

Advisory Committee on Academic Staffing Report on Recommendations for 2017-2018

The Articles of Government stipulate that the Advisory Committee on Academic Staffing (ACAS) report each year to Academic Council on its recommendations to the Provost regarding tenured and tenure-track staffing requests. Below are ACAS's recommendations for this year. We received 14 search requests from 11 departments and programs, which made our job challenging. The Provost and Deans indicated that they could authorize only five tenure-track searches in 2017-18, so we had to turn away some very compelling proposals to arrive at our recommendations. (In fact, we added an alternate in case a sixth position could be authorized.)

We met each week for the entire academic year. We studied each staffing request in depth and asked follow-up questions of the departments when we needed more information. We attempted to understand the structure of each requesting program and department, but also its sense of the future--of its staffing, its curriculum and the larger field or discipline it covers. We assembled benchmarking research in which we considered the staffing patterns of peer colleges and considered their implications for our own evaluation. We read department and program visiting reports, letters submitted by interested faculty and students, and data on patterns of enrollment and majoring over many years.

In this process we considered many values and needs that were difficult to weigh against each other. Some requested hires seemed important because they would promote especially exciting curricular and pedagogical innovation; others because they would maintain longstanding commitments to areas of study and teaching essential to our idea of liberal arts education. We thought seriously about both the traditions and the possible futures of the disciplines in which new hires would be made. Outstanding enrollment pressures got our attention, but so did the imperative to promote a flourishing academic program across the College. We considered the structure, faculty demographics, and recent and upcoming retirements in every department and program we reviewed, and thought about how new hires could contribute to the College curriculum beyond the departments or programs where requests originated. In all these considerations, we were mindful of the College's commitment to diversity. We also thought about more specific issues, such as the proper balance between tenured/tenured-track and FIP faculty in particular departments. In some cases, our decision was a matter of triage. We worried that without an immediate additional position, the department or program in question would no longer be viable.

As part of our process, we created a list of pros and cons for each staffing request. Interested departments and programs can schedule a meeting with the Provost with whom they can get an overall view of ACAS's perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of their request. Full details of our process and policies will be posted on the committee's website.

We should note that one of the staffing requests, from the American Studies program for a position in Asian-American Studies, does not appear on the list below. That is because while we

were still in the process of deliberating on our recommendations, the Provost's Office determined that it would approve a tenure-track search in Asian-American Studies in 2018-2019, which mooted our consideration of the American Studies request. During our deliberations, we noted the lack of a specialist in Asian American Studies on our campus and we support the Provost's authorization of the position for 2018-2019.

It is fair to say that our committee began the year with some trepidation about the task we had before us. Our main duty was to advise the Provost and deans about tenure-track staffing requests, but we also had to create the basic operating procedures and rules for our committee. We were pleased to find that we could work collegially and productively through these matters, setting aside our local concerns to focus on the broader interests of the College. We have continued to think about how we can improve the process of evaluating staffing requests, and more broadly what we can do to ensure that the College's resources are deployed so as to best assure the continued intellectual vitality of our institution. In particular we will be studying the staffing implications of the College's relatively high number of small departments and programs, and how we might facilitate and incentivize sharing of faculty across departmental and program lines. All eight voting members of the Committee--the non-administrative faculty members--will be returning next year, and so we plan to get a running start on this work in the fall.

Recommended Staffing Requests for 2017-2018 (in alphabetical order):

Biological Sciences
Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences
Computer Science
Physics
Spanish

Alternate

French

Not Recommended for 2017-2018

Biological Sciences (2nd position request)
Chemistry
Computer Science (2nd and 3rd position requests)
Economics
Neuroscience
Women's and Gender Studies