University Senate
Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee (FPAC)

Response to Charge S- 1012A Balance of Full-time and Part-time Faculty Teaching

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A.   Charge

Charge S-1012A: Balance of Full-time and Part-time Faculty Teaching: Consider the 1999 Report on the Balance of Full-time and Part-time Faculty Teaching at Rutgers University, and, with updated numbers and charts from the Office of Academic Affairs, make recommendations concerning changing trends and shifting percentages.

B.   Background

The Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee for some time has grappled with difficult but important questions about the amount of overall teaching done by full time and part time faculty. Our efforts to produce a longitudinal picture go back to 1999 data, now impossible to gather in identical format for purposes of comparison. The general sense is that the percentage of overall teaching done by part time faculty has increased over time but we lack hard evidence one way or another.

Recently, President Robert Barchi has called for greater accountability about all our work at the University and this committee applauds his call. Efforts are already underway to establish a clearer and fuller understanding of the research accomplishments of our faculty, at both the individual and the collective level. Surely we want to do the same for assessing accurately our accomplishments in the critical area of teaching.

The Senate FPAC members therefore decided to explore the possibility of widening the context of its original charge about the relative proportion of teaching done by full time vs. part time faculty to include a broad overview of "Who Teaches What?" We determined that a large statistical canvas best suited our purposes, recognizing that while such a canvas necessarily rests upon the efforts and accomplishments of thousands of individuals teaching in a variety of ways, there is much value in a broad overview, especially at the undergraduate level. We turned to the most promising source of data for gathering the information needed to understand who teaches what.

For several decades Rutgers University has monitored student enrollment and teaching assignments at the undergraduate level through a data collection vehicle known as CAS (Course Analysis System). CAS is currently administered at Rutgers by the Division for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, for which Robert Heffernan is Executive Director. He and Mike Cullinan, the person directly responsible for maintaining the system, spoke with the FPAC at the

March, 2014 meeting and have been most helpful throughout in responding to our requests for data.

The core data gathered under CAS provides numbers of credit hours (e.g. 10 students enrolled in a 3-credit course counts as 30 credit hours) and breaks down this core data by subject, department, and job title of instructor, with percentages of "responsibility" noted where instruction is split. To continue the above example, an associate professor doing two weekly lectures and a TA doing one recitation/lab segment would be counted at 67% and 33% of the total credit hours taught, or respectively 20 and 10 credit hours.

C. Discussion

C.1 Reliability and completeness issues

The data on number of credit hours is complete and reliable, as it is drawn from the class rosters used to generate student transcripts of high integrity. So, we can be confident that for fall 2012 Camden SAS taught 47,017 undergraduate credit hours, New Brunswick SAS 347,551, and Newark SAS 64,815.

By contrast, the data on who does the teaching is woefully incomplete, as it comes from individual departments that seem to be under no particular compulsion to complete their part of the process, which is to fill in the names of instructors for each course and sub-section (lecture/discussion/lab) of the course. Camden SAS is the most dutiful, with 81.4% reporting fully, while at New Brunswick the corresponding figure is only 65.4%, and Newark trails at 53.9%. Non-reporting may be due to staff shortages at the departmental level, or perhaps indifference by the central administration, or some combination of these two factors plus generalized incompetence.

Moreover, the assignment of instructional "responsibility" percentages for fully reported data should be treated as "best estimates". Since the entire CAS system is based on minutes of contact time, there is inevitable underreporting of grading work by TAs who do not run independent recitation sections and for different reasons, underreporting of faculty efforts in supervising TAs who do run recitation sections. Particularly in the Biological Sciences and Chemistry in New Brunswick, the divisions of labor are complex and should be treated as expert approximations rather than absolute numbers.

There are other complications, such as the non-handling of independent study since it does not have fixed hours. Presumably, the measurement of online instruction will involve new challenges. And some would argue that the amount of teaching effort is or is not greater at different levels of instruction, probably an unresolvable issue.

These and other shortcomings and challenges we may have failed to consider have not deterred us from the conclusion that reasonably complete CAS. data would be valuable in a variety of ways in strengthening our teaching mission by providing fundamental information on who teaches what. The appended set of tables should be taken as indicative of what is possible in the way of data analysis, not as specific evidence on anything, nor as the defined way data should be analyzed.

C.2 Reading the appended tables

For the School of Arts and Sciences at each campus (Table 1, New Brunswick; Table 2, Newark; Table 3, Camden), the opening table (Table 1.A, Table 2.A, and Table 3.A, respectively) lists rows for all distinct subjects, along with the department offering the subject. The next block of five columns shows percentages of instruction by persons in each of five basic categories, as follows:

> FF-TT = full time, tenure or tenure track
> FT-NTT = full time, not tenure track
> TA = teaching assistant
> PTL = part time lecturer
> Other = all other RU employees, ranging from administration officers on to undergrad students somehow hired with instructional responsibilities

The four columns to the right of the table provide numbers and percentages of fully reported and not-fully reported data.

The second table for each campus SAS (Table 1.B, Table 2.B, and Table 3.B for the New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden Campuses, respectively) follows the same structure as the opening table but the data contained in the five columns titled "Number of Credits Taught per Faculty Member in Five Basic Categories" is for number of credit hours, closely related to what we routinely call "student-teacher ratio." Since these are credit hours, one may usefully divide the numbers shown by 3 to reflect the usual 3-credit course but the numbers we show are more accurate in that they reflect the extra effort involved in a 4 or even 5 credit course versus a 3 credit course.

A complete list of all job titles and the number of persons in them (adjusted by the percentage of responsibility discussed above) is shown in Appendix A for each of the three campus tables.

D.   Recommendations

Obviously the instruction done by part time lecturers, teaching assistants, and the full time faculty at various ranks varies greatly from department to department and from campus to campus. Such variance may or may not be a good thing but for sure it is worth knowing who is doing what in the classroom. Although our report does not include gender or ethnic/race identification, these could easily be incorporated in future reports since the data on rank comes from the same payroll system that also includes codes for these additional personal characteristics.

The necessary first step is to obtain more complete data by obtaining the compliance of individual reporting units. The next step would be to provide the resources to support meaningful data analysis and to make this information available to the University Senate and other bodies charged with enhancing the quality of teaching at Rutgers University. We conclude this report, then, with two recommendations:

1)   Units responsible for completing CAS reporting forms should be required to do so, promptly at the conclusion of each semester at the latest.
2)   The Division for Institutional Research and Academic Planning should be provided with resources necessary to complete requests for data from the University Senate and other appropriate governance bodies.

The FPAC will revisit this charge when suitable data become available.

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