Item 2 is as unrealistic as Item 5. The EC cannot devote the time it should at the present time to hiring lecturers. How can it pretend to be able to hire at least 10 new assistant professors every year for many years to come and annually replace the large segment of the lecurers who will be rotated out?

The future hiring policy of the department which this document outlines is unrealistic. Suppose, for argument's sake, that we are given permission to hire 10 lines for the next 15 years and slowly replace lecturers. The course loads of the lecturers will then be absorbed by the regular faculty, and the routine course load will have to be 4 or 5 composition and/or lower division courses out of 6 for all of the faculty every year. This prospect will make hiring assistant professors or anyone else quite difficult. Indeed, it will severely affect retention of current faculty.

B. EDUCATIONALLY UNDESIRABLE.

The revolving door policy assures a perpetual mediocrity for the composition and lower division English classes. By forcing out people once they have learned to handle the courses, the Senate document turns the basic courses of the department into an unending internship.

Item 3 implicitly allows the lecturers to remain on a part-time basis. This is also pedagogically undesirable in addition to being morally insensible. Since a three-fourths salary (\$12,000) is not a living wage for teachers, these people will be forced to moonlight, despite teaching three courses (usually composition). This will force them to neglect their classes and

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further insure the shoddy character of the instruction in these courses.

Items 2, 3, and 5 of the Senate document are simply unworkable, even if they were desirable. They are also educationally indefensible.

II. A SOLUTION: PRESENT, IMPERFECT, AND FUTURE CONDITIONAL.

If items 2, 3, and 5 of the Senate document are defeated, the department reverts to the document which the Senate adopted last spring, insofar as it is compatible with policies of the central administration and with any new measures the department may adopt at the present time. It permits indefinite hiring of the lecturers who are good teachers and recognizes some seniority.

I would recommend the addition of items 1, 4, and 6 to the Senate document of last year. This would give us a realistic policy for the immediate future which requires no new action by the administration; it gives us a continuing supply of permanent good teachers for the composition and lower division courses; and it treats the lecturers with a measure of humanity that respects their professional status as teachers of important courses and their economic status as wage earners. It does not commit the department to impossible hiring policies or quotas.

It is not perfect. It still retains in the department a level of second class citizens; but they are not treated as subhumans, professionally or economically. Possibly someone can work this problem out in the future. At the moment I see no other immediate realistic solution.

It solves the problems for the near future. But the solution can be improved upon by some measures which have not yet been tried and which yet are realistic. (1) Beginning lecturers ought to be given a three-course load their first semester, possibly even their first year. AI's and regular faculty, who teach fewer courses get this chance to plan their courses. (2) There ought to be a committee which regularly looks over the lecturers, just as there are committees for the AI's and TA's and for the regular faculty. This would ease the EC burden and give more attention to a large segment of the department. Such a committee should include some lecturers. Eventually this committee should recommend to the department and the university a humane, educationally feasible, economically respectable method of incorporating the good teachers among the lecturers into the "permanent" structure of the university or slowly replace them with assistant professors. This should be carefully planned and will require major administrative readjustments.

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