2004 Conference for Chairs Symposium—Strategizing in an Era of Resource Constraints

Sponsored by the APSA Departmental Services Program Committee

The 2004 Conference for Political Science Department Chairs was dedicated to discussing the strategies available to chairs who are dealing with growing budget constraints. Themes included declining state budgets, surviving admin-istrative mandates, tradeoffs of using adjuncts, and supporting professional development. APSA President Susanne Rudolph opened the conference, noting the theme is both relevant to the discipline and valuable for political science department chairs. Su-san Pharr, Departmental Services Committee (DSC) chair, moderated the panel, which consisted of Michael Baer, Stephen Majeski, Shir-ley Geiger, Donald Baumer, and John Brehm. The Conference drew over 65 attendees to hear the five presentations and to consider concrete suggestions for how to operate effi ciently under a shrinking budget. Given the widespread interest in the topic, the DSC has asked that the participants publish their find-ings in this symposium.

Surviving Administrative Mandates (from a Department Chair's Perspective)

—Stephen Majeski,
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Chair, APSA Departmental Services Committee

It should come as no surprise that both the amount and pace of administrative work that departments must accomplish at almost all higher education institutions has increased substantially over the past 10 years. If this is news to you just talk to your department administrator—if she/he has time to have a pleasant conversation. After all, for most institutions, operations budgets have been cut and professional and classifi ed staff have been reduced, while at the same time, administrative work has escalated in response to increases in student enrollments, greater demands for accountability, the increasing importance of fund raising efforts, and the generation of sponsored research. No wonder that the lives of department chairs, administrators, and other professional and classifi ed staff have become more challenging. The increase in administrative work at the department level is largely a function of increases in administrative mandates.

What are Administrative Mandates?

Administrative mandates are temporary or new permanent tasks that departments, programs, or centers must accomplish that are not accompanied by additional resources (money and/or staff). Tasks such as payroll, travel arrangements and reimbursements, grant and contract administration, web site construction and maintenance, computer technical support, and class scheduling have been decentralized to the department level, with central administration providing only computing and administrative support and technical training. Academic reports are more frequent and require more effort. In addition, tasks such as visiting committees, newsletters, alumni outreach programs, and donor and fund raising events have all become standard department tasks requiring department resources.

Why are there more Administrative Mandates?

There are at least four reasons for the increase in administrative mandates. For one, budget cuts and staff reductions create a situation where there is less money and fewer staff to do more work. Second, higher education faces pressures for greater accountability. Legislators, Higher Education Boards, parents, the business community, tax payers, and donors expect improved education and greater research output with the same or fewer resources. Institutions must be able to demonstrate that they are using their resources effectively and efficiently. This requires more documentation and analysis on the part of all levels of administration for such things as objective student learning outcomes, graduation rates, and faculty/student contact hours. Third, there is greater competition among departments for resources such as faculty lines, teaching assistantship allocations, graduate student fellowships, faculty leaves (sabbaticals), computer equipment, student technology fee money, and curriculum transformation initiatives. To win these resources, department heads have to prepare better proposals with more persuasive arguments containing concrete evidence of need. Finally, central administrations need to demonstrate they are lean and effi cient. But the work still must be done somewhere. So, some of the administrative burdens are shifted down to departments—analogous to shifting of work and tax burdens from the federal government to state and local government.

How to manage Administrative Mandates without doing all the work yourself

As one fellow department chair commented, "How do we respond (to increased administrative mandates)? I suppose most of us make the best efforts we can, knowing we are not doing what we should be doing, and feeling badly about it." You cannot do it all yourself; this applies to department chairs and administrators alike. While it is certainly possible to do almost all the work associated with increases in administrative mandates, two things are likely to happen. Either you will not have time to do other important things such as research, teaching, and other important department functions, or you will be so frustrated and overworked that the quality of your work will diminish. Both situations are liable to make you fi nally throw in the towel and quit. It is important to understand department priorities and goals. Some administrative tasks and reports are crucial to achieving those goals and

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deserve serious effort. Others are not and should not warrant major effort.

- It is essential that you delegate responsibility for handling signifi cant portions of the work. Staff are (or can be) competent and can handle a considerable amount of the work. It is noble and often appropriate to shelter faculty from administrative busy work—that is one role of a good departmental chair—but they need to be engaged in important administrative projects; particularly those that they have a real stake in. Whenever possible and affordable, provide staff with training opportunities so that they can handle new and different administrative tasks.
- It can also be quite helpful to periodically evaluate staff organization and structure. As the work demands of your staff change so should staff organization and structure. Sometimes this may well mean redefi ning job descriptions (and appropriate personnel) to meet changing work demands and skills.
- Also, never underestimate the value of using hourly money to hire graduate or undergraduate students to help with specific projects. When crunches come, hire "temporary" staff and support your needy students.
- Lastly, though this is a delicate process, work to gain more departmental control of the resources necessary to accomplish the required tasks. Having control of resources and the local fl exibility to deal with workloads can be essential to coping with administrative mandates. While administrators talk a good line about decentralizing authority and responsibility and how department chairs are key leaders, most high level administrators tend to hold a tight grip on scarce resources. Perhaps the rhetoric of decentralization, empowerment, and accountability can help to gain more local control.

Declining State Budgets: A Structural and Administrative View

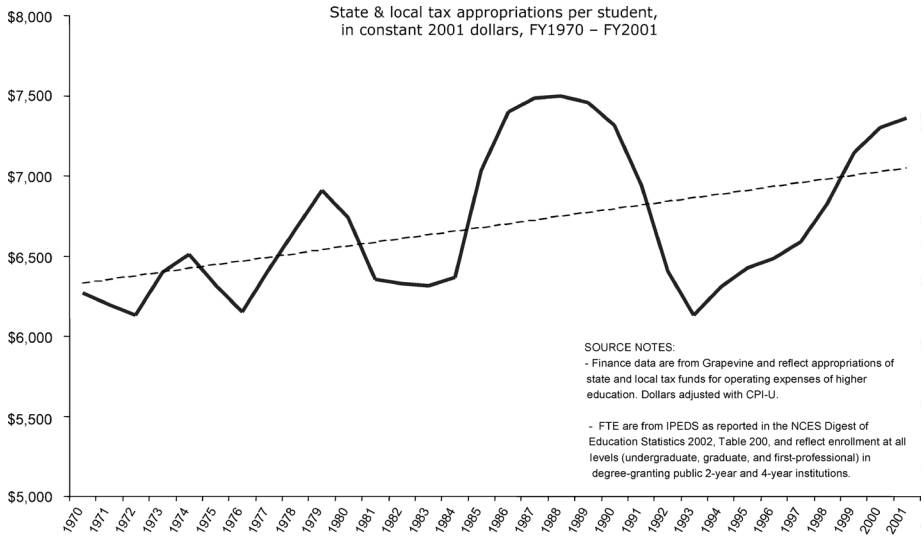
—Michael A. Baer
American Council on Education
President, NCAPSA

Ever since I have been involved in higher education, I have noticed a consistent cyclical pattern in state funding of higher education. Would that this were the pattern of the future! Although funding has historically been cyclical, since the 1970s the proportion of a state's budget dedicated to higher education has shown a steadily declining trend, from 9.8% in 1980 to 7% last year (Schmidt 2004). We are witness to a changing pattern in the relationship between the states and higher education. Higher education is increasingly viewed as a private rather than a public good, and this evolving perception will substantially impact both public and independent institutions. Tuition will become more comparable and competitive.

The depressed budgets of U.S. public higher education over the last few years are well known to all. While the point in this cycle when nearly every state experienced budget shortfalls seems to have passed, in mid-FY04, 23 states still cut higher education budgets to eliminate budget shortfalls. It appears that state revenue in FY05 will be more stable (Schmidt 2004), but not strong.

In 1999, Hal Hovey noted that without new state taxes, even if economic growth continued and enrollment increased as projected, it would be impossible for U.S. public higher education to maintain the same per capita student expenditures and provide faculty and staff salary increases that kept pace with income growth throughout the economy (Hovey 1999). In the period following his report, economic growth did not continue.

Figure 1



SOURCE: State Higher Education Executive Officers, State Higher Education Finance Survey.

Hovey noted that the states face a structural budget defi cit. Pressures from other sectors in state government, in particular the growing requirements in the criminal justice system, the burgeoning needs in health care, the demand for improvement in the K-12 system, and a changing economic climate (as we move to a service economy, sales taxes bring in fewer resources), cause the structural deficit in most states to loom large.

In early 2003, Dennis Jones wrote a policy brief that built on Hovey's work (Jones 2003), projecting the structural deficit state-by-state for an eight-year period. His model was based on maintaining current service levels, current tax structures, conservative estimates of expenditures, and the improvement of state economic conditions to average, or "normal" conditions. Based on his model, Jones projected that 44 states faced a structural deficit and 12 states faced a deficit of 5% or greater.

Lest private institutions think they would not be effected, consider this: as the social compact between higher education and the states changes, and tuition grows in public institutions due to decreased state support (in other words, these institutions become more privatized), the competition between sectors increases, diminishing the ability of independent institutions to attract students. In addition, independent institutions face challenges caused by the public's trepidations about tuition rates, by the volatility of the stock market, and by the pressure to provide more financial aid.

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What can your department do?

- Don't blame your administration when there are budget shortfalls. Work with them, not against them.
- Become entrepreneurial—figure out ways to sell your product by attracting non-traditional students or developing non-traditional programs.
- Think of different pedagogical approaches that conserve human resources but won't cheat the students. As we move toward serving as learning institutions rather than just teaching institutions, are there ways that technology-blended coursework can reduce the need for human resources?
- Think through your long-term scheduling: Are there low-enrollment courses that can be offered less frequently but still remain available to each cohort of majors? Remember, we are teaching for the students, not to meet faculty preferences.
- Are there nearby institutions where you can make formal or informal arrangements to trade or share courses to provide expanded offerings for your students?

References

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Trade-Offs of Using Adjuncts

—Shirley M. Geiger
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APSA Council Member

Today's department chairs are attempting to "do more with less," in response to budget cuts, disappearing faculty lines, legislators and administrators who think faculty have it too easy, and an increasingly diverse student population which wants classes offered at non-traditional times. In such times, hiring adjunct professors to help cope seems to be the best way to respond to these demands. Too often, though, the crunch of time does not allow for careful weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of hiring adjuncts. In this article, I lay out some of the tradeoffs of the apparently simple act of finding "someone to cover the course." Concerns about the tradeoffs in the use of part-time and adjunct faculty are not new to the American Political Science Association. In 1997, APSA was one of 10 academic associations that accepted the invitation of the American Historical Association to convene in Washington, D.C., to discuss the "growing use of part-time and adjunct faculty." In my comments, I will rely heavily upon their articulation of the tradeoffs of using adjuncts as well as the Department Chair Online Resource Center sponsored by the American Council on Education. [Note: APSA has subsequently joined with other associations to form the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) to explore issues related to academic employment of adjuncts. See www.academicworkforce.org].

Departments hire adjuncts in a number of situations, most commonly, as supplemental instructors to cover courses when a department faces an enrollment bulge; as specialists to provide specialized instruction in a particular field; as full-time sabbatical replacements; or as substitutes to cover scheduled absences arising from pregnancy; leaves of absence, or medical leave, the notice on which may be short or long.

The AAUP Report (1997) provides an insightful portrait of the working conditions of adjuncts. They are less likely to have telephones on campus or to receive remuneration for holding office hours. They have less access to photocopying, computer equipment, and secretarial support. They are more likely to be women. They are more likely to teach lower division and community college courses. They spend less time on out-of-class preparation or interaction with students. They have lower publication rates. They have less contact with discipline/professional associations. Their pay per course generally ranges from $1,000 to $3,000, although no systematic data is readily available on pay rates.

What is Gained in Using Adjuncts?

- The students get instructors who want to teach and who enjoy affiliation with the institution.
- Adjuncts may bring expertise that it would be difficult or economically improvident to duplicate through the appointment of tenure tract faculty.
- Adjuncts can help institutions be responsive to student needs on short notice.
- Adjuncts can help institutions meet the needs of nontraditional students who want more evening and Saturday classes.
- Adjunct pay scales allow institutions to adapt at a lower dollar cost to the institution.
- Finally, adjuncts may be recruited strategically to increase the diversity of the department's faculty.

What Are the Problems with Using Adjuncts?

- The pay, with no benefits, may attract less able teachers or those with some problems that prevent their full-time hire, but which they choose not to disclose.
- The excessive reliance on part-time faculty for lower division courses means that entering and less-prepared students are primarily taught by part-time staff who are not paid to provide the out-of-class support that is particularly essential to such students.
- Adjuncts may know less about the institution and may be less able to respond to student questions or needs for assistance.
- Adjuncts may have little daily involvement with their colleagues.
- Full-time faculty must bear the full weight of the committee work.
- Finally, adjunct faculty teaching the general education/core courses may have less concern about the role of these courses in recruiting the department's majors and minors.

Academic programs require high levels of permanent faculty involvement to maintain and renew curricula, to develop courses, research trends, set requirements, and design general education courses, majors, minors, and graduate programs. We must consider the true costs of shifting this burden to full-time faculty, who may be out-numbered by part-timers. With increasing attention to student credit-hour generation, full-time faculty members who teach mostly upper division courses generate significantly fewer student credit hours. Having adjuncts teach upper division courses also raises questions of who is best qualified to develop and shape majors and minors.

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These concerns may be addressed successfully in a number of ways. One of the best is to bring back retired faculty members, if possible. For many newer programs, this is not an option. A number of observers have recommended other good practices, with respect to adjunct professors. For example, Taylor (2003) suggests the following to improve the quality of the work experience for adjuncts: Offer a student worker for several hours a week to adjuncts teaching more than one course; include adjuncts in faculty meetings; provide mail boxes, offi ces, e-mail accounts, and computers; and list adjuncts on faculty rosters.

The AAUP Statement recommends the following: Appoint faculty who are well-qualified, monitor the balance between full-time and part-time faculty; consider establishing system-wide or state-wide minimum salary and fringe benefi ts for adjunct faculty; and urge regional accrediting bodies to pay closer attention to the impact of reliance on adjunct faculty on student outcomes and academic quality (Taylor 2003).

There are tradeoffs to using adjuncts, but the weight given to those tradeoffs increasingly depends on budgetary decisions. The challenge for the department chair is to ensure that the quality of instruction and academic integrity remain primary concerns in the decision making process.

Note

* This discussion of the tradeoffs of using adjunct professors includes observations from the following documents: Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty. 1997. American Association of University Professors, Washington, D.C., September 26–28.

Reference

Taylor, III, P. A. 2003. "Good Practices in Caring for Adjunct Faculty." Department Chair On-line Resource Center, Department Leadership Project, http://www.acenet.edu/resources/chairs/.

Faculty Development in a Private University Environment

—John Brehm
University of Chicago

Declining revenue bases affects the private graduate and undergraduate school environments in exceptionally similar ways. The University of Chicago draws its revenue for the most part from a rolling calculation from its endowment (unlike, say, state revenue contributions). While there is no question that well-endowed institutions have special advantages, the climate of resource constraint and threat is nevertheless ubiquitous.

In the final analysis, because faculty development includes a multiplicity of potential activities, it is very diffi cult for institutions to create an overall program that serves all, or even most, of their faculty well. Some untenured faculty members want lots of guidance and appreciate structured programs that point them in directions that bear the stamp of approval of senior faculty. Others want the freedom to choose and pursue their own course. In the realm of faculty development, one size does not fit all.

What resources are available, and what are the possibilities within an increasingly budget tight environment?

Nevertheless, often small steps and innovative institutional practices can make a signifi cant difference in faculty development, and in support for shaping the next generation of faculty. Some universities provide modest research pools to faculty to cover expenses such as travel, books, small purchases, and the like. There is often tremendous inequity in access to research funds. As a result of outside offers or of the original recruiting offer from one's university, some faculty attain research funds signifi cantly larger than those of faculty who have been loyal to the university and consistently producing for many years. A small pool of funds to help even this imbalance can make a big difference.

Release time is another important faculty development tool that often can be employed even at times of resource constraint. Institutional practices can vary on how to apply release time; different policies can have different consequences for allocation. At the University of Chicago, release time is supported not through the vehicle of a formal sabbatical policy (whereby faculty earn release by committing to teach at the university for a specifi ed period of time) but by sufficient earnings of external (or occasionally internal) grants. The University of Chicago insists that faculty return to serve out their responsibilities as members of the intellectual community and as teachers by restraining the number of years that faculty may engage in release time over a specific period.

The University of Chicago also maintains a unique "workshop" system within at least two of its divisions (the humanities and social sciences). At last count, there were 70 of these intentionally interdisciplinary workshops. My own department, at last count, was involved in 18 such workshops, which vary from those which are nominally confi ned to political science ("Political Theory," although it draws from fi elds such as philosophy and religion) to explicitly those which are interdisciplinary ("Program in International Politics, Economics, and Security," which draws principally from political science and public policy). The workshops are venues for advanced graduate students to present their own work in front of their peers and faculty in a collegial environment. The university provides few resources, but the workshops have proven quite successful in advancing students to interesting and challenging appointments at academic and non-academic institutions.

The idea of "faculty development" must really mean, despite the hard times and the appeals of moving elsewhere or moving inward, the idea of moving upward and intellectually outward. The capacity for faculty development should fl ow from closer integration of our undergraduate and graduate students into the processes of our ideas, and of their own into ours.

Administrative Leadership

In the fi nal analysis, we are extraordinarily fortunate at the University of Chicago to have had a series of deans of the division of social sciences who are, on the one hand, strong defenders of the interests of the department, wanting to see the department as a whole become the best it can be, and on the other, strict moderators of the division's budget. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to department management and faculty development in an era of resource constraints, but the single most important element to a successful department is effective academic leadership.

Faculty Development in an Era of Resource Constraints

-Donald C. Baumer
Smith College

Institutional support for faculty development within higher education has

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increased greatly at many colleges and universities over the last 10–15 years. In the 1970s, and continuing through much of the 1980s, the big concern among top administrators about faculty seemed to be that too many were tenured. Heavily tenured departments were seen by many as a source of stagnation and low productivity. Thus, rather than emphasizing programs for faculty development, many institutions sought ways to insure that faculty would retire. But, as the number of actual and foreseeable faculty retirements ballooned in the 1990s, a new concern arose: recruiting and retaining high quality faculty members. Faculty development became trendy. Helping new faculty members be the best they could be made sense to administrators and trustees.

At Smith College, the program of faculty development blossomed during the 1990s from one that provided funding for conference travel, small ($3,000 maximum) internal research grants, and assistance in obtaining external grants, to one that included expanded versions of the aforementioned; plus, various curriculum development grants/incentives, course releases to pursue research and writing projects, and numerous internal workshops and seminars. Several of these new opportunities targeted untenured faculty, but others were directed toward mid-career faculty. One result of the increased availability of course releases was that most untenured faculty members only carried a full teaching load in about half of the years of their probationary period.

Some Examples of New Faculty Development Programs

- Internal grants (up to $3,000) for computer software and other technological enhancements for the classroom.
- Internal grants for the development of courses on women, East Asia, multiculturalism, and globalization.
- Course releases to collaborate with other colleagues at Smith on interdisciplinary research and writing projects.
- Internal grants to enable untenured faculty members to host symposia for external scholars working in their area of research.
- External grants to pursue collaborations with scholars at other selected liberal arts colleges.
- Workshops dealing with everything from how to teach writing more effectively, to how to get books published, to how to write effective grants proposals.
- Additional staffi ng to help faculty members obtain outside grant funding.

Most of these faculty development opportunities are still in place despite a "structural deficit" problem that has resulted in reductions of both staff and faculty at the College in recent years.

Strategic Advantages of Faculty Development Programs

Faculty development programs enjoy several strategic advantages that help them to survive in periods of resource constraints:

- Presidents and provosts worry about losing their faculty "stars" to other institutions, which is something many trustees sympathize with, even as they insist on downsizing.
- Presidents, provosts and trustees also want to avoid the perception that the institution is in a state of decline, as cuts in faculty development programs might suggest, because this can affect negatively the recruitment of both students and young faculty.
- Donors, and some outside institutions/foundations, are often interested in contributing to faculty development; and endowed funds and external grants, once received, often cannot be deployed to other budgetary priorities.

Several of the opportunities listed in the previous paragraph are endowed faculty development programs or opportunities funded by foundations. Thus, despite the temptation among decision-makers to view some aspects of faculty development as non-essential there are off-setting considerations that protect at least some of the funding in this area.

Chairs and senior faculty should keep in mind that workshops, research support, courses releases, and the like are not necessarily the most effective at making young faculty members feel satisfied and productive. There is also the personal element. Does the new faculty member feel at home in the department and/or the college or university? In many institutions faculty mentoring programs have been established to help new faculty learn about the students, the department, and the college/university. Such programs can be helpful, but they should be approached with great care. It is very diffi cult, if not impossible, to separate mentoring from evaluation. But, some substantial separation should be put into place if the programs are to work well. Separation may take the form of interactions (class observations, etc.) between mentors and untenured faculty not put into writing, and/or having the mentor play an advocacy role in all the formal evaluations of an untenured faculty member conducted by the chair or other senior faculty. There is also the issue of how mentors are chosen; in particular, what role the untenured faculty member plays in the choice of his/her mentor. In general, mentoring relationships that give new faculty members a good deal of choice about who their mentor will be, and what sorts of things they will do together, work best. Mentoring programs should be fluid, flexible, and thus capable of being customized to fit the individual.

Also, chairs and faculty administrators should not forget the informal and social sides of faculty development. What new faculty members often want most is a chance to meet and talk to other faculty in similar circumstances. Social gatherings for untenured faculty members can be very helpful. Informal dinners or even sporting outlets can help new faculty members feel at home. Isolation is usually not conducive to faculty development.

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