

Course Staffing in the School of Liberal Arts, 2013-2018 Trends and Recommendations

Faculty Affairs Committee
Feb. 18, 2019

Background

In 2017 the Fiscal Recovery Planning Committee charged the Faculty Affairs Committee with reviewing "the current use of Associate Faculty in departments and programs in the School of Liberal Arts and the consequences of further reductions." The charge included the following potential tasks:

1. Identify policies that address Associate Faculty employment
2. Conduct a review of the existing use of Associate Faculty by program and department
3. Identify potential new models for the use of Associate Faculty
4. Address specifically issues of equity and efficiency with the use of Associate Faculty

The Faculty Affairs Committee completed task 1 last spring, and we submitted to Faculty Assembly and Dean Tom Davis our recommendations for best practices in employing Associate Faculty. We also learned that we couldn't address tasks 2-4 without a broader analysis of course staffing decisions in each department and program.

In May 2018 the committee launched a data collection and analysis initiative to understand how course sections and credit hours were distributed among different ranks of faculty in the School from academic years (AY) 2013-14 to 2017-18. Candy Smith invested many weeks collecting this workload data, and she provided the committee with aggregate anonymized data organized by department and program. Chairs and directors used this data to write narratives explaining their teaching needs in light of course releases and department priorities, as well as possible strategies for teaching more students with a shrinking faculty. We thank everyone for these efforts. This report presents broad trends in course staffing in the School, raises important questions for the School as a whole to consider, and makes specific recommendations, which we will share with the Fiscal Recovery Planning Committee and will pursue as a Faculty Affairs Committee in future.

Associate Faculty in the School

The School of Liberal Arts relies on Associate Faculty to teach a significant number of our courses and contribute in other ways. Many Associate Faculty members teach consistently for the School and have done so for many years, in some cases decades. Associate Faculty have invested their loyalty, creativity, and talents in making the School what it is today. The School benefits academically and financially from Associate Faculty who teach SLA courses. SLA will continue to rely on Associate Faculty in staffing courses and sharing their expertise with students. Last year's Faculty Affairs Committee presented a series of recommendations focused on improving communication and hiring procedures with Associate Faculty, increasing representation for Associate Faculty, and reinstating the Senior Associate Faculty promotion process. Many of these recommendations have been implemented, and we continue to work on others. We appreciate Dean Davis' decision to reinstate the promotion process. We see this small step as a well-deserved recognition of Associate Faculty members' personal dedication and skills as teachers and their contributions to program development, recruitment, and retention for the School. We also acknowledge that, for those Associate Faculty who are teaching 10% more students because of higher course caps, the 10% compensation increase of Senior Associate Faculty (from \$2700 per section to \$2970 per section) feels like treading water.

Trends

This section summarizes key trends in course staffing and poses some more general questions about the evaluation of faculty workloads in an environment of financial exigency. We draw these trends from the narratives written by chairs and directors and from the following chart, which summarizes, for the past five academic years, the distribution of course sections and credit hours across the School by faculty rank, as follows:

- tenure-line faculty (TF),
- lecturer-line faculty (LF, which includes clinical professors and professors of practice), and
- associate faculty (AF, listed here as PT for part-time).

Distribution of SLA Sections and Credit Hours by Faculty Rank

		AY2013-14						
		# Faculty	# sections	% sections	#students	% students	# Std/Fac/AY	# stud/secs
ALL LIBA	TF	166	590	32.8%	13195	30.4%	79.5	22.36
	LF	78	501	27.9%	12807	29.5%	164.2	25.56
	PT	239	707	39.3%	17407	40.1%	72.8	24.62
	School AY Tot	483	1798		43409		89.9	24.14
		AY2014-15						
ALL LIBA	TF	169	621.84	34.2%	13579	31.5%	80.4	21.84
	LF	79	557.5	30.2%	13292	30.8%	168.3	23.84
	PT	213	671	36.3%	16281	38.7%	76.4	24.26
	School AY Tot	461	1850.34		43152		93.6	23.32
		AY2015-16						
ALL LIBA	TF	158	565.84	33.0%	12203	30.5%	77.2	21.57
	LF	74	511	29.8%	12619	31.5%	170.5	24.69
	PT	213	640	37.3%	15216	38.0%	71.4	23.78
	School AY Tot	445	1716.84		40038		90	23.32
		AY2016-17						
ALL LIBA	TF	156	581.17	35.7%	13170	33.3%	84.4	22.66
	LF	73	505.67	31.1%	13284	33.5%	182	26.27
	PT	175	539.5	33.2%	13153	33.2%	75.16	24.38
	School AY Tot	404	1626.34		39607		98	24.35
		AY2017-18						
ALL LIBA	TF	149	549.17	35.7%	12165	32.1%	81.6	22.15
	LF	69	452.33	29.4%	12751	33.6%	184.8	28.19
	PT	183	535	34.8%	12996	34.3%	71	24.29
	School AY Tot	401	1536.5		37912		94.5	24.67

1. The economics of our School currently depends on a fairly consistent structural division of labor:
 - a. During the past five years, we relied on Associate Faculty to teach between a high of 39.3% (AY13-14) and a low of 33.2% (AY16-17) of course sections. We relied on Associate Faculty to teach between 40.1% (AY13-14) and 33.2% (AY16-17) of students. The average number of students per associate-faculty section was steady, declining slightly during these five years (from 24.6 to 24.3).
 - b. The decrease in the percentage of students taught by Associate Faculty has mostly moved to Lecturers (up from 29.5% to 33.6% of students over this five-year period). Lecturers are the

only faculty rank who saw an overall increase in the average number of students per section (up from 25.6 to 28.2).

- c. While Tenure-line Faculty taught slightly higher percentages of sections (+2.7%) and students (+2.1%) during the two years of the extra course policy (AY16-17 and AY17-18), the average number of students per tenure-line faculty section has remained fairly constant (dipping from 22.4 to 22.2).

This is the structural reality of the School as our curriculum operates in general. If there are reasons for a discussion about significantly altering this division of labor (and we believe there are), then we need to collectively rethink our curriculum and our course staffing in much more fundamental ways than we have thus far.

2. The departments that employ most Associate Faculty are among the largest enrolling departments in the School. Based on their narratives, the reasons vary by departments:
 - a. large number of Gen Ed courses (COMM, ENG-W, and WLAC)
 - b. requirement of working professionals to teach courses (JOUR and PARA)
 - c. loss of faculty to retirements resulting in curricular gaps (ANTH and SOC)
 - d. in addition, several interdisciplinary programs rely on Associate Faculty to teach a significant proportion of their sections, including AFRO (67% AF sections in AY17-18), AMST (82%), LATS (100%), and WOST (40%).

Many departments and programs have made strong arguments that they have done everything they can to increase enrollment efficiencies (i.e., average number of students per section), partly by reducing associate-faculty sections. Overall the number of Associate Faculty teaching for SLA declined from 239 people in AY13-14 to 183 in AY17-18, a drop of 23.4%, and the number of sections taught by Associate Faculty fell from 707 to 535, a drop of 24.3%. During the same period, SLA enrollments declined 12.6%, and SLA sections taught declined 14.5%. Thus, some cuts in associate-faculty sections were necessitated by falling enrollment in the School. The data do not allow us to specify the source of additional cuts, but they likely include the following:

- higher course caps in various Gen Ed Core courses, primarily in Communication Studies, Writing, and World Languages
- some departments eliminated (nearly) all of their sections taught by Associate Faculty or placed full-time instructors into these sections
- note: the effect of the requirement that all tenured faculty teach an extra course is unclear (see below).

Without more systematic changes to the School's curriculum, the recent decline in associate-faculty sections has likely hit a plateau. Narratives already reflect a movement to increase associate-faculty sections again as well as a stated goal of returning to the previous course caps in those public speaking, writing, and language Gen Ed courses that had mandated increases in recent years. There needs to be Dean-level guidance on the setting of course caps in SLA as well as returning to the status quo regarding Associate Faculty hiring. The Dean should consult with departments and programs about the standards of their disciplinary and professional organizations.

We also call for Dean-level guidance on the question of whether full-time faculty in relatively well-staffed departments should be teaching courses for departments and programs that rely on Associate Faculty. Particularly in the case of interdisciplinary programs, there are full-time faculty in our School who could teach some of their associate-faculty sections (see below).

3. Departments and programs define equity and efficiency in teaching workload very differently.
 - a. Definitions of equity inform how departments and programs think about the number of students individual faculty members teach and the caps they set on courses.
 - i. Some departments and programs emphasize the time demands and smaller class sizes needed for the active-learning pedagogies and grading demands of writing, performance, and language courses, especially at the introductory level.
 - ii. In other instances, departments stress the time demands of teaching and mentoring graduate students. (Some departments cite both considerations i and ii in defining equity and setting course caps as they do).
 - iii. In some cases, departments and programs set higher course caps because grading can be automated through Scantrons or Canvas. In other cases, departments and programs set higher course caps even though faculty assign significant amounts of writing and/or require other time-intensive pedagogies and grading.
 - b. There are consequently at least three different definitions of efficiency:
 - i. Percentage of seats filled (regardless of where course caps are set)
 - ii. Absolute number of students taught in a course (compared to average headcounts)
 - iii. Effective application of faculty expertise, with typically more qualified tenure-line faculty teaching the more advanced courses (regardless of the number of students taught)

Any serious discussion of efficient distribution of faculty labor in the current financial environment needs to consider whether the most clarifying metric of teaching workload (subject to pedagogical parameters) is total sections or total headcount. Use of the latter would effectively prioritize and encourage strategies to increase enrollments. At the same, the variety of understandings of efficiency and equity poses difficulties for shifting from the current section-based measures of teaching workload to other measures, such as expected headcounts for each faculty rank or faculty member.

Extra Course Policy

All tenured faculty in the School were required to teach one extra course during AY16-17 or AY17-18. The effects of this policy are difficult to gauge. On the one hand, during these two years, Tenure-line Faculty as a group taught a higher percentage of sections and students than they had during the prior three years of the data collection. On the other hand, the group of Lecturers, who were unaffected by the policy, saw larger increases in the percentages of sections and students they taught in AY16-17 and AY17-18 compared to the baseline of AY13-14.

The effectiveness of this policy is also unclear when we compare the preceding three years to the extra-course years AY16-17 and AY17-18:

- in AY13-14, the 166 TF taught, on average, 3.6 sections per year
- in AY14-15, the 169 TF taught, on average, 3.7 sections per year
- in AY15-16, the 158 TF taught, on average, 3.6 sections per year
- in AY16-17, the 156 TF taught, on average, 3.7 sections per year
- in AY17-18, the 149 TF taught, on average, 3.7 sections per year

Junior faculty on the tenure-track were not subject to the extra course requirement. As a result, the expected bump in average sections would not be the full 0.5 sections per year. But some increase would be expected. Available data does not provide answers as to why these averages remained so constant while the extra course policy was in place. One possibility is that some Tenured Faculty were

more active in seeking course reassignments for research simply to preserve their usual teaching workload while meeting their research commitments and service obligations.

Recommendations

The differences in how departments and programs define equity and efficiency are not idiosyncratic. Department and program narratives reflect profound differences in curricular requirements, degree structures, and disciplinary priorities. One-size-fits-all prescriptions are hard to square with this variety. As a result, the Faculty Affairs Committee has not been able to meet the third task with which we were charged: "Identify potential new models for the use of Associate Faculty."

However efficiency is defined, the School's financial exigency means that we need to find ways to teach relatively more students with a shrinking faculty. One strategy is to increase average headcount per section across the School. This strategy can be advanced by drawing more students to SLA courses and by attracting more students to complete SLA majors, minors, and certificates, thus increasing the total number of credit hours they take with us. Increasing the average number of students per section is not the only strategy available. Increasing the number of sections per tenured faculty member is another, as well as increasing overall student enrollment per faculty member.

Other credit-hour growth strategies, such as limiting the number of dual and transfer credits that students bring into IUPUI and restructuring the Gen Ed Core to favor SLA courses, lie beyond the scope of this report. As our committee's data collection did not differentiate between undergraduate and graduate courses, understanding section distribution and enrollment trends in graduate programs is an area for further investigation, possibly by other committees. Our recommendations do not pertain to graduate programs.

1. Ask chairs of departments and directors of programs where growth in average headcount per section has been strong to present their narratives and strategies at a Chairs and Directors' meeting on increasing and teaching larger averages per section.
2. An appropriate faculty committee or the Dean's Office can coordinate an ongoing review of: a) SLA courses that can be taught by full-time faculty in cognate disciplines and b) existing or emerging teaching gaps that can be filled by full-time faculty in cognate disciplines. The Dean would have to support the creation of a clearinghouse of cognate courses, set deadlines for departments and programs to list their available courses and/or available faculty during each semester's schedule planning, and expect departments and programs to participate.
3. The School should develop an organizational mechanism or capacity to promote more cross-listing of relevant courses across SLA departments and programs and more regular offering of high-enrolling courses, possibly by multiple faculty, including outside the home department or program. The Dean would have to support the goals of cross-listing relevant courses and identifying multiple instructors for high-enrolling courses.
4. Departments and programs can invite full-time faculty members with relevant training to apply for adjunct status, thereby increasing opportunities for teaching and collaborating across departments and programs. As examples, we note that the GIS and MHHS narratives both indicated that more of their course offerings could be taught by full-time faculty in other departments and programs.

5. The challenges that some departments and programs report in staffing upper-level courses for their majors could be mitigated by some of the preceding steps toward increased sharing of faculty across the School. Another strategy would be to ask all departments and programs to consider accepting upper-level courses from other departments and programs into their majors. Once again, Dean-level support would be required to encourage this sharing/horse-trading of courses across majors and minors. For example, the Dean could set a target that each department and program identify 3-4 outside courses that they would consider accepting into their major and minor.
6. One teaching model being used in some departments is to offer large (100+ student) sections and use trained graduate or undergraduate students as graders (alternatively paid by graduate funding or Lunsford Scholarships). Other departments and programs might follow this teaching format if it works pedagogically, practically, and financially.
7. The Dean's Office should develop a clear policy on graduate funding and teaching assistantships with an eye to a financially and pedagogically-sound approach to using graduate students in place of Associate Faculty.
8. Encourage the development of interdisciplinary majors, minors, and certificates that can attract new students from outside SLA: e.g., Media and Creative Arts major, Ethics minor, Diversity certificate.
9. If the need for Associate Faculty is driven by demands of curricular structures instead of student headcount numbers (i.e., "We have to offer all of these required courses on a regular basis"), then curricular requirements should be reviewed and revised to reduce the pressure to offer so many repeat sections.
10. As SLA enrollments remain in decline, departments and programs should be cautious about increasing the number of sections they offer, including those taught by Associate Faculty. We acknowledge the counter-argument that growing enrollments by adding more associate-faculty sections would benefit SLA financially, *provided that the demand for these new sections comes from students outside SLA*. Recruiting SLA students from one department or program to another will not grow SLA revenues. This caution against adding new sections without enrollment growth from outside SLA applies not only to decisions to increase sections for current curricular needs, but also to decisions to develop new academic tracks that require additional faculty resources, including new Associate Faculty. We encourage departments and programs to re-envision academic tracks—possibly replacing some tracks or creating others that draw on existing full-time faculty for all of their coursework.
11. In our guidance to department chairs and program directors, the Faculty Affairs Committee asked them to identify and rank the top 3-5 priorities that affect their course staffing decisions. (Priorities might include teaching Gen Ed requirements; offering special pedagogy; recruiting and serving students in majors, minors, and certificates; running graduate programs; supporting faculty research, civic engagement, etc.; and offering service learning, study abroad, internships, etc. for students.) Not all narratives did this, but we recommend that all departments and programs clarify the priorities that affect their course staffing, perhaps in their Annual Report. This exercise helps remind us of the various forms of excellence we promote as a School and the need to support this diversity even through our financial exigency. It also helps clarify tradeoffs within individual departments and programs as we staff our courses, distribute sections, and set course caps. We encourage the School's administration to pay close attention to these department and program

priorities as they design and apply policies across the School. For example, an interdisciplinary program may have priorities that current full-time faculty in the School cannot meet. So dialogue with the program director and deliberation among its faculty will be important steps in any effort to staff interdisciplinary program sections more with Tenure-line Faculty or Lecturers.

12. The Faculty Affairs Committee, consulting with Associate Faculty, should develop further recommendations to improve associate-faculty working conditions, particularly with regard to salary, raises, and opportunities for professional development (including graduate study).