

Report on Faculty Teaching Liberal Arts and Sciences Courses

Executive Summary

One of the goals of our LA&S self study was to examine whether we had sufficient faculty available for and assigned to teach in our LA&S program. In order to explore which faculty members were most heavily engaged in LA&S teaching responsibilities, the highest enrolled LA&S courses from each cluster were identified and analyzed for the years 2006 to 2015. The percentage of sections taught by adjuncts was used as an initial indicator of whether there might not be sufficient faculty available at the institution to teach a particular course. For context, this was compared to the overall percentage of courses taught by adjuncts in each of the departments that housed the LA&S courses. Given that the greatest overall percentage of courses taught by adjuncts in any single department was 31%, courses taught 40% or more of the time by adjuncts were considered to be understaffed by full-time faculty. We also examined the numbers of full time faculty potentially available to teach within a given discipline and the number actually teaching individual LA&S courses. The additional analysis of the number of full-time faculty engaged in teaching the course and the number or percentages of sections they teach revealed that while for some courses like Art Appreciation, Introduction to Speech Communication, Introduction to Sociology, U.S. Government, Global Issues, Introduction to Life Science, Philosophy of Human Nature and Logic, there may not be as many full-time faculty willing and/or able to teach the course as we might prefer, for others like Writing I and II, Applied Statistics, and Health and Fitness, the demand for the courses was so great that even with many full-time faculty committing their time, there remains a high need for adjuncts. On the other hand, there are also a number of courses like Commonwealth of the Arts, World Civilizations II, U.S. History II, General Psychology, Human Growth and Development, Precalculus, Informal Geometry, and Earth Systems Science for which we appear to have more adequate availability of full-time faculty. In some disciplines like History, Psychology, and Mathematics with relatively large numbers of faculty they are able to better support their LA&S courses with full-time faculty than in disciplines with few full time faculty members (Philosophy, Sociology, Art). Nonetheless, some disciplines with relatively few full time faculty members like Earth and Geographic Sciences can support LA&S courses without heavy use of adjuncts, because of nature of their commitment to using all of their full-time faculty for these courses. However, some other courses like Life Science have been historically staffed almost exclusively by adjuncts. Overall, the structure of the LA&S curriculum seems to have created an over-reliance on adjunct faculty, particularly in the disciplines of Art, Biology, English Studies, Exercise and Sports Science, Philosophy and Sociology.

Arts

From the Arts cluster, the courses Writing I and II, Art Appreciation, Commonwealth of the Arts, American Literature II, Children's Literature, and Introduction to Speech Communication were examined. The two departments that house these courses, Humanities and English Studies average 20% and 24% of their courses taught by adjuncts. Many of these courses have a relatively high percentage of sections taught by adjunct faculty, ranging from 41 % for Introduction to Speech Communication to 64% for Art Appreciation and 72% and 69% for Writing I and II respectively. While more full-time faculty teach Introduction to Speech

Communication and Art Appreciation than Writing I and II, much of the load for these courses is borne by a relatively small number of faculty with 69% of the sections of Introduction to Speech Communication taught by full-time faculty being handled by two faculty members who have taught 43 and 29 sections respectively, and 79% of the sections of Art Appreciation that are taught by full time faculty being taught by just two faculty members who have taught 20 and 14 sections respectively. The load on full time faculty for Writing I and II is much more evenly divided with no faculty member carrying more than 20% of the sections taught by full time faculty and a wide variety of faculty contributing to the course. Writing I and II are among the highest enrolled service courses and while there are many qualified full-time faculty who can and do teach these courses, the number of sections still makes it necessary to staff the majority of these courses with adjuncts. While courses like Art Appreciation and Introduction to Speech Communication do not require as many sections, we appear to have a limited pool of faculty available to teach these, leading to a reliance on adjuncts. The Humanities program houses 16 full-time faculty members, but their disciplines range from languages, to music, philosophy and art, which may help explain why for the most part only two of them teach Art Appreciation. The English Studies program houses 21 full-time faculty members and many of them contribute to Writing I and II, but only 2 contribute substantially to teaching Introduction to Speech Communication, perhaps in part because of the different areas of expertise required to teach courses on composition and speech communication.

In contrast to a more specialized course like Art Appreciation, Commonwealth of the Arts is taught predominantly by full-time faculty members and the load is distributed fairly evenly with 5 different faculty members contributing to teaching 18-24 sections each. We have a sufficient number of full time faculty available to teach the course in order to insure that most of the sections are taught by full-time faculty drawn from the 16 members of the Humanities program. The literature courses examined, are also taught predominantly by full time faculty with only 5% of the sections of American Literature II and 22% of the sections of Children's Literature taught by adjunct faculty. However, because they require expertise in a particular area of literature, these courses tend to be taught by a more limited number of full-time faculty members, with 89% of the sections of American Literature II that are taught by a full time faculty member taught by one of two faculty, and 91% of the sections of Children's Literature that are taught by a full time faculty member covered by just two of the 21 English studies faculty.

Citizenship and the World

From the Citizenship and the World Cluster, the courses World Civilizations II, United States History II, Global Issues, United States Government, General Psychology, Human Growth and Development, Introduction to Sociology, and the Philosophy of Human Nature were examined. These courses are taught by faculty from the departments of Behavioral Sciences, Economics, History and Political Science, and Humanities (Philosophy of Human Nature) which average 10%, 18% and 20% of adjuncts teaching courses respectively. Over 40% of the sections of the Philosophy of Human Nature, Introduction to Sociology, United States Government, and Global Issues were taught by adjuncts. United States Government and Global Issues had the highest rates of adjuncts at 51% and 65% respectively. In each case when taught by full time faculty members the vast majority of the sections were taught by just two Political Science

faculty members for each course. Over the years examined, Political science has had only 4-5 full-time faculty members, which may help explain the large number of adjuncts and small number of full-time faculty involved in these courses. Introduction to Sociology was taught by adjuncts 42% of the time and when taught by full time faculty members, two Sociology faculty taught 78% of those sections. Over the time period in question Sociology has tended to have at most 3 full-time faculty members. Philosophy of Human Nature was taught by adjuncts 45% of the time and 77% of the sections taught by full time faculty were taught by one of two full time Philosophy faculty members. While they are housed in the relatively large Humanities department (16 faculty), during the time period examined there tended to be at most 3 full time philosophy faculty members. In each case we have service courses with a high load of students, and a limited pool of faculty to draw from in Political Science, Sociology and Philosophy, leading to relatively high rates of adjuncts and limited variety of full-time faculty participation.

World Civilizations II, United States History II, General Psychology and Human Growth and Development all had less than 40% of the sections taught by adjuncts. World Civilizations II was only taught by adjuncts 22% of the time and when taught by full time faculty the load was distributed across 5 different faculty members teaching from 4-8 sections. United States History II had a higher number of its sections taught by adjuncts (36%), but when taught by full time faculty the load was also divided between 5 faculty teaching from 3-13 sections. General Psychology has an even broader representation of full time faculty with only 29% of the sections taught by adjuncts and over 6 full-time faculty contributing from 4-13 sections to only a few sections in some cases. Human Growth and Development has a greater percentage of its sections taught by adjuncts (35%), but it also has over 6 full time faculty contributing from 1-12 to only a few sections. These four courses each have a substantial pool of full time faculty available to teach, and the results are relatively lower rates of adjuncts teaching these courses. While numbers have varied over the years, in the most recent year we had 12 faculty in Psychological Sciences and almost 20 historians, providing reasonably sufficient staffing for LA&S courses in these disciplines.

Science, Math and Technology

In the Science, Math and Technology cluster the courses Introduction to Life Science, Earth Systems Science, Health and Fitness, Precalculus, Applied Statistics, Informal Geometry and Logic were analyzed. These courses are taught by faculty from Biology/Chemistry, Exercise and Sports Science, Earth and Geologic Sciences, and Mathematics which range from 13% (Earth and Geologic Sciences) to 31% (Mathematics) of their sections taught by adjuncts. Over 40% of the sections of Introduction to Life Science, Health and Fitness, Applied Statistics and Logic were taught by adjuncts. Introduction to Life Science was taught by adjuncts at by far the highest rate of all the courses analyzed with 88% of the sections taught by adjuncts. Furthermore, 85% of the sections taught by a full-time faculty member were taught by just one faculty member who is no longer employed at Fitchburg State. While the Biology program had lower faculty numbers at the outset of the period we are examining, that number has risen to 12 full time faculty who could be available to teach Life Science. Both Logic and Applied Statistics have roughly 50% of their sections taught by adjuncts. In the case of Logic 89% of the sections taught by full time faculty were taught by only 2 faculty members. As mentioned

above, historically there have been at most 3 philosophers on the faculty available to teach a course such as this. In contrast, Applied Statistics has been taught by over 7 different full-time faculty members with some teaching as many as 20-30 sections. Mathematics has had as many as 10 full time faculty available to teach. Health and Fitness exhibits a similar pattern to Applied Statistics with 41% of courses taught by adjuncts but over 7 different full time faculty members contributing to the course from a current pool of 11 full-time faculty. Like courses in the other clusters, there are some like Logic for which there are arguably not enough qualified full-time faculty to teach the course, while for others like Applied Statistics and Health and Fitness, there are many qualified faculty, but the demands for sections for the course are still too great to avoid a heavy reliance on adjuncts. The one striking exception to this pattern is Introduction to Life Science. There is no reason to believe that there are not enough qualified faculty in the Biology Department to teach this course yet it has almost exclusively been taught by adjuncts. The only explanation for this extreme pattern would seem to be a deliberate decision to staff the course with adjuncts.

The courses with fewer adjuncts in Science, Math and Technology may in some cases represent deliberate efforts to staff courses with full-time faculty members. Pre-calculus and Informal Geometry have 20% and 0% of their sections taught by adjuncts respectively. The overall numbers of sections for these courses are substantially lower than those needed for Applied Statistics, but they are taught by roughly the same number of different full time faculty. The exclusive use of full-time faculty for Introduction to Geometry in particular seems likely to be an intentional decision on the part of the department. In addition, the Math Department and a second SMT department, Earth and Geographical Sciences, have relatively few majors freeing up faculty to carry heavier loads of LA&S courses. This may also help explain why a course like Earth Systems Science has only 21% of its sections taught by adjuncts and has had 5 different full-time faculty members contributing to the course. Given that the Earth and Geographic Sciences department currently has only 6 faculty members and two of those faculty are dedicated to teaching Physics courses, all of the qualified full time faculty from that department contribute to the course Earth Systems Science.