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Policy Statement Concerning Lecturers

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The role of the lecturer, once seen as a temporary, stop-gap measure to meet burgeoning enrollments, has become a permanent part of university staffing. The national trend during the past five years toward increasing the number of lecturers, both full time and part time, can be seen in both public and private institutions of higher learning. In fact, many institutions are predominantly staffed by lecturers. Many have debated (and lamented) the whys of the situation. We lecturers, however, feel the time has come to cease lamentations and recognize the role of the lecturer for exactly what it is, a permanent, on-going part of the overall staffing situation.

The advantages to the university are many. Highly qualified personnel perform maximum amounts of work for moderately low cost. Ph.D.s hired as lecturers are teaching writing courses which previously had been mostly taught by graduate students, bringing to those undergraduate courses the results of training, experience and commitment previously only found in upper division literature courses taught by assistant, associate and full professors. Instead of being frightened or threatened by the number of Ph.D.s for whom there are not enough tenure track positions, the university should take advantage of these trained people who need work, who want to teach, who are much more than the technicians they have often been thought, who, whatever their specialties, are willing to teach courses that up till now most of the regular faculty have not wanted to teach.

The two major problem areas are:

1. Legitimacy. All administrators and faculty need to realize the importance of the role of lecturer and its positive advantage to the departments and to the university.
2. Continued employment. Those who teach well should be encouraged, not discouraged, to continue as an integral part of the overall program. Some formula, such as longevity of service plus quality of service, could assist in providing a measure of security to lecturers and to the department. The administration, working together with the lecturers, can develop an improved, clear policy of evaluating quality of service and of ranking the lecturers. We believe that this should include:

- a. Teaching effectiveness--an improved form (which we are working on) of standard evaluation plus the possibility of peer evaluation. If the department of English is discussing right now peer evaluation of assistant professors, why should lecturers be evaluated less thoroughly?

b. Seniority. Years of service, if considered quality service, should weigh heavily in the ranking. Lecturers who have experience here should be given priority over lecturers hired from outside. In ~~its~~ its policy the department should state whether or not lecturers with degrees from UT are to be judged as equal to Ph.D.s from other universities. The policy should state the department's view of lecturers who have spouses in the department and should state if it gives priority to lecturers who have Ph.D.s. This past year there were some M.A.s hired before several Ph.D.s who thought they had good teaching evaluations.

c. Publications. If the department does not want to have this as part of its general policy of evaluating lecturers, it could make it part of this evaluation in individual cases. A lecturer whose teaching evaluations are not as good as many others, but who has been publishing articles in whatever field, should not be automatically ranked low, especially considering that the university's own Measurement Evaluation Center does not think that its surveys should be used in rehiring and promotion decisions. Most lecturers have been trained in the humanities. We bring that training to the teaching of writing, broadening the definition of what a writing course is. Scholarship should not be viewed as irrelevant to teaching, even if it is scholarship in something other than composition. We believe that the teaching of writing needs an intellectual grounding, broad, not narrow. The insurance of quality teaching necessitates a broader, less mechanical, more flexible standard of individual evaluation. Because lecturers are hired to teach writing does not mean, should not mean, that other interests and capabilities are considered by the department as irrelevant.

d. Ranking Procedure. The department should reevaluate its numerical ranking procedure. If there are seventy people to rank, a spread of 1 to 4 is very narrow. The number of people ending up with the same ranking must be a problem, even when using decimals. How are the ties broken? One year at least it was done by reference to the position of the lecturers' last names in the alphabet--a desperate measure!

e. Earlier Appointments. We need earlier appointments for as many lecturers as possible. The lecturers realize that there will always be some who must be hired at the last minute, but we think the department can decrease the number of these last minute appointments.