

To: Physics Faculty
Faculty Equity in Physics

Hi everybody,

I met with Bob twice in the past two weeks for about an hour regarding faculty equity concerns I have, many of which have been voiced within the department away from the ears of the senior faculty. I found Bob shares these concerns, was aware of some of them, and is committed to improve things. I will continue to both attempt to organize our efforts and facilitate communication between Bob and faculty that wish to be heard but not identified. To this end, I invite people to meet with me if and when you like either anonymously or as a committee to brainstorm improvements. Below, I describe some topics that I discussed with Bob along with possible actions/inactions.

Inequitable schedules between new instructors and senior faculty: Bob had already become aware that some lecturers have schedules that are more difficult than more experienced faculty and is concerned that these new instructors are the least able to comfortably manage these more difficult schedules. He is committed to remedy this situation and has begun looking at schedules for the coming quarter. It is my (Pete's) memory that previously it was customary to give new instructors one single prep each quarter for their first year; and in their first three quarters have them instruct the three 130's or 120's. Subsequent to their first year, lecturers and professors were assigned schedule without regard to seniority. When did this change? I don't know. However, we as a department can agree on a policy that we find equitable.

In particular is the issue of who teaches the 70-student classes that were introduced this past summer and agreed upon in a faculty meeting provisionally for the coming year. These classes have a greater WTU/ Student Contact Hour ratio, and may be considered desirable. This question will be opened up to the faculty and I think Bob plans to address it explicitly sometime soon.

Lecturers are responsible for 14 WTU instead of 12 WTU like they did when I was hired in 2000. When did this change happen? My guess it was when financial hard times resulted in ratcheting down some austerity. I use the word "ratcheting" intentionally and it reminds me of strong warnings by Buffa year after year that the ratcheting never goes back. Changing this back to 12 WTU would require considerable action through the Dean's office, but there are areas where we as a department can inquire and negotiate creatively.

Some people approach me with concerns but are afraid to bring this up to the department / senior faculty. I don't think new instructors were afraid to bring up concerns when I arrived in 2000. When did this transition happen? Why? Bob and I are both committed to learn about this and improve the situation. One thought I have is, in an effort to expedite departmental actions some decisions have been made without complete disclosure, discussion, or consensus. To the people uninformed of the complete process, this can feel disempowering. I think it is important for us to move forward interpreting that these decisions were made with benevolent intent - with the department's best interests in mind. However, I think we should be intentional about how decisions will henceforth be made in the department. Bob and I think that transparency would result in a department that feels more at home for everyone.

I feel hopeful about our ability to negotiate a harmonious, equitable department.

Thank you
Pete

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