

PROPOSAL FROM THE SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE ON LECTURERS

"We maintain that all pain and suffering are results of want of Harmony, and that the one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of Harmony is self-interest in some form or another."

The epigraph about self-interest is an axiom of 19th-century Theosophist thought. The Theosophists were wrong about a great many things, not the least of which was the workings of self-interest. There is nothing inherently wrong with a self-interest based upon deeply held values and, when self-conscious of its function as an enabling force, a generous presumption of the productive force of other self-interests. To be self-interested is not necessarily to be narrowly self-serving.

The proposal contained in this document originates from the identification of four self-interests, each of which characterizes the professional commitment of a group of college English teachers. The proposal presupposes both the legitimacy of each self-interest and the desirability of accommodating all four in some kind of balance serving our students, our department's broad disciplinary role in liberal education at U.T., and each kind of professional college English teacher. The proposal is our attempt to articulate the general principles and framework for such an accommodation.

We ask that you bring to the reading of this proposal a provisional acceptance of the legitimacy of each postulated self-interest. We ask, also, that you accept provisionally the three premises underlying the program: (1) The English department will need at least thirty non-tenure track Ph.D.s to help staff its courses for the indefinite future; (2) Members of this group should be recognized as a genuine educational resource, both to sustain our historic commitment to traditional studies and to enhance our curriculum; (3) The existence of such a group is of definitive value to the new and recent Ph.D. seeking to find, at a future date, tenure track employment at another institution.

We have requested the Senate to call a department meeting upon the distribution of this proposal. Although normal procedure calls for Senate debate and vote prior to circulation of legislative action, we have requested this change in procedure for two reasons. First, the issues involved in the proposal are those of disciplinary identification and professional self-definition. We believe that our subcommittee needs an open forum to determine, even in a general way, the sense of departmental attitudes and commitment. Second, we believe that matters such as the one being addressed here can be satisfactorily resolved only if everyone wishing to speak has a say. Senate meetings (and our old department meetings), organized to end in voting, test the patience of listeners who have formed their opinions and do not want or need to hear each member speak his/her piece. The result is often an unintended impatience with the issue at hand. We ask for this meeting to hear opinions, questions, gripes, and hopefully some wit. On the basis of your input, we will (1) refine/revise the proposal; (2) add to it specifics for implementation; and (3) submit it for Senate debate and ratification. If ratified, as called for by our constitution, the proposal will then be submitted to the entire department for review.

The Self-Interests

1. Lecturers who desire ongoing, even if occasionally periodic, employment in the U.T. English department teaching freshman and sophomore English and upper-division writing courses..
2. Lecturers who desire full-time, substantively parallel professional careers involving teaching--traditional and innovative--in the U.T. English department at all undergraduate levels.
3. New and recent U.T. Ph.D.s who envision lower division teaching as a Lecturer as an opportunity for professional credential enhancement and financial support, prior to finding a tenure track position elsewhere or planning for another career altogether.
4. The tenured and tenure track faculty who desire to continue the department's historic commitments to (a) teaching at all levels, undergraduate through graduate; (b) traditional scholarship and creative writing as they fall under the aegis of research paradigms at major research institutions; (c) the hiring and promotion to tenure of assistant professors recruited through national search; (d) the perpetuation and enhancement of the graduate program through aggressive job-hunting for our Ph.D.s; (e) an influence upon educational policy in the University at large.

For anyone active in present department life, it of course goes without saying that members of all these groups are interested both in the quality teaching and diligent advising of our students.

The Aims of the Proposal

1. To provide each self-interest with a reasonable opportunity for its exercise. This means, as you will see, that the possibilities for self-interests #1 and #2 are somewhat narrowed; that self-interest #3 is enhanced along its indicated line; and that self-interest #4 is liberalized beyond its present traditionalism.
2. To address the spirit of these "realities" of our department's professional life:

"It does no one any good--least of all the Lecturers themselves--for regular faculty to assert, in self-righteous tones, that the University should not be hiring Lecturers, that it is immoral to do so, that theirs is a slave labor, and so on. To anyone with responsibility for academic and financial affairs in the Department of English or the College of Liberal Arts, such talk betrays so lamentable a lack of acquaintance with reality that response to such accusations is pointless." (Dean King in "Reflections on Lecturers in the English Department.")

"We are constantly trying to devise the best procedures for appointment, evaluation, and re-appointment--procedures that will ensure fairness to all and acknowledge meritorious service [of Lecturers]. . . . You [Dean King] have rightly asked the Department to do all it can to make the Lecturer position a fair and rewarding one so that our students might receive the best instruction possible. We have always had that as our primary goal. We too believe that it is time to emphasize the positive contributions of Lecturers. With your help we hope to continue improving every aspect of their situation. (Executive Committee Response to Dean King's "Reflections.")

"There has been much recent discussion in academe on the role of the 'independent scholar.' By this term is meant the scholar who has invested long years toward obtaining a Ph.D. but for whom no traditional employment opportunities exist which fully use that person's academic talent. The problem is all too familiar in the liberal arts. This topic has now become a regular part of scholarly meetings such as the Modern Language Association and conferences sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I for one am glad that we are able to offer employment to Ph.D.s

in English and sister disciplines who otherwise would have no opportunity to join in the academic life. We are in this way able to provide rewarding employment for many people whose choice otherwise would be the solitude of the 'independent scholar.'

The time for lamentation has passed. We owe it to our students to concentrate now on the positive advantages of having Lecturers as part of the faculty of The University." (Dean King's "Reflections on Lecturers in the English Department.")

3. To provide an accommodation of self-interests within the context of the aforementioned "realities"--through definition and specification of job conditions and activities--without recourse to such essentially contested concepts as "legitimacy," "professionalism," and "teaching of writing vs. teaching of literature."

THE PROPOSAL

The English department's non-tenure track college English teachers will be composed of the following employment categories: Lecturer I, Adjunct Assistant Professor, and Lecturer II. In accordance with University regulations, all will be one-year appointments, renewable on a year-to-year basis. The categories designated below are listed, from highest to lowest priority, in their order of hiring preference.

LECTURER I

A group primarily composed of new and recent U.T. Ph.D.s in English. After successful completion of the doctorate and work as an AI at U.T., new degree holders will apply for a Lecturer I position. While defined as a one-year position, this appointment will be renewed as a matter of course for up to three years upon evidence of competent and dedicated teaching.

Rationale for the Lecturer I Position

The Department's commitment to promoting the careers of its new and recent Ph.D.s, and its acknowledgment of their right to participate in U.T.'s post-doctoral teaching and career-enhancing opportunities, partially informed the original conception of the non-tenure track instructorships, assistant professorships, and later the lecturer position. Fairness to these

U.T.-trained teacher/scholars and interest in the effectiveness of our Ph.D. program demand that this commitment and this right, as long as we have any staffing needs at all, be honored.

By envisioning the position of Lecturer I as one renewable for three years, we are acknowledging, in addition, the professional status of these individuals and the requisite job security for their productive employment. In the first instance, we believe these individuals have earned the right--often on the basis of years of teacher training and service in our department--to be overseen much as our assistant professors are for their first three years before the rigorous third year review: with constructive annual reviews designed to promote improved teaching and professionalism. In the second instance, we are responding to the experience of our present lecturers. They have observed that career enhancement--in the form of publishing, further education, curriculum development--is not precluded so much by the teaching load as by the conditions of employment. Uncertain about employment from one year to the next, the lecturer cannot save money for summer research or reduced teaching. Strategies for job-hunting and for research become overshadowed by fears about fractional discriminations in the teaching evaluations upon which future employment may depend. We believe that the granting of three one-year contracts--presuming competent and dedicated teaching--will promote the interests of teaching (by reducing pressure) and careers (by allowing for a long-term strategy of professional development).

Because we believe that the conditions of Lecturer I employment are substantially better than those under which our present Lecturers have served, we are committed to designating, in the phase-in period, as many of our present Lecturers as possible as first- or second-year Lecturers I. It must be noted, however, that the whole concept of the Lecturer I position requires the virtual certainty of employment opportunities for two to three years. This means that, in the early stages of the program, we cannot allow the group to exceed our reasonably certain staffing needs. We think, on the basis of some preliminary calculations, that about half of our present Lecturers can be offered employment in the Lecturer I group. More of this will be discussed when we devise our implementation program.

ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

A group primarily composed of Lecturer I and Lecturer II veterans who have demonstrated both of the following professional accomplishments: (1) excellent teaching; (2) the ability to enhance our department's pedagogic range on the basis of demonstrated expertise in areas--both traditional and non-traditional--not adequately addressed by our regular faculty: e.g., creative writing, interdisciplinary studies, training in editing, training with computers, grant proposal consultation and writing, etc.

The teaching load is three courses per semester; the salary is not less than the median Assistant Professor salary; the teaching is at all undergraduate levels, with special emphasis on the department's upper division needs, interdisciplinary courses, and the development of new courses.

We envision employment as an Adjunct Assistant Professor as a career substantively parallel to that of the regular faculty in the U.T. English department. The premise underlying the category is this: our regular faculty, committed simultaneously to traditional teaching at all levels and to the expansion of our national reputation through traditional scholarship (both in literature and in composition theory) and creative writing, uses nearly all its energies in these pursuits. As the largest department in the University and the discipline which must both shape and be shaped by the dominant culture, we need to enhance our traditional educational range without diminishing our historic commitments. By using talented Ph.D.s--whose special abilities/life experiences function as "adjuncts" to the interests of the regular faculty--as a creative intellectual resource, we believe we are vigorously serving the interests of both our University and the profession of college English teachers at large.

While there is presently some justifiable discomfort with the Dean's creation of the Super Lecturer position (both the position itself and the selection of its members), we believe that the Dean's interest in such a category is to be commended. In fact, we see the Adjunct position as an attempt to define a job category in the full spirit of the Super Lecturer.

As presently defined, the Adjunct position can be filled without arbitrariness and on the basis of a long-range vision of educational excellence and innovation in the U.T. English department. The position, moreover, can be rewarded (in terms of salary, teaching load, and teaching function) in ways that serve both the Adjunct and the department desiring his/her full creative resources. We will therefore ask, first, that the Super Lecturer position be done away with after suitable arrangements are made with its members to secure their employment (probably as permanent Lecturer I members). We will also require, as part of the Adjunct position, that members serve on some major department curriculum or staffing committee. Adjuncts must have a genuine sense of department strengths and weaknesses in order to forge a creative relationship with it.

The number of Adjunct positions will be determined on a formula as yet to be concocted. The considerations will be funding, our continued ability to procure traditional Assistant Professor lines, and the staffing needs Adjuncts create for themselves by their innovations.

Justification for the Adjunct Position

The function of the adjunct positions, as the HOP defines them, is to supplement the erudition and interests of an academic workforce with the related, but substantively different expertise and perspective of those with experience in the non-academic workplace. While such a supplemental relation can be readily observed in the comparison of individuals with shared commitments but divergent job practices--for example, the Professor of Marketing and the Director of Marketing for a corporation--an equivalent supplementation can also be found between the pedagogic focuses of our discipline.

Our recent concerns with the composition program have unfortunately given some the impression that the aforementioned "focuses" are composition teaching (as an interest in communication) and literature teaching (as interests in the value and history of literary art). This is a total misconception. Composition teaching and literature teaching are two emphases within the same focus: the promotion of reading exposure and comprehension in the service of historical awareness (of writers, ideas, and events) and better writing

(strategies, traditional and new, for the precise and effective use of language).

If the first focus addresses traditional humanistic concerns (literature and composition), the second, supplemental focus addresses the cultural moment, the present ways of life and the thinking which authorizes them. This second focus is often addressed in English courses and yet has no place supplanting the primary focus, in the name of "relevancy." Nevertheless, the focus on the cultural moment has its place in our educational vision. Indeed, it corresponds to the supplemental interest in "job practice" addressed through the adjunct service of the business executive, engineer, corporate lawyer, and retired legislator. The English department, which is pursuing the first focus within the context of a crisis in literacy and a mandate for research excellence, also has a legitimate claim to the pursuit of this second focus considered as an educational complement. It is our contention that the adjunct position was intended to serve this kind of educational aim. Insofar as the Adjunct Assistant Professor will have taught within the primary focus while investigating--through curriculum innovation and/or intellectual activities outside academe--the currents of the cultural moment, he/she will be inside and outside the University community in much the same manner as his/her counterparts in other disciplines.

LECTURER II

A group primarily composed of Lecturer I veterans. After serving three years as a Lecturer I, individuals will automatically be classified in the Lecturer II category (from which they can indefinitely apply for Adjunct positions). Members of this group will be appointed after all the Lecturer I and Adjunct teachers have been placed. To protect both the veteran lecturer who has taught well for years and the department's right to give its students the best possible instruction by hiring the best talent available, we propose the following: Those in the Lecturer II category whose teaching performance, over the recent two year period, would rank among the top 50% of the Lecturer I group will be hired, assuming staffing need, before a recruit with a Ph.D. from another institution or University department. Those in the Lecturer II group without such a ranking will simply be judged head-to-head against the available competition. Someone from another institution, or a U.T. Ph.D.

from a discipline other than English, who is appointed as a Lecturer II can, after a successful year's employment, apply for admission into the Lecturer I category and, of course, the shelter of its greater job security.

Rationale for the Lecturer II Position

It is clear that members of this group have the least job security and, as third in the hiring hierarchy, will probably be notified of employment later than Lecturers I and Adjuncts. Nevertheless, we believe that even this position is better than the one presently occupied by the lecturers and might improve further. In the proposed scheme, the Lecturer II gets the benefits of Lecturer I and Adjunct successes. The more Lecturers I who publish and get jobs elsewhere, and the more students drawn by the Adjuncts to take elective courses, the greater the staffing need for Lecturers II. In addition, this arrangement more easily allows the rewarding of successful, long-term Lecturer II teaching. At present, no one but a Super Lecturer has particular likelihood of employment from one academic year to the next: a drop in student evaluation--from strong to merely competent--can radically change one's ranking; confusion about whether to privilege the recent (as opposed to new) Ph.D. or the Ph.D. of long standing prevents one year's EC from making obligations for the next year's EC; highly qualified applicants from other institutions or with U.T. Ph.D.s from other disciplines, having no clear-cut place in the hiring hierarchy, also preclude multi-year employment commitments by acting as an unknown in the hiring equation from one year to the next. And given the primary commitment of all to quality teaching, it would be highly inappropriate to rule out consideration of "outsider" applications.

Once enrollments level off, it may well be possible to predict filling only part of our staffing needs with Lecturers I and Adjuncts. Under these conditions, we encourage the department both to hire Lecturers II early and, in cases of longstanding good teaching, to envision the appointment as a two-year department obligation. The plan as a whole allows for--and encourages--such commitments by bringing all the self-interests into mutually sustaining relation.

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