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U.T. Lecturers: A Survey

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"I am not on any committees. I would not be willing to spend the time doing extra work when I am employed only semester-by-semester. I am working to build credentials to escape this job."

The owner of that raw tone-of-voice is, to those who know, a respected teacher and, though young, an accomplished scholar (two books, ten articles). She teaches part-time only, yet instructs 100 U.T. students in a discipline that requires them to write, and her meticulously to correct, 6 or more papers each, in a semester. She wants to know her worth. That, or she wants out.

There is no question about her ability, by the way. Nor is there any question about the ability of two others, who are in the same position. They do good jobs. It is the tone in which they describe their jobs that is disturbing.

"I used to put students first; that got me no where."

"I soon realized that making good was defined by student evaluations . . . If I can stay a page ahead of the class, I can teach the course."

These sound tough enough, calloused, academically "smart," aware of the pragmatic deceptions (small or major) required for survival on a tough campus. They do *not* sound pleased with themselves, certainly not proud of their jobs. Rather, they sound confused, as if they were receiving mixed signals about the value of their work.

Take away the smarts and the bravado and replace it with the gentler manner of another respondent, and the tone of confusion is still there, the

uncertainty whether the University really sets any value on the teaching it asks to be done:

"I have had two Fulbright teaching awards to Africa. In 1983 I was awarded funds for travel to an international conference in Germany. These funds were partly from UT and partly from ACLS. I am quite happy teaching undergraduate courses, but could do a much better job if I was not simply assigned courses at the last moment."

This perplexity at the mixed signals of professional worth may be expressed more fully; the writer of the following (like several other "part-time" faculty, some with four-course loads!) has a rich publication record, and teaches at every level, graduate, tutorial, upper-division, lower-division, for a salary far below \$20,000 and under contractual terms that indicate that she is little more than a replaceable line-worker. Her tone, polite but tense, is still the significant conveyor of her uncertainty:

"Despite personal rewards, I do experience the continuing perception that the University of Texas at Austin, in its 'full utilization' of my professional experience, is exploiting me to a certain extent. I believe that my professional record in all areas of publication, service to the profession and to the University, and teaching bears favorable comparison to those serving at a full-time, tenured rank with substantially higher salary. In many ways, however, it is not the issue of rank or salary that is most debilitating. Rather it is the lack of access to any support for my professional activities."

(Each of the respondents is a UT

"Lecturer." I use the term generically, to include all so-called "part-time" faculty below the rank of "Senior Lecturer." Each, in replying to a T.A.C.T. survey, has been promised protective anonymity. In some cases anonymity requires sexual disguise, and accordingly the reader will find *all* Lecturers referred to as women throughout this report. There is admittedly a rhetorical mischief in this. Several Lecturers, women *and* men, have felt that they were "treated like women," in terms of an academic double-standard and a tacit expectation that they will perform routine "work" contentedly, for a lower level of recognition. A uniform use of the feminine pronoun may help to sensitize the reader to this.)

The *root* problem with "Lecturers" is that no one knows who they are. That is, no one knows professionally "who" they are. No one, even among the Lecturers themselves, knows whether they are any good or not. Regular or Full-Time Faculty are ritually, thoroughly, and repeatedly scrutinized, starting up-to-a-year before their joining the University. The process reassures the University community as to the intellectual quality of its professional membership; it reassures the public, as the University's largest constituency; and, not insignificantly, it reassures the individual faculty member, whose professional status is gradually validated. In large areas of the University, little or none of this reassurance is available in the case of Lecturers.

Because the expressed rationale for hiring Lecturers is to fill a specific, "low-level," last-minute, temporary classroom need, two assumptions take root;

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One is that we are, perennially, in a state of emergency that precludes any traditional scrutiny by scholarly peers. The other is that there is really no need to evaluate rigorously so small and temporary a part of the faculty anyway. (There are by now, however, almost 400 Lecturers, and neither they nor the classroom needs they fill are temporary!) One assumption quietly begets another, and so there springs up an additional, corollary notion that in the case of Lecturers there is really not that much to evaluate.

Really? Who knows, anyway? It is not an insignificant problem. We are downwind from three approaching dangers, and can already get their scent. One is the danger, within the regular University faculty, of mentally dividing the curriculum into the worthy and the unworthy courses, those that we alone are fit to teach and those that "they" are fit to teach. Indeed we already do this, and are unable to keep secret where our contempt falls. Another is the danger of the perception, within the mind of the University's public constituency, that we are employing a "cut-rate faculty." And the third is the danger, within the "cut-rate faculty" itself, that this group will become so demoralized that perception will in fact become reality.

Stereotyped views of the U.T. Lecturer adumbrate a composite of the academic drifter: young, with a U.T. Ph.D. but committed neither to U.T. nor to the profession. Content to be an under-

achiever. Content; but discontent too, and maybe a little dangerous.

It may be helpful to hold this stereotype up as a background to the T.A.C.T. survey results.

In Fall 1984 the University employed 64 Specialists and 331 Lecturers. (Senior Lecturers are not counted, here or in the survey.) Depending on whether Specialists are grouped with Lecturers, this is an increase of either 26% or 51% over the year before. Thirty-three of the total 395 responded to the generally distributed survey, or 8.4%, twenty-one women and twelve men. The median salary of the women is \$18,000 (average \$19,672); the median salary of the men is \$19,200 (average \$21,530); and the median salary of the group as a whole is \$18,000 (average \$20,348). (All salary figures given are Full-Time Equivalent.)* It is instructive to compare those who fall below the salary median with those who come out above it.

The age range for the group as a whole is 28 to 53. The median age for the entire group is 39; the average is 38.37. The average age of those above the salary median is 38.7; for those below the salary median it is scarcely

any younger: 38. Looked at another way, the salary average for the Lecturers in their twenties is \$22,500; for those in their thirties it is \$20,149; for those in their forties it is \$20,380, and for those in their fifties it is \$22,000. (If there is considerable variation between the peaks and valleys, the rate of age-advance is virtually geologic.) Among those above the salary median, 36% are in the Humanities. Among those below the median, 79% are in the Humanities.

Appointment as a Lecturer, especially in the Humanities, is not a step toward professional advancement. Five out of the thirty-three have in the past been "tenured," but lost their tenure. Fourteen others have in the past been on tenure-track. Of these fourteen, three have served six or more years on tenure-track (6, 8, & 11 years). They represent, accordingly, the deterioration of the probationary system. Seven out of the group who have *no*

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*Salary averages for the *entire* Specialist-Lecturer population, Fall 1984, are: women - \$20,141; men - \$22,777; combined - \$21,696 (high salary = \$45,000).

CHECKING ACCOUNTS

NO SERVICE CHARGE

\$500 minimum (\$4.00 per month if under \$500)

NO ITEM CHARGE

5½% DIVIDEND PAID MONTHLY

(paid for each day the balance is \$500 or more; no dividend on days balance

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second source of income are earning less than formerly, having experienced an average 24.8% salary cut.

On the other hand, eight of the thirty-three are teaching "full-time" at U.T. while also holding a second job.

Are Lecturers indeed merely itinerants? Sixteen of the thirty-three have taught at U.T. four years or less. However, seventeen have taught here five years or more (fifteen years in one case) and their average length of service to U.T. is eight years.

Seventeen of the group (52%) earned their doctorates or equivalent highest professional degrees from U.T. Twelve of *these* (71%) are below the salary median. However, it is an error to suppose that they are apprentices in the job market. Only seven of the U.T. degree holders earned their degrees in the last four years. The average interval since the degree for the remaining ten from U.T. is 11.6 years. Five of the non-U.T. degree holders (Berkeley, Cornell, N.Y.U., U.S.C., "Univ. of California") earned their degrees in the last four years. For the remaining eleven it has been an average ten years since the degree. In other words almost two-thirds of the group as a whole must be thought of as having a time-tested commitment to their academic careers, though from an economic standpoint many of their careers must seem marginal at best.

Not necessarily marginal, however, from the standpoint of production. It is true that many have not published. (Though some inhabit disciplines such as Art and Architecture in which productivity consists of creative work which the T.A.C.T. questionnaire was unable to quantify.) The median publication of editorially refereed articles is two. But the group as a whole has published 263 articles (average 7.97). Eleven of those below the salary median have published 91 articles among them, so that the average publication of articles in this lower group, for those publishing at all, is 8.27. Eleven of the thirty-three in the whole sample have published an aggregate twenty-two editorially refereed, scholarly books. Five of these authors are below the salary median, but have published ten of the books

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among them. These figures are *not* given in order to suggest that there ought to be some correlation in quantifying productivity and pay. But the numbers tend to support the complaint of many Lecturers that what they do "doesn't seem to count."

One of the ironies of the Lecturer rank is that accomplishments outside the classroom *don't* "count." The argument is made that, since the Lecturer is hired only to do a specific, temporary classroom job, and since the performance of this job at full-time theoretically leaves no time for study and writing, any such extra-curricular accomplishments are "not part of the arrangement" and should not really be brought under review. "If she wants credit for her book, she should get on a tenure-track line!"

The odd thing is that a large majority of the group do receive tacit credit, of a sort, for special intellectual skills. Five out of the thirty-three (earning above and below the salary median, with an average of \$22,150) teach graduate courses. (Graduate courses as traditionally understood, not for instance "English" courses in Law School.) Twenty-two of the thirty-three (nine of them below salary median) teach upper-division courses. Eight (three of them below median) teach Honors or conference tutorials. If it is assumed (and I do not say it should be) that instructing at these levels represents higher achievement, then there is some anomaly in the level of recognition given, especially when one recalls that most of these people teach four courses, and over 100 students each. Otherwise, the significance of the figures lies in their muted but subversive suggestion that the "work" of instruction at *all* levels might be accomplished with a generally humbler (albeit talented) corps of workers!

It is demonstrable that there are some poor-quality instructors in the Lecturer rank (rehired nevertheless under our blind-eye, out of perennial "need"). It is also demonstrable that there are a few in the rank who have multiple advanced degrees, first-class records as scholars and teachers, up to twenty years teaching experience (and a below-median salary). Yet

neither they nor the others are as yet academically visible.

It is true that some Lecturers, for good reasons or bad, do not wish to be scrutinized under any circumstances beyond the level of the Teaching Evaluations already conducted. (Several Lecturers were fearful that the anonymity of the T.A.C.T. survey would be breached and that they would become identifiable, and hence subjected to hostile review. Two *very* accomplished and valuable Lecturers cited this fear as reason for declining to participate in the survey at all. There is no way to tell if this attitude is common.) Others are suspicious merely of the kind of catch-22 scrutiny that subjects them to a double standard. Still others, frustrated by neglect, welcome the opportunity to step forward in any way available and make themselves as visible as possible. It is not the intention here to suggest that we fine-sift the desires and suspicions of individual Lecturers. The point is, rather, to indicate that we have a secret faculty at work here, rapidly expanding, diverse in skill but unrecognized, demoralized. If it is bad for them, it is bad for the community.

It has been suggested that the solution to the Lecturer problem lies in terminating the employment of every Lecturer, without exception or review, after an arbitrarily fixed period, and replacing her with someone not yet cycled through. But this expedient relieves *none* of the three dangers. Rather, it increases them. And it simply institutionalizes the root problem, wherein we are abandoning the process of traditional discriminations and recognitions that furnish professional identity.

The Lecturer problem has polarized elements of the faculty and caused decent, fair-minded, charitably motivated men and women to injure one another deeply. There are those I very much respect who are able to see no other path to follow than the above, for instance. But it seems to me that there *must* be truer solutions, which recognize better the realities of the Lecturers' predicament, as well as the diversity within the group.

Surely any policy that increases the number of faculty forced to teach as Lecturers, or that decreases their recognition, is a policy at odds with the University's ideals.