

College of Arts and Sciences
Task Force on Instructor-Rank Faculty
March 15, 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Motivation

The changing nature of the academic labor force, and the changing nature of teaching, have brought the once peripheral, and often temporary, role of Instructors into the center of higher education. Instructor-rank faculty now make career-long contributions to the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) and to the campus, and together with tenure-stream faculty, constitute our “core faculty.” And yet, for decades, the ranks of Instructors have grown without sufficient or intentional planning, and without a rational understanding of their role in the academic landscape. Moreover, current strategic planning and visioning initiatives in the College and on the Boulder campus make the recommendations of this Task Force timely and highly relevant.

The Charge and Work of the Task Force

In April 2018, Interim A&S Dean James White and Arts and Sciences Council Chair Stephen Mojzsis worked together to form the A&S Task Force on Instructors. *Its charge is broad: to examine the status and function of Instructors and Senior Instructors in the context of the mission of the College of Arts and Sciences.* Key areas of consideration include workload and its effect on teaching and service, the communication of policy, compensation, Instructor career paths, and unit and College climate with regard to Instructor-rank faculty. The Task Force consisted of ten members, drawn from the three A&S divisions: three tenured Professors, one Teaching Professor, four Senior Instructors, one Associate Clinical Professor, and one Instructor.

The Task Force sought broad input from various stakeholders: Instructors themselves, tenure-stream faculty, and A&S chairs and directors. We held multiple open-ended listening conversations with Instructors, we met with chairs and directors from all three divisions, and convened several Town Halls as we developed our recommendations. Numerous one-on-one side meetings were also held. Multiple updates were provided to the Arts and Sciences Council, and interested parties beyond A&S were also kept abreast of our work: several Regent Hall administrators and the Executive Committee of the Boulder Faculty Assembly.

Core Commitments that have Guided our Work

Four key commitments guided the Task Force’s work. Our recommendations, and how those recommendations respond to the current environment, all proceed from these commitments:

- *Students First.* The Task Force most emphatically does not represent the pleadings of Instructor-rank faculty as one specific group. Rather, in our deliberations, we

consistently prioritized that which is good for the College of Arts and Sciences, good for its core faculty, and most especially good for our students.

- *Core Faculty.* We proceed with the understanding that tenure-stream faculty and Instructor-rank faculty should both be considered as “core faculty.” Although the respective roles and duties of these two groups do indeed differ, as well they should, we seek, where possible and appropriate, parity between these two faculty groups.
- *T1 at the R1.* We proceed from the understanding that CU-Boulder is preeminent as a research institution, as an “R1.” The question then becomes: What kind of teaching faculty does an R1 institution deserve? We can and should have T1 at the R1.
- *Make Instructors Visible.* We cannot address the problems that this report considers, much less improve our collective lot, if Instructor-rank faculty remain as they long have been: a shadow faculty.

Findings and Highest-Priority Recommendations

The full Task Force report offers 39 recommendations, ranked in “priority/impact” as medium, high, and highest. We introduce here in the Executive Summary the **13 highest-priority recommendations**:

Teaching Loads that Fail Students and Denigrate Service

By far the most central and pressing concern expressed by Instructors (and acknowledged by chairs and directors) is the shift in workload. For some twenty years in Arts and Sciences, a 100% appointment, with a 3/3 course load, and a 75/25% teaching/service merit ratio was the default Instructor appointment. Since about 2013, the default option for a 100% appointment has shifted to a 4/4 course load and an 85/15% teaching/service merit ratio. In addition to negative impacts on Instructor morale and efficacy, we are concerned about the inevitable effect of this workload increase on student engagement, success, and retention. We recommend that the College:

- Reframe the relationship between teaching and service to address the significant role of instructionally-related service. **(Rec. 1a)**
- Establish a 3/3 teaching load that includes a new category of professional development in addition to service, for a 70/20/10 teaching/service/professional development merit ratio, with no reduction in pay for current instructors and the new base salaries for new hires. This would be the standard benchmark for full-time Instructor positions. **(Rec. 1d)**

These highest-priority recommendations reflect not a reduction in teaching effort but rather a reallocation of time towards high-impact teaching practices and student interactions in recognition of the diverse forms in which teaching and teaching-related service activities occur. They also reflect the necessity for Instructors to engage in professional development that ensures currency in the field and directly benefits their teaching and student learning. Tenure-stream faculty ensure their pedagogical currency in large measure through their research; instructor-rank

faculty rarely have an officially recognized research component to their work, and thus need to have professional development activities recognized as essential to their effective teaching.

Chaotic and Inconsistent Communication of Policy

The second area of concern, voiced in equal measure by discouraged Instructors and perplexed and frustrated chairs and directors, is the chaotic and inconsistent communication of policy. Faculty Affairs guidelines for Instructor reappointment and promotion are often ignored or misinterpreted. There is broad confusion among chairs and directors on how to update by-laws and policies pertaining to Instructors, and they spoke at length about the need for “work arounds” to make A&S policies serve the needs and interests of their units. We recommend that the College:

- Develop policies regarding Instructor-rank faculty that strike a balance between consistency and a full recognition of the distinctive needs/roles of individual units. (**Rec. 2a**).
- Improve the clarity, implementation, and effective communication of campus-level policy (Office of Faculty Affairs) regarding Instructor-rank faculty at the College level (e.g. alternating full/expedited review for Senior Instructors; new Teaching Professor designation). Ensure timely review of reappointment dossiers and issuance of contracts. (**Rec. 2b**)

Falling Behind: Low Pay and Salary Compression

Research has shown that broad respect for the work of Instructor-rank faculty goes a long way toward fostering job satisfaction. However, respect alone is not adequate compensation for work. Low starting wages and considerable salary compression, especially for long-serving Instructors, emerged as very high priority issues in our discussions. We recommend that the College:

- Continue to address the base starting salary for new Instructors to offer a living wage in Boulder, to permit competitive searches, and to reward Instructors appropriately for their valuable work at the university. (**Rec. 3a**)
- Address, through targeted funds, severe salary compression among long-serving Instructor-rank faculty created by previous increases to the floor salary (and which will only be exacerbated by recently implemented increases to the floor). This recommendation should be implemented in the context of recognizing career merit, and compression/career merit should be revisited on a periodic basis. (**Rec. 3c**)
- (Re)Design merit systems in units so that merit criteria match contracts and actual work, and to ensure that Instructor-rank faculty can qualify for the full-range of possible merit designations. Units should have mechanisms in place to reward Instructor scholarly or creative work (work essential to currency in the field), even when such activity is not contractually required. (**Rec. 3e**)

Years of Service on an Uncertain Career Path

The Task Force found that even after decades of service, Instructor career paths are uncertain, and any security tenuous at best, given finite three-year reappointments. Many Instructors have a

career-long commitment to the College, and represent some of our foremost campus citizens. A career in service of CU should be honored. For many Instructors, that is hardly the case. We recommend that the College:

- Ensure the existence of clear policies in every unit for standards for reappointment as well as promotion of Instructors through ranks (Instructor to Senior Instructor, and to Teaching Professor). Instructors should not be disadvantaged in their careers by the absence of such unit policies, or an unwillingness to create them. **(Rec. 4a)**
- Create additional Instructor lines. An undue reliance on Lecturer positions does not serve students or the College well, and is corrosive to the spirit of the university. **(Rec. 4j)**
- Develop clear policies for Instructor searches that would facilitate a path to Instructor positions for highly qualified, long-time Lecturers by (1) recognizing their CU-Boulder contributions even as rigorous searches are conducted, and (2) implementing a transitional cost-sharing plan so that financial considerations do not stand in the way of deserved transitions from Lecturer to Instructor status. **(Rec. 4k)**

Not at the Table: An Unwelcoming Climate

It is easy to dismiss references to “climate” as unduly vague or difficult to remedy, but climate is the bedrock on which all of our findings and recommendations rest. In some units, Instructors are not allowed to vote; in others, they are not even allowed to attend faculty meetings; in still others, multiple Instructors share one vote. On top of all of this, Instructors are currently required to sign a contract in which they waive all grievance rights. Instructors often thus remain invisible, unrecognized, vulnerable, and un-thanked. We recommend that the College:

- Mandate consistent minimum voting rights for Instructor-rank faculty in all departments and programs across the College. These minimum voting rights would be consistent with the voting rights enumerated in BFA and ASC By-laws. Although any department or program can restrict these minimum voting rights and meeting attendance given the specific issue under discussion (e.g. personnel matters), such restrictions should be regarded as limited exceptions to the principles of broad participation by Instructor-rank faculty in department and program affairs, regular attendance at department and program meetings, and inclusive participation in unit and College faculty culture. **(Rec. 5c)**
- Revise the Instructor contract for employment, which in its current form fails to extend to Instructors the full rights normally extended to faculty members. (Instructors are currently forced to sign a contract with the Regents that waives all grievance rights, and includes provisions for dismissal for cause that depart from faculty norms.) **(Rec. 5e)**
- Establish a standing “Faculty Affairs” committee on the Arts and Sciences Council that could take over from a possible short-term Task Force implementation committee. In addition to other duties, such a Faculty Affairs committee would be able to monitor over the long term the status of Instructors and advocate for desired change. At least one-third but no more than one-half of the membership of such a committee should be comprised of Instructor-rank faculty. (Such an ASC committee may begin as an ad-hoc committee, but we anticipate the need for the committee to be ongoing and thus deserves to be constituted as a standing committee.) **(Rec. 5k)**