

University Administration Proposes Expansion of the Teaching Stream

On December 20, 2016 MUFA posted an announcement entitled [MUFA Proposes Expansion of the Teaching Stream](#), which is reprinted in the Faculty Association's recent [newsletter](#) (dated December 2016 / January 2017). As the notice points out the expansion of the teaching stream has been a matter of ongoing discussion between the MUFA executive and the senior administration for several years and we have been unable, despite a great deal of discussion and sharing of proposals, to reach agreement on this issue. As MUFA's latest proposal makes clear, the Faculty Association supports the expansion of the teaching stream in principle, as does the administration. Where we struggle is with the specific parameters of this expansion.

Although the MUFA announcement indicates that the Association favours an increase in teaching stream allocations it does not indicate the conditions that MUFA has placed on this offer. The MUFA executive has proposed that the allocation of additional teaching stream appointments be linked to a cap on the number of CLA appointments that can be made on a Faculty by Faculty basis. More specifically, with the exception of Health Sciences, MUFA has proposed a ratio of 85/15/5 (tenure-stream/teaching-stream/CLA) for each individual Faculty, with the latter two numbers defining the upper limits. For the past couple of years I have indicated to the MUFA executive that I am not prepared to relinquish control over the allocation of CLA appointments since this is a critical operational tool that is tied directly to the Provost's singular responsibility to ensure sound fiscal management of the university. Faculty members should understand that it is the strategic utilization of CLA appointments which is at the heart of the current impasse regarding the expansion of the teaching stream.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain why it would be imprudent to agree to a strict limit on CLA appointments, one which could then only be altered with the approval of the MUFA executive.

Tenure- and teaching-stream appointments are two branches of a broader category of faculty positions which I have taken to call career-stream appointments. As the chart in the MUFA proposal illustrates the development of the teaching stream has achieved what it was originally intended to accomplish, in terms of reducing the fraction of CLA appointments and replacing these with career oriented teaching-stream positions. The fraction of faculty with career-stream appointments has therefore increased from 86 to 92% since 2006 while the fraction of term-limited appointments (CLAs) has shrunk from 14 to 8%. This percentage is already below the average proportion of CLAs amongst our prime comparators, the U6 and U15 universities. Moreover, the growth in career-oriented appointments did not happen because it was part of an agreement with MUFA. It happened because the Deans made judicious decisions to employ the teaching stream classification to create more career-stream positions and therefore provide more stability and continuity of course delivery in their respective Faculties. If the teaching stream allocations were to be raised now, we would no doubt see a further decrease in the number of CLAs as a fraction of faculty complement. To the extent that it is prudent the Deans will

always opt for teaching-stream appointments over CLAs. This does not need to be mandated by fiat. Moreover, because we are a research-intensive university, the Deans will always manage, and be guided to manage, their budgets so as to maximize the number of tenure-stream faculty appointments.

However, given current uncertainties with the funding formula and tuition frameworks, as well as recent fluctuations in labour markets and enrolments that beg for innovation and nimbleness in program offerings, there is a need for the kind of flexibility that CLA appointments afford. It is critical that the Deans, in consultation with department chairs, have the latitude to determine the appropriate ratio of appointments within their Faculties. It cannot be over-emphasized that CLA appointments provide Faculties with a number of important opportunities, including:

- The ability to make appointments of medium term but limited duration, particularly during times of uncertainty or fiscal restraint
- The ability to bring in faculty with specific skills from industry or practice to meet program needs
- The ability to experiment and develop new programming in areas where long term demand is uncertain

It would be irresponsible of me to impair in any way the capacity of the Provost to act as financial steward of the Faculties by removing this critical operational tool, given that it is the Provost who is solely accountable to the President and the Board of Governors for the Faculties' financial health and sustainability. If the current MUFA proposal were to be adopted, we would need to make a significant reduction in CLAs in most of the Faculties. While we might be able to convert some of these to teaching stream appointments, this would inevitably result in an increase in the number of sessional instructors since that would become the only recourse open to Deans who are not able to make 30 year commitments inherent in teaching-stream appointments. Particularly in times of duress we could see a dramatic rise in the number of sessional appointments, something that would not be in the best interests of the university, its faculty members and its students.

We are all striving towards the same goal, to maintain and build McMaster's position as the second-ranked research-intensive university in the province, as a place where scholarship and learning sit side by side. Teaching- and tenure-stream appointments are remarkably complementary. The enhanced focus on teaching inherent in teaching-stream appointments not only brings attention and passion to our educational mission throughout the institution, it also enables our tenure-stream faculty members to dedicate a greater proportion of their time and energy to research. Given the funding climate in Ontario, there will never be sufficient resources for all teaching to be done by tenure-stream faculty. This has been the situation for many years now. Thus, teaching-stream, CLA and sessional appointments all play a role to facilitate the university's research mission.

The Deans and I remain committed to working with faculty members and MUFA to reach an understanding of the appropriate mix of tenure- and teaching-stream faculty within a research intensive university that is consistent with promoting the fiscal sustainability of this fine institution.

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Provost and Vice President (Academic)
January, 2017