

Faculty Hiring Principles

Background

The 2003 *Report on UMBC Faculty Size, Composition, and Allocation*¹ provided information about UMBC's faculty in terms of historical trends, student-faculty ratios, enrollment projections, and comparison of UMBC with its peer institutions, both within the University System of Maryland (USM) and nationally. The report, together with more recent data, reveal that:

- The number of research faculty at UMBC has grown rapidly over the past few years and now constitutes nearly 24% of all faculty.
- Growth in student enrollment has not been matched by a corresponding growth in full-time instructional faculty, particularly tenured/tenure-track faculty.
- UMBC's student/faculty ratio is higher than the target value we have set.
- UMBC relies more heavily on part-time faculty than other peer institutions.
- More than 60% of lower division course sections are taught by part-time faculty and teaching assistants.

The purpose of the present document is to set forth principles that can guide UMBC in planning for its faculty growth and composition. To be useful, the document must be sufficiently precise to provide real guidance and yet flexible enough to permit the administration to exercise judgment in such matters as conversion of part-time to full-time appointments and allocation of faculty lines to specific departments and programs.

Faculty Size

One of the principles set forth in *First Steps to 2016* is management of new undergraduate and graduate student enrollment within resource capacity. For this reason, targets for overall faculty size must be tied to enrollments; that is, actual and projected student-faculty ratios should drive planning for overall faculty size. The following principles address total faculty size (headcount):

- The ratio of FTE students to full-time instructional faculty should be ≤ 18 .

Rationale. From fall 1996 to fall 2000 UMBC's ratio of FTE graduate and undergraduate students to full-time instructional faculty was about 20. However, in recent years, with enrollment growth outpacing faculty growth, the ratio has increased. Using UMBC's current projected enrollments, and the recommended replacement of part-time faculty with full-time faculty (see *Faculty Composition* below), a ratio of 18:1 is achievable over time.

- Vacancies created by the resignation, retirement, or non-renewal of full-time instructional faculty should be filled as quickly as possible.

Rationale. Each year, full-time instructional faculty members leave the university and

¹<http://www.umbc.edu/provost/ReportonUMBCFacultyAugust2003.pdf>

offset the potential gains achieved by new faculty hires. When there is sufficient advance notice, searches should be undertaken prior to the separation of the departing faculty member from the university. Temporary vacancies detract from the gain in faculty numbers accomplished through new hires. The practice of intentionally keeping lines vacant for one or two years in order to recoup salary savings needed for other purposes should be discouraged and a realistic budget for those other items (e.g., part-time faculty; start-up costs) should be developed.

Faculty Composition

Planning for the composition of the faculty should be guided by our vision for “An Honors University” and by normative data from other public research universities. For example, the percentage of lower division course sections taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty is quite low (23% in Fall 2001), and increasing the percentage would be consistent with our vision of an honors university. Similarly, in comparison with our peer institutions, there is room for substantial improvement in the percentage of faculty who are full-time.

- Growth in the numbers of externally funded research faculty should be permitted so long as there is adequate infrastructure to support them and so long as such appointments advance UMBC’s mission as a research university.

Rationale. Growth in the research faculty is good for the university unless it creates too great a burden on resources such as space or staff. At present, our largest research centers house the majority of their faculty off site, and growth can be sustained without significant negative impact on the instructional mission. Also, since the vast majority of research faculty are full-time, research faculty contribute to the overall percentage of faculty who are full-time.²

- No more than 20% of the instructional faculty should be part-time.

Rationale. One conclusion from the *Report on UMBC Faculty Size, Composition, and Allocation* was that “If UMBC wants to achieve its vision of an Honors University, the most important step it can take is to dramatically increase the percentage of full-time instructional faculty.” In fall 2003, about 34% of the instructional faculty are part-time. One way to achieve this is to systematically replace part-time faculty, where appropriate, with full-time faculty. For example, a net increase of 10 full-time faculty per year and a net decrease of 15 part-time faculty per year would make this goal achievable by fall 2010.

- Lines currently budgeted for full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty should be filled.

Rationale. If all budgeted lines for tenured/tenure-track faculty were filled, the student/faculty ratio that is reported annually to MHEC (based on “core” faculty), would be at or close to 23:1, our target value. This ratio is an indicator of success in *First Steps*

² Normative data suggest that percentages of full-time faculty are greater than 90% or even 95% in the top ranked universities, but these figures are based on all faculty, not just instructional faculty.

to 2016. Although the number of budgeted lines should also grow as the university's enrollment grows, filling the currently vacant slots would make a marked difference in this important measure of institutional performance and quality. Lines to be vacated as a result of non-renewal of contract or denial of promotion and tenure should also be filled promptly.

Action on this principle is one means of increasing the full-time faculty according the previous principle.

Allocation of Faculty Lines

Each of the principles below should carry some weight in decisions about allocation of faculty to departments and programs. However, it is not feasible to provide a single ranking or weighting of the principles nor to arrive at a formula for determining which specific hiring requests should be granted. It is reasonable, however, to argue that priority should be given to a hire that fulfills two or more of the principles. It is also reasonable to expect guidance each year from the Provost and the Deans, concerning principles that they are inclined to weight most heavily.

It should be noted that some principles can be addressed in an initial justification for authorization to search; others are based on characteristics of the candidate chosen or circumstances that arise unforeseen. For example, promoting faculty diversity is highly valued, but it is not until the candidate is put forward for appointment that this factor explicitly comes into play. Similarly, opportunistic hires, which advance the university's objectives, are by definition unplanned.

- Consideration should be given to departments and programs that have high student-to-faculty ratios or high student-credit-hour to faculty ratios.

Rationale. Programmatic needs remain a driving force in faculty allocation because the university must fulfill its instructional mission. Departments can choose from among several types of student-faculty ratios and can also differentiate among different types of students (e.g., graduate vs. undergraduate). However, enrollment pressure should not be the sole factor justifying a faculty hire.

- No more than 25% of a program's tenured and tenure-track faculty should be over the age of 60.

Rationale. Loss of faculty due to retirement is a growing concern as faculty members hired in the 1960s and 1970s are reaching retirement age. If one conceptualizes a faculty career as four, or even five, decades, then it is prudent to plan for such turnover on a routine basis. Departments with large numbers of faculty over the age of 60 should be permitted to recruit so as to avoid sudden large numbers of vacant lines. As of fall 2002, 21.5% of the full-time instructional faculty and 30.8% of the tenured faculty were 60 years of age or older.

- One or two hires per year should be allocated on the basis of academic program review. The Provost and Deans will prioritize all of the recommendations arising from the review process with reference to university priorities and goals, as well as departmental/program

strengths and weaknesses.

Rationale. If academic program review is to be meaningful, then there has to be some assurance that the outcomes of the reviews will influence hiring decisions. “Additional resources” is a frequent, if not universal, recommendation arising from program self-study and from external program reviews. This principle assures that academic program reviews carry some weight in determining faculty allocation.

- Commitments of faculty lines to new academic programs should be planned for and honored, provided enrollment contingencies, if any, are met.

Rationale. At present, new program proposals are approved and implemented with implicit allocation of faculty lines as noted in the proposal, usually contingent on enrollment. Subsequently, requests for these new faculty compete with other priorities in any given year. This principle formalizes the commitment and suggests that allocation planning should reflect the commitment. A related principle is that new academic program proposals should be realistic in terms of the resources needed for their implementation. Programs implemented with the promise that no new resources are needed will be held to that promise.

- Consideration should be given to departments that have not hired a regular full-time faculty member for more than 10 years.

Rationale. Some infusion of new ideas and talent is important for intellectual vitality. This can be accomplished when vacant lines within a program are filled.

- Start-up costs should be taken into consideration in allocating faculty hires.

Rationale. So long as start-up funding remains a resource limitation, departments and programs with low start-up costs may be given some preference.

- Consideration should be given to departments hiring faculty with expertise in research or scholarly areas targeted by the university or the department for development or emphasis.

Rationale. As the university builds centers of excellence or interdisciplinary clusters of faculty, specific areas of expertise may form the basis for a hiring priority.

- Consideration should be given to departments and programs that have actively supported university priorities. Development of interdisciplinary courses, thematic clusters of courses, first-year seminars, and other such efforts are possible examples of such goals.

Rationale. Many departments have expressed interest and willingness to support the university’s academic initiatives, but participation can be costly, requiring additional resources. This provides an opportunity for recognition of such efforts.

- One or two hires per year should be reserved for unique hiring opportunities that are consistent with the university’s goals and values.

Rationale. In recent years the university has been able to take advantage of unique,

unanticipated opportunities and has made additional, unplanned hires that have significantly advanced the university's objectives.

- Consideration should be given to departments hiring faculty who will contribute to the production of Ph.D. degrees awarded either in their own departments or through interdisciplinary programs with which they are affiliated.

Rationale. Production of doctoral students is an important indicator of productivity for a research university.

- Consideration should be given to departments that could significantly reduce their percentage of credit hours taught by part-time faculty by hiring a full-time faculty member.

Rationale. Increasing the percentage of full-time instructional faculty is a goal in terms of the composition of the overall composition of the faculty. Departments that can contribute to that goal by consolidating part-time offerings and converting to a full-time position should have an incentive to do so.

Resources

The success of a hiring plan for faculty will depend on identification of adequate budgetary resources. Two factors are particularly important. First, there is not yet a line item in the UMBC budget for start-up costs, an essential resource for hiring tenured and tenure-track faculty. UMBC has taken start-up funds from the Designated Research Initiative Fund (DRIF), but that fund is currently in deficit, and start-up costs are particularly high in the very areas where UMBC has high enrollments. The success of a principled approach to faculty hiring will be dependent in part on identification of alternative revenue sources to fund these start-up costs.

Another structural deficit arises from an inadequate budget for part-time faculty. This leads to a reliance on salary savings from vacant lines to fund the increasing need for part-time faculty. Our ability to fill vacant lines will therefore also be dependent on allocation of sufficient resources to support part-time faculty, both in terms of number and salary levels.

The cost of reducing the number of part-time faculty and increasing the number of full-time faculty depends on several factors such as the numbers of courses typically taught by part-time vs. full-time faculty and the salaries (plus benefits) paid. Given average faculty course loads and salaries from AY 2004, projected enrollment of 9,350 FTE students in fall 2004, and several simplifying assumptions, it would cost about \$4 million to bring the student/faculty ratio to 18:1 or about \$2 million to bring it to 19:1.