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Approved by the Senate: 3/24/2009
Not Approved by the Senate:
Approved by the President:
Not Approved by the President: 5/4/2009

Increased Teaching Load for Temporary Faculty

Submitted by: Ciffon Price/Tina Whittle

3/3/2009

Motion:

We move for the Faculty Senate to request a formal declaration from the Administration stating the increase in teaching load for temporary faculty is one forced solely by the current and temporary budget woes of the state and will be reduced when the present budget situation improves.

Rationale:

It is our understanding that the increase in teaching load for temporary faculty--over 150 individuals or more than 18% of full-time faculty overall--is occurring University-wide effective Fall 2009. This will affect many students, especially since the two departments hosting the largest number of temporary faculty, Writing and Linguistics and Mathematical Sciences, also teach the Core Curriculum Course Requirement's Essential Skills classes (Area A).

An increase in teaching load will be a detriment to the quality of education received by students of these affected teachers, who will be separated from the professional development which the University's Mission Statement states is essential for effective classroom performance. This document describes the "University's hallmark" as "a culture of engagement that bridges theory with practice" and its faculty as "teacher-scholars whose primary responsibility is the creation of learning experiences of the highest quality, informed by scholarly practice, research, and creative activities," offering a "student-centered environment" that "promotes student growth and life

success.” Furthermore, the 2008-2009 Faculty Handbook asserts that the “faculty’s professional and moral right to teach rests upon mastery of their subject and/or competent scholarship,” and that faculty members “have an obligation to keep abreast of main currents in their fields.” It also places “high priority [on] allotting time to students,” a practice that would regrettably be compromised if teaching loads are increased above the standard teaching load of 12 credit hours as prescribed by the Faculty Handbook.

This change could also set a dangerous precedent: an increase in teaching load for all faculty. In addition, if the increased teaching load eliminates the need for several temporary positions, the hypothetical increase for all could result in the elimination of some permanent lines as well.

Senate Response:

3/24/2009: MOTION: “Increased Teaching Load for Temporary Faculty” Sonya Huber (CLASS) moved for the Faculty Senate to request a formal declaration from the Administration stating that the increase in teaching load for temporary faculty is one forced solely by the current and temporary budget woes of the state and will be reduced when the present budget situation improves. The motion was seconded. Sonya Huber continued with the rationale, including Georgia Southern’s commitment to students and to building real relationships with students and added that students choose GSU for this reason. She stressed that talking about dilemmas regarding staffing patterns raises very complex and painful issues, but that the use of the word “equity” is an interesting term when we look at resource distribution across colleges and departments.”

Tina Whittle (CLASS) then spoke to the motion, beginning by correcting the first sentence of the rationale to reflect the most current statistics: there are currently 141 full-time temporary faculty, which is almost 25 percent of overall faculty. She then called attention a petition of support which had been signed by faculty across the University. She added that increased teaching loads for temporary faculty would be detrimental to the quality of the education that we promise our students in our mission statement: “learning experiences of the highest quality, informed by scholarly practice, research, and creative activity [activities].” She stressed that she cannot fulfill the promise when teaching five classes of writing intensive composition, an opinion shared by every professional body in her discipline. She stressed that separating what instructors do in the classroom from professional development is not only unrealistic, but it is slanderous to our profession as a whole. How can any of us tell students that higher learning matters if official University policy states otherwise for 25 percent of its faculty. She added that our students, deserve better, and they deserve the teacher they paid for.

These are tough economic times, and they're getting tougher. In such times, people have to make hard decisions. She stressed that the motion demonstrates that temporary faculty understand the circumstances but also asks for recognition that this class load increase is the educational equivalent of a tourniquet: It might save a life in the short term, but the long term consequences are dangerously unsound.

Marc Cyr (CLASS) Senate Moderator asked for further comments, and seeing none, called for a voice vote. The motion was unanimously approved.

Marc Cyr (CLASS) Senate Moderator asked senators to send language suggestions for the lecturer position to Jean-Paul so the Faculty Welfare Committee work on it and come back with a greater clarity.

President's Response:

From Dr. Grube 5/4/2009: Following review of the motion presented to the Faculty Senate at the March 24, 2009, Faculty Senate meeting, as provided in your memo of March 25, 2009, I have not approved the motion below presented to the Senate by Dr. Sonya Huber-Humes.

It is the practice of Georgia Southern University to employ temporary faculty to manage teaching responsibilities that cannot be either tenured or tenure track faculty. The primary role of temporary faculty, therefore, is devoted to teaching, rather than either research or service. Therefore, the expectation that temporary faculty will commit the entirety of their 15-hour workload in the instruction of students is appropriate. It is not the intention of the University to reduce this expectation at some later date.

MOTION: We move for the Faculty Senate to request a formal declaration from the Administration stating the increase in teaching load for temporary faculty is one forced solely by the current and temporary budget woes of the state and will be reduced when the present budget situation improves.

RATIONALE: It is our understanding that the increase in teaching load for temporary faculty--over 150 individuals or more than 18% of full-time faculty overall--is occurring University-wide effective Fall 2009. This will affect many students, especially since the two departments hosting the largest number of temporary faculty, Writing and Linguistics and Mathematical Sciences, also teach the Core Curriculum Course Requirement's Essential Skills classes (Area A).