

Executive Summary

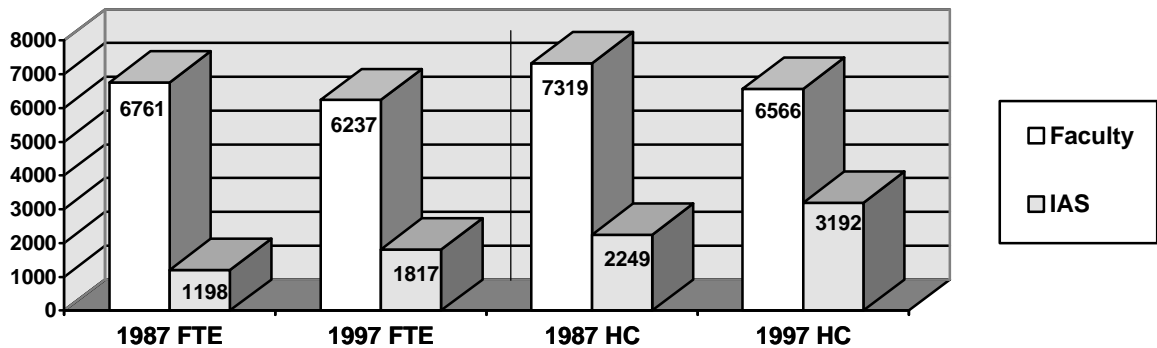
TEACHING ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE UW SYSTEM

A UW System Board of Regents 21st Century Study

Background

The University of Wisconsin System differs from most other universities and colleges in that its non-tenure-track instructors and researchers are not faculty. By state statute in Wisconsin, the "legal faculty" consists only of those hired with tenure or in tenure-track positions. In order to be tenured, a faculty member must have an appointment of at least half-time. The non-tenure-track instructors are categorized as academic staff, a group of employees separate from the faculty with its own set of personnel policies and procedures. There has been an increase in the use of such instructional staff across the nation. The proportion of instructional academic staff (IAS) at most institutions in the UW System has increased from an average of 15% of the FTE instructional staff in 1987, to about 23% in 1997.

Changes in proportions of faculty and instructional academic staff*(IAS) from 1987 to 1997 by full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount (HC)



*Excludes Zero dollar appointments, UW Hospitals, CHS titles, visiting, emeritus and L/I faculty, and instrument innovators

Colleges and universities hire such non-tenure-track instructors for several reasons. One is to balance budgets, as this class of instructors typically is paid a lower rate. They also can be hired quickly if the need arises or non-renewed with relative ease, as their contracts usually run for a limited period of time. Instructional academic staff often have specific teaching expertise and professional skills that may not be found among the faculty.

This report focuses on the instructional academic staff and those research academic staff whose responsibilities include teaching students in the UW System.

Rationale for the Study

This study was prompted by the recognition that the UW System must plan well for the university of the future. The UW System Board of Regents' Study of the University of Wisconsin System in the 21st Century recommended an examination of "the role of teaching academic staff within the UW System with the intention of improving their status, roles, rights and responsibilities."

This study is intended to begin a dialogue within our institutions to raise our collective awareness of employment practices for instructional academic staff. As we identify those practices that could be improved and implement needed changes, the quality of education across the System can in turn be enhanced for all UW System students.

Scope of the Study

The study reviews instructional academic staff personnel policies and procedures, to ascertain whether they reflect current institutional needs and are appropriately interpreted and applied. Particular attention is paid to changes which have been made since a 1983-84 review of the roles and working conditions of all UW System academic staff.

The study has been guided by a steering committee made up of system academic staff and faculty. The committee met several times to discuss issues and process, and reviewed drafts of this document. A survey of UW System institutions and a review of personnel policies and relevant literature formed the basis for the report.

Instructional Staff Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of instructional academic staff is to teach. However, there are differences in background, experience and function among the IAS and the departments in which they teach that affect the actual range of responsibilities in such areas as student advising, scholarship, and service. The formal expectations are reflected in seven major title groupings: Clinical Health Science (CHS) professors; Clinical Professors; Adjunct Professors; Lecturers; Faculty Associates; Faculty Assistants; Instrument Innovators-instruction. Each of the titles may carry a prefix, such as “assistant” or “associate”. In addition, there are a few IAS who serve in program-related titles, such as military science. The basic expectations of individuals in these titles are described in the report at pages 6 and 7.

Systemwide Guidelines for Appointing IAS

While the assignment of research academic staff titles may be obvious when an individual has no classroom responsibilities, the decision to assign classroom responsibilities to non-faculty is not a simple one. UW System guidelines describe when it is appropriate to assign resources to an instructional academic staff rather than a faculty position. The underlying presumption in the guidelines is that full-time, permanent instructional needs should be filled through faculty appointments. UW System Unclassified Personnel Guideline (UPG) #2 provides that “one can determine that the staffing of a teaching position by appointment of an instructional academic staff member, rather than a probationary faculty member, may be appropriate but not mandatory if any of the following conditions apply:

1. When the position is to be filled by someone who lacks the minimal academic credentials for a faculty appointment.
2. The position being filled does not include the full range of responsibilities of a faculty appointment which includes teaching, research, and institutional and public service.
3. The need for the instructional services is expected to be short-term.
4. The funds supporting the position are not expected to be available beyond a given time period.
5. The long-range tenure management requirements in the department preclude the possibility of additional probationary faculty appointments.”

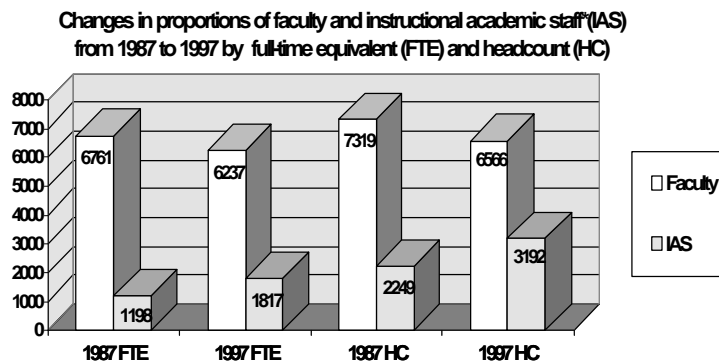
IAS APPOINTMENT TRENDS AND TYPES

Concern about the increasing use of IAS is not new. The 1983 academic staff review examined the history of the increase in IAS appointments. The rise at some UW System institutions appeared to be related to the circumstances that produced declarations of fiscal emergency at five institutions in 1974.

Small budget increases throughout the 1980's and decreases in the 1990's have resulted in staffing decisions that maximize flexibility and thus, a gradual increase in the use of instructional academic staff at most institutions in the UW System.

Systemwide, the proportion of instructional academic staff in the total instructional workforce (IAS and faculty) has changed from 15% in 1987 to 22.6% (FTE) in 1997 (see figure, p. 1). This represents an increase of 619 FTE instructional academic staff systemwide. Over the same time period, the number of faculty decreased by 523 FTE.

- IAS teach in all disciplines, with the largest concentration in health sciences and education. (p. 12)
- IAS teach at all levels, reflecting the various reasons cited for appointing them. (p.12)
- Less than half (43.8%) of the FTE instructional academic staff with academic year appointments are full time; some are temporary full-time appointments and some have been renewed for many years. In contrast, the vast majority of UW System faculty are full time. (p.13)
- There are proportionately more women in the instructional academic staff than in the faculty. This is consistent with national trends. (p. 14)
- The ethnic makeup of the instructional and research academic staff is roughly the same as the faculty. (p.14)
- Most academic staff (58%) have fixed-term-terminal appointments, i.e., they are hired for a discrete period of time with no expectation of renewal. Fixed-term renewable appointments also may be for a semester, or may be longer, but carry a requirement for notice of nonrenewal and some expectation of re-employment. Rolling horizon and indefinite appointments provide more security, but less than tenure for faculty. Issues related to titles and appointment type are discussed in Section IV. (p. 14)



Source October 1997 payroll

Includes CHS faculty. Excludes research, visiting, emeritus, professor L/I, and 224 HC (6% of total) for which no appointment type was coded. See note 36.

Subsequent to the 1983 academic staff review, UW System institutions reviewed the job security provisions for all academic staff. Job security generally has improved for non-instructional academic staff. IAS appointments are more resistant to change due to their role as instructional “shock absorbers” and the fact that a larger proportion of the IAS is part-time. Five significant changes in institutional policies and practices affecting IAS resulted from the 1983 review:

1. the timing of notice provided for non-renewal of all academic staff has been increased;
2. the proportion of full-time IAS appointments has increased at several institutions;
3. the number of multiple year and rolling horizon contracts for IAS has increased at most institutions;
4. two institutions now provide indefinite appointments for IAS;
5. the five institutions that limited the number of consecutive years IAS could serve have deleted the limit. One institution has a de facto limit of 6 years.

INTEGRATING IAS INTO INSTITUTIONAL LIFE

Several recent articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education indicate a concern that IAS are not in the mainstream of campus life. Instructional academic staff and part-time faculty have been referred to as “invisible faculty”, a “new class of migrant workers” in “faceless departments.” News reports focused on these instructors nationally portray them as tending to be poorly socialized in the institution, rarely well supported, and often ignored by their departmental colleagues and the university at large. They are not viewed as being accorded full respect and attention as collaborators in the educational process.

The UW System institutions were surveyed in spring 1997 and IAS were surveyed in spring 1998 to discover what is being done or might be done to avert such a situation in Wisconsin by better integrating instructional staff into the learning environment. It is important to our students that they are instructed and advised by staff who are knowledgeable about how the university works, and how their courses fit into the curriculum. Instructors need to be well-prepared and well-supported in their instructional responsibilities so students experience excellence in the classroom and lab.

The report section, “Integration of IAS into Institutional Life” (beginning on p. 28), examines three important parameters relevant to the quality of our educational environment -- the extent to which:

- IAS and research staff are invited to participate with faculty formally and informally in making academic policy and curricular decisions;
- adequate support is provided to promote good teaching, research, and service;
- professional assessment and development opportunities are available.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The instructional academic staff is comprised of professional, well-qualified instructors who contribute to the currency of instructional material, and enable institutions to have needed programmatic and budgetary flexibility. A focus on the quality of the student experience in each class, irrespective of who teaches it, should be maintained as the report and its recommendations are considered by the Regents and the institutions. (Recommendations begin on page 39 of the report.)

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study.

1. For the most part,¹ the current level of use of academic staff is the result of budgetary pressures resulting from the decreases in state funding over the last decade, forcing institutions to rely on non-faculty instructors to meet pressing instructional needs and to keep course sections available to serve students. Generally, these instructional academic staff command lower salaries than ranked faculty.

¹ Several institutions have deliberately decreased the proportion of instructional academic staff, funded through base reallocation. (See Table on p. 11)

2. Institutions vary widely in the extent of their use of instructional academic staff, the ways in which instructional academic staff are deployed in the institution, and the types of appointments and attendant job security they are afforded.
3. Departments within the institutions appear to vary in their approaches to including instructional academic staff in governance and other activities of the academic community, and to evaluating their work.
4. Many of the desired changes in personnel policies and working conditions apply as well to all instructional staff, indeed, to all employees. This report deals with the needs of the instructional and research academic staff.
5. While the UW System can provide a legal framework, guidance, and examples of best practices, most issues identified in this study will be addressed most effectively at the institutional level.

Given both the likely continued use of IAS and long-range concerns, including preserving quality of instruction and academic freedom, we should review our employment practices to determine how we can better support instructional and research academic staff to produce the most effective instruction within our resource constraints. This report recognizes the complexity of staffing decisions dependent on programmatic needs, fluctuating demands, availability of qualified faculty and budgets. In this context, institutions should establish plans to utilize fully the talents of the teaching academic staff, enhancing the learning environment for students across the UW System.

A. Integration Of IAS Into Institutional Life

The need to integrate instructional and research staff into the educational process is increasing with the rising number of part-time and temporary academic staff in our classrooms and labs. Our institutions and departments must clearly articulate expectations for academic staff performance and must attend to instructional and other needs of these staff, including appropriate levels of job security and opportunities for professional development. Instructional and research academic staff have the responsibility to be involved in formulating institutional policies and responses to identified needs and should be involved in governance at department, college, and institutional levels.

Efforts designed to improve the UW System's instructional environment for students are at the base of the following recommendations.

UW System Administration should:

1. Develop a forum sponsored by the Office of Academic Affairs for regular discussion of instructional academic staff issues.
2. Review language used in describing accountability measures relating to the proportion of instructional academic staff teaching in the UW System institutions and reconsider the requirement to label academic staff as distinct from faculty in course schedules.
3. Continue to model the integration of IAS into discussion of teaching and research issues through System Administration-sponsored programs, such as those sponsored by the Undergraduate Teaching Improvement Council which serves all UW System teachers regardless of title.

Institutions should:

4. Undertake a concerted, institution-wide effort to enhance support for the needs of instructional academic staff. The process should begin with focus groups or a survey of full and part-time IAS that assesses their instructional support needs and examines their working conditions.
5. Incorporate part-time and full-time instructional and research academic staff into orientation programs that provide an opportunity to learn about the institution's mission, institutional and departmental cultures, colleagues and students.
6. Facilitate the participation of Category B academic staff in departmental and college-level governance, placing a high priority on formal and informal communication among academic staff and faculty to fully involve IAS in the social and intellectual life of the institution.
7. Ensure the availability of and support for educational technologies for IAS.
8. Develop a plan that addresses staff development, performance expectations and evaluation, and other conditions of employment for IAS.
9. Professional development support (support for coursework, seminars, conferences, study and research, and the like) should be based on merit and need rather than on classification. Professional development opportunities should be equally available to entry level and experienced instructors.
10. Instructional and research academic staff should be involved in governance at department, college, and institutional levels. They should be encouraged to participate in developing and implementing institutional responses to policies, and particularly in, but not limited to, personnel policies including title assignments, prefix changes, and evaluation policies.
11. Implement a structure and procedure for collaboration between faculty and academic staff governance groups when issues affecting the welfare and well-being of both groups are involved, such as: the development of evaluation criteria, morale issues, and voting rights. If decisions made by academic staff have an impact on faculty, then faculty should be involved, and vice versa.

B. Personnel Policies

The following recommendations are designed to improve the personnel system to further our primary concern – the delivery of quality instruction, while recognizing very real resource constraints.

UW System Administration should:

1. Review, and if appropriate, add elements to the unclassified personnel data system to help examine IAS issues (e.g., highest academic degree and first appointment date.)
2. Review the application of the UW System Job Security Guideline (UPG 3.05) to instructional academic staff, in accord with the institutional reviews recommended below.
3. Consider revising Category B titles to reflect national titling trends so that UW System instructional and research titles might be better understood for grant applications, in the national job market, and for other academic purposes.

Institutions should:

4. Ensure that policies and staffing plans for use of IAS reflect and project academic needs and budget capacity, job security appropriate to projected need, and provisions for assessment of performance.

5. Review the longevity of the instructional academic staff as a basis for planning and to ascertain the extent to which IAS may be given extended appointments. (Longevity data would then be entered into the UW System personnel database.)
6. Consider, after the first year or two of appointment, making renewable appointments for positions that can be supported by budget and programmatic need. Fixed-term-terminal and one-semester appointments should not be used repeatedly in the absence of a plan that demonstrates such need.
7. As supported by budget and academic program needs, make multiple-year, rolling horizon and indefinite appointments available for IAS who have provided substantial continuous service.
8. If not currently in place, establish systems for making compensation adjustments and setting promotion criteria for IAS that reflect merit and experience.
9. Identify personnel policies and practices that apply to instructional academic staff in a way that makes them easily accessible to department chairs, faculty, and instructional academic staff.
10. Review the recruiting and hiring process to ensure that those delegated the responsibility for hiring understand the role of IAS in the institution and convey appropriate expectations to successful candidates.
11. Orient department chairs to their role as supervisors of instructional and research academic staff so they can implement academic staff employment policies in a consistent manner.
12. Develop policies and practices specifically for part-time and ad hoc IAS, including: timely notice of appointment and reappointment; definition of workload (percent of appointment) that does not artificially deprive IAS of fringe benefits; expectations for performance, merit reviews, and professional development.