Statement from the Committee on Teaching & Advising Regarding Lecturer Teaching Loads

Advisory statement on lecturer teaching loads:

We understand that teaching is the primary responsibility of our lecturers and that unless there is an exceptional circumstance, such as a teaching release that has been approved by the dean, the teaching load is 4/4 annually. Teaching is 80% of the lecturers’ workload, with an additional 20% devoted to service.

There are, however, occasionally exceptional circumstances when all four of a lecturer’s sections do not fill. At present, the practice is that when this situation arises, lecturers are asked to teach an extra section the next semester without any additional compensation, under the logic that a 3/5 load is essentially the same as a 4/4 load.

As a committee devoted to improving teaching and advising in this school, we take strong exception to this practice. Teaching 5 courses in a semester is an extremely demanding teaching load. In addition, our lecturers make numerous and important service contributions to the life of our School of Liberal Arts and to our departments, and we cannot reasonably ask them to carry out any service tasks on top of a 5-course load. Furthermore, we believe that even for our best teachers, which many of our lecturers are, teaching and advising must necessarily suffer under such a heavy teaching load.

We find this practice unjust and not in the best interest of our lecturers, our students or our departments. When this situation arises, rather than adding on an additional course thereby creating a semester with a 5-course load, we believe that the chair of the department in question should work with the dean to identify meaningful work that the lecturer can do during that semester to make up for the one canceled section. Those tasks can then be specified in an MOU between the lecturer and the chair, and approved by the dean.

We offer this as a recommendation. Should the situation of unfilled sections arise more than once every three years, then the need for the position would have to be reconsidered and a strong justification for its continuance offered to the dean.