

30 May 2023

To: Academic Council

From: Carol Dougherty and Dan Brabander (co-chairs) for the Advisory Committee on Academic Staffing (ACAS)

Dan Brabander (co-chair), Geosciences
Carol Dougherty (co-chair), Classical Studies
Nolan Flynn, Chemistry
Tavi Gonzalez, English and Creative Writing
Simon Grote, History
Stella Kakavouli, Computer Science
Pinar Keskin, Economics
Irene Mata, American Studies

Re: Annual Report to Academic Council, 2022-23

We report here the work of the Advisory Committee on Academic Staffing for the 2022-2023 academic year. As mentioned in previous reports to Council, ACAS has interpreted its mandate to advise the Provost's Office on matters of academic staffing differently from previous years. Feeling frustrated by the partial staffing picture ACAS receives when considering only those departments that submitted proposals for a given year (and only for TT appointments), this year's committee set out to develop new procedures and practices that would create a thoughtful collaborative context in which the faculty could work together to develop a more holistic, long-range vision for the future of the academic program.

In October, we sent a questionnaire to chairs of all departments and programs asking them to reflect on their staffing within a broad context -- over a multiyear time span and with attention to ways they might collaborate with adjacent departments and programs. We received replies from thirty-nine departments and programs. After distributing a summary of the responses we received, members of ACAS met with departmental and program chairs in divisional groups to follow up on the questionnaire. A second round of divisional meetings was held in February, this time with members of the Provost's office in attendance. We all agreed that while the discussions in those meetings were sometimes difficult, they were in the end quite useful -- especially in providing clarity about the possibilities of shared appointments and other forms of interdepartmental collaboration. The memo sent to faculty outlining the parameters of three different modes of shared appointments emerged directly from these discussions and proved to be quite effective not just in addressing the questions raised but also in generating thoughtful requests from departments for shared appointments.

In late February, ACAS solicited proposals for tenure-track requests from departments and programs -- asking once again for a long-range staffing vision that reached outside departmental boundaries. We received proposals from fifteen departments and programs (see list below), requesting a total of twenty-four positions. We had hoped to receive memos from departments and programs even if they were not requesting positions in the near future since that would give ACAS and the

Provost's office a more complete staffing picture. We encourage departments and programs to do so going forward. As in the past, the number of positions requested from humanities departments was significantly smaller than from other areas of the college. We received requests for 3 positions in the humanities; 7 in the natural sciences, and 14 in the social sciences. We encourage more humanities departments and programs to submit proposals or memos going forward.

Faculty members of ACAS did not vote on or rank individual proposals. Decisions about which proposals were approved were made by the Provost's Office [see below]. We want to remind Council that eight searches have already been approved for 2023-24 – they are in Anthropology, Art History, Chemistry, Computer Science, English and Creative Writing, French Francophone and Italian studies, Philosophy and Political Science. This year, the Provost's office has indicated that it will provide specific feedback to those departments and programs that made requests - -not just outlining the pros and cons of their proposals but also indicating a longer term timeline for possible appointments.

Members of ACAS did read all the proposals and shared feedback on individual requests with the Provost's office as well as more general, assessment and advice:

- As the provost has previously announced, the college plans to reduce the cap on tenure track appoints from 231 to a number between 223 and 225 by AY 2024–25. This planned reduction in tenure-track faculty is at odds with many of the labor-intensive goals of the strategic plan (e.g. inclusive teaching, diversifying the curriculum, interdisciplinary teaching). We can't realistically do more with less, and we will need to reconcile our ambitious strategic goals with these staffing constraints.
- Many issues regarding the relationship between NTT and TT staffing remain unresolved. What is the appropriate number of courses to be taught by non-tenurable faculty? How can we accommodate NTT staffing within a department's overall staffing in ways that are sustainable and respectful? These are questions that the faculty at large should address rather than be left to individual departments to negotiate.
- Faculty have been leaving, either retiring or departing for other jobs, in unusually high numbers. We believe it is important to understand why this is happening and what, if anything, the college can and/or should do about it.
- Several departments and programs expressed an interest in some kind of shared appointments. The Provost Office memo delineating three different models for shared appointments (joint, associate, affiliate) is a good first step, but we need to know how to put these new relationships in place.
- There seem to be few, if any, clear numerical standards, either within or across departments, governing a range of factors that affect staffing indirectly, such as acceptable advising loads, faculty capacity for supervising student research, appropriate course enrollments, the number of courses that can be required for a major. Clearer standards in these areas would help departments and programs judge when their current staffing level is truly unsustainable.

In addition to our discussions with the Provost's Office, ACAS intends to reach out to departments and programs next fall, individually and in groups, with advice about ways to enhance or revise their requests as well as with information about hiring needs in adjacent

departments, etc. In particular, we want to encourage departments and programs to continue to think critically and imaginatively about the best “selective liberal-arts” version of their field going forward, rather than trying to reclaim what it has been in the past or to match the breadth of Research-1 institutions.

Concluding Remarks

These – and other -- challenges that we face as we consider how to staff the academic program going forward are significant and should be confronted by the faculty directly and collectively. Rather than wait for external forces (enrollment patterns, Provost’s office, Trustees) to make decisions for us about the future shape of the academic program, we strongly encourage the faculty to take a leadership role in addressing these challenges proactively and collectively. To this end, we believe that ACAS can and should continue to play an important and influential role in facilitating faculty planning and deliberations about the future of the academic program. In particular, we recommend that ACAS continue to facilitate regular meetings of faculty by division (or other relevant groupings) in the future – both on their own and with members of the Provost’s office. We feel strongly that instituting this practice was the single most effective outcome of the shift in our work this year away from evaluating proposals, and we see real value in continuing to establish the infrastructure necessary for faculty deliberations about the future of the academic program. Not only did the divisional meetings held this year generate a much better set of proposals this round, but we see them as a productive setting for future discussions about the broader issues raised above. This format in which faculty meet often in groups that are larger than individual departments and smaller than the whole faculty is key to developing a thoughtful and collaborative strategy for responding to the staffing challenges we face.

Transitions to 2023-24

ACAS is lucky to have substantial continuity in terms of committee membership for next few years: Dan Brabander, current co-chair, will be returning for two more years of service on the committee; Tavi Gonzalez was elected to a full term (23-26) and Pinar Keskin will return to the committee after her leave year. In our final meeting of 2023, the committee discussed following up in the fall with those departments and programs that requested positions this year, getting an early start on facilitating cross-departmental communications and collaboration, and doing the work necessary to help the faculty work within the constraints of the college’s resources to produce the best plan for the academic program going forward.

In particular, the committee feels strongly that divisional meetings of chairs continue next year, focusing not just on questions of staffing but also on the larger issues raised above that impact the academic program indirectly. We hope that the committee can take a leadership role in scheduling, chairing, and setting the agenda for these meetings, acting as a liaison between the interests and concerns of the faculty and those of the Provost’s Office.

Proposals Submitted in 2023

Africana Studies
Biological Sciences
Chemistry
Classical Studies
Cognitive Science and Linguistics (w/Psychology)
Computer Science
East Asian Languages and Literature
Economics
Education
Environmental Studies
History
Political Science
Psychology
Sociology
Spanish and Portuguese

Searches already authorized for 2022-23 (11)

Astronomy
Computer Science (2)
Education
Music
Neuroscience
Physics (2)
Political Science (2)
Women's and Gender Studies (senior hire)

Searches already authorized or hired for 2023-24 (8)

Anthropology
Art History (senior hire; McNeil Chair)
Chemistry
Computer Science (position filled)
English & Creative Writing
French, Francophone, and Italian Studies
Philosophy (position filled)
Political Science

New searches approved for 2023-24 (2)

Psychology and Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences
Sociology

Searches approved for 2024-25 (8)

Biological Sciences
Economics
English
Environmental Studies

French, Francophone and Italian Studies
Spanish
Africana Studies and Psychology (joint search)
WGST and department to be determined (joint search)