

Faculty Congress Task Force on Carnegie Reclassification Report to the Provost

In Fall 2014, Faculty Congress appointed Dr. Alice Dailey (English) and Dr. Rick Eckstein (Sociology and Criminology) to convene a Task Force to study the implications of the expected Carnegie reclassification on Villanova faculty. The Task Force consists of faculty from all colleges organized into subcommittees for Engineering, Nursing, VSB, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Math and Science. Each subcommittee generated a report outlining the specific concerns of faculty in their area. They solicited input from department members, contacted administration and faculty at other institutions, and studied data gathered from internal polling instruments, such as the 2014 HERI report and their own college-administered assessments.

From the subcommittee reports, the Task Force has distilled five sites of pressing concern. These are described in the summary report below. Appended to this summary are the subcommittees' full reports, which outline area-specific needs and recommendations.

The intent of this document is to offer focused faculty input at this crucial time of transition. Faculty understand that the university is in a stage of intense planning for reclassification. This planning cannot proceed appropriately without significant input from those who do the teaching and research at Villanova. Given Faculty Congress's track record of success in facilitating conversation about important changes at the university, we believe we have a key role to play in governance and decision-making as we move toward reclassification. It is our hope that the Provost's office will use this report to initiate ongoing dialogue both with the Congress and, crucially, with faculty members in discrete academic units. This dialogue will be necessary to ensure the university's successful transition to doctoral status.

The Task Force on Carnegie Reclassification identifies the following five areas of concern:

1. Expansion and improvement of facilities (high priority for Engineering and CLAS)

As we transition to a more intensive research university, the need for improved facilities and additional space becomes inescapable. In addition to requiring thoroughly updated classrooms in many of the campus's substandard older buildings, Villanova must have additional research, seminar, and graduate office space to meet current needs and projected expansion. This is an urgent concern for the sciences and for the College of Engineering, which will carry a heavy share of the PhD-producing load.

In the sciences, Mendel Hall is essentially full. There are few areas in which to expand in the building, making the recruitment of high quality faculty more challenging. Existing facilities have exceeded their useful lifespan, leading to water leaks, poor air handling, months without deionized water, and no common areas for collaboration. The appearance and actual state of the facilities will be an upcoming challenge for the recruitment of high caliber faculty and students, who are able to compare our facilities to our competitors'. Both long- and short-term plans must be instituted immediately. These plans should identify opportunities to convert facilities into multi-purpose space, redistribute current facilities according to pressing

needs, and prepare for the larger-scale renovation or replacement of Mendel Hall. Current faculty in the sciences must be included in these plans.

In Engineering, lab, office, and teaching space is inadequate for current needs and will not support projected expansion. Facilities are severely limited, and many labs, offices, and classrooms do not sufficiently support modern innovations in engineering education. Full-time graduate enrollment in Engineering has nearly doubled since 2005, outstripping lab and graduate student space. As in the sciences, faculty recruitment in Engineering will become a growing challenge without a clear space plan and adequate, attractive space to offer. Many current Engineering faculty are landing large research grants, but these often require the addition of graduate students and postdocs, who need offices and research facilities that Villanova currently does not have. Although CEER was built for labs and research, a large portion of that building now houses administration. Even the college IT group (part of UNIT) has taken up some intended CEER lab spaces. As a consequence, Engineering is currently housing some new faculty members in the basement of Garey Hall, and many others have been unable to secure lab space in spite of having active research grants. Expansion of Engineering facilities is a critical priority for the college in the next five years. Since the expansion project will require significant funds, short-term solutions need to be developed.

2. Inadequate research support (very high priority in all colleges)

Villanova faculty do not have adequate resources for maintaining the current level of research. While research standards have grown, the university's internal research budget over the last 10 years has remained relatively static. The university must make significant new investments in faculty research to sustain current productivity and to establish Villanova's competitiveness among doctoral institutions. Faculty across colleges identify the following research needs: improved research/laboratory space; improved graduate student/postdoc office space; modernized laboratory equipment and improved technical support; increases in the frequency of both traditional sabbaticals and non-sabbatical research leaves (especially in disciplines without graduate research assistants); grant-writing support; increased startup funds to attract high-caliber faculty; strategic allocation of existing graduate assistantships; and more travel funds, both for conference attendance and research. The remainder of this section will address some of these concerns in greater detail.

To maintain its current level of research productivity, the university must be prepared to make up for significant losses in research funding that will attend the anticipated increase in PhDs. Because we currently produce fewer than 10 PhDs per year in National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded areas, Villanova is classified under the NSF's Research at Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) status. This status gives Villanova faculty in all NSF-supported disciplines access to funding that will not be available if PhD output increases. In 2005-2013, 44% of Villanova's NSF funding (\$19.4 million) was designated as RUI. Additionally, a change in status will mean a restructuring of Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) grants we receive. Under the new status, Villanova would be required to fund 30% of MRI-eligible costs for an annual university expenditure of between \$500,000 and nearly \$1 million.

The issue of travel funds is especially pressing for faculty in a number of academic areas. In some disciplines, certain elite conferences review submissions with stringent criteria, and acceptance and presentation is commensurate to publishing a peer-reviewed journal article. In other fields, conference participation is imperative to professional visibility and publication. In short, attending conferences is a necessity, not a luxury, for research-productive faculty, and it must be better supported by the university. One faculty member describes what is typical for many: “To attend two conferences this year, one of which is de rigeur for my field and the other of which I was eager to try out to build connections with colleagues doing similar research in other disciplines, I had to pay more than \$2000 out of pocket after subtracting my \$1200 departmental allowance for conference travel. This was just to cover airfare, hotel, and conference registration fees (not to mention food, taxi, airport parking, and other incidental costs). Across these two conferences, I presented a total of three papers, served as a discussant for two sessions, and chaired a business meeting. I am doing my job and doing it well, but I am significantly in the hole financially for it.” These strained circumstances are reported in several colleges at Villanova. In addition, faculty note that in some fields, major conferences are held over holiday breaks to lower costs, meaning that faculty are not only forfeiting holidays (like Easter) that the rest of the university community enjoy but may have to pay out of pocket for the privilege. This business model would be unacceptable in any other kind of professional employment.

Some faculty are concerned about trade-offs that will be necessitated by an increased research focus and PhD output. The university at large has decided to embrace the move toward Carnegie reclassification, and this move will ostensibly benefit the whole community. Academic and non-academic units across the university must therefore share the burden of underwriting the doctoral enterprise—an enterprise that includes not only PhD programs but the facilities, resources, and faculty research necessary to support doctoral status.

We should think hard about the wisdom of diverting resources from currently thriving Master’s programs to support doctoral education. In some disciplines, the Master’s degree has become the more desirable degree, especially as new PhDs continue to encounter a contracting academic job market. To maintain our relevance in the current employment climate, we must think strategically about how internal resources like graduate assistantships are managed and continue to support our robust Master’s programs. Similarly, we must allocate university resources cautiously, managing issues such as class size in a way that does not compromise the quality of undergraduate education.

In addition to the issues that have been outlined above, doctoral-granting disciplines draw attention to current unmet needs, including the need for dedicated graduate student space, stipends and health benefits for graduate students, language support (especially German), Digital Humanities support, and library resources, which have been shrinking along with the library budget. Attention to these areas will contribute to the competitiveness, academic legitimacy, and prestige of our doctoral programs, whereas failure to provide sufficient funding will create ongoing struggles to recruit, train, and place students.

3. Teaching loads (high importance in all colleges)

Faculty across colleges call for a decrease in teaching loads for anyone actively engaged in research and publication. Since both global and local scholarship expectations continue to rise, and since Villanova will continue its commitment to teaching excellence, with consideration of disciplinary parameters, course-load expectations should be: 2-3 for anyone actively engaged in research; and a 2-2 or 2-1 for highly research-productive faculty. This is much more reasonable given the research output expected for tenure and promotion at Villanova and is commensurate with universities at our *current* level of research productivity, even before the pending reclassification. In practice, our tenure and promotion standards for humanities faculty, for example, are now on a par with those at Tufts and Marquette, where faculty produce one scholarly monograph for tenure and a second for promotion to Full. The standard teaching load at Tufts and Marquette is 2-2, not including potential reductions for exceptionally productive scholars or for service. As a counterexample, humanities faculty at Ursinus College have a standard 2-3 (not 3-3) teaching load but with no monograph required for either tenure or promotion.

Under the 2-3 reduced load, Villanova faculty are constrained from maintaining a continuous research agenda, making it difficult to collaborate with colleagues at prestigious institutions who can seamlessly conduct research year-round. The criteria for maintaining a 2-3 teaching load at Villanova demand that faculty complete a year's worth of research in 7 months, often with particularly heavy work during the summer months—time that remains unpaid for many research faculty. While some faculty are able to “buy out” of courses through external funding, many areas of faculty research are not fundable through these means.

In the past, university administration has cited Villanova's high research productivity under the 2-3 load as evidence that the load is appropriate. This is short-sighted. In addition to fostering demoralization and burnout, pressing problems among faculty at Villanova, the current model is not viable over the long term. The university depends on faculty to administer programs, chair departments, and perform departmental, college, and university service. If the teaching load is not brought into line with the university's current research standards, imperative service roles will become increasingly difficult to fill. Many junior and recently-tenured faculty report abjuring significant service roles because the current teaching-research workload simply does not leave room for these commitments, nor is service remunerated with promotion or commensurate course releases.

One illustration of work overload is that research-productive faculty in some disciplines are now spending 10+ years at the rank of Associate Professor, saddled with far heavier service burdens than they had at the rank of Assistant but with no decrease in teaching and equal—if not increased—research expectations. This is especially true in departments that bear disproportionately heavy responsibility for administering academic programs. While colleagues at peer institutions are advancing in their careers, many Villanova faculty lag behind under research standards for promotion that do not match our teaching and service loads. These circumstances not only impede promising midcareer scholars from rising to greater prominence in their fields but also make it difficult to recruit and retain faculty who have other opportunities.

Many faculty across colleges have suggested a more nimble approach to assessing the value of their academic labor. In Nursing, for example, faculty already have significant classroom, advising, and clinical responsibilities. Will these remain valuable in the face of higher research expectations, and how will workloads and assessment reflect the potential reallocation of these tasks? In Engineering, standard teaching loads are higher than at peer institutions. While the college is trying to address this through internal resource reallocation, this may not be possible given other pressing concerns. How will workloads be affected by the increased advising and mentoring responsibilities concomitant with an expanding PhD program?

Finally, the current workload can have the unintended effect of disincentivizing teaching innovation. Developing new courses, introducing new methods in a proven course, or working across colleges to offer interdisciplinary courses all take considerable time. Other than the intrinsic rewards of innovative teaching, there is little in the current structure to encourage faculty to make this investment. On the contrary, given the possible constraints of a 3-3 teaching load, available time not devoted to research can very well prove to be time unwisely spent. Faculty in smaller departments that must offer a broad range of courses to support their majors are already doing four and often five separate teaching preps per academic year. In the humanities and social sciences, a 3-course semester of writing-intensive undergrad classes plus a graduate seminar can easily yield a grading load of more than 1,000 pages of student work. In the sciences and engineering, just a few more students in a lab can generate dozens of extra hours examining reports and notebooks. In Nursing, evolving workloads need to account for current demands that include not only research but classroom teaching, academic advising, and clinical responsibilities. Faculty are committed to maintaining the quality of our graduate and undergraduate teaching but find it difficult to do so under mounting research obligations.

4. Academic ranking structures and labor models (moderate concern in most colleges)

Some faculty express concern with how shifts in reclassification-driven research expectations affect those not engaged in research. There is worry about an emerging two-tier structure at Villanova in which research-active faculty theoretically have the opportunity to advance to Full Professor while faculty who make distinguished contributions in teaching and service do not. Excellence in teaching and service must continue to be appropriately compensated. In cooperation with faculty, the university must thoughtfully consider how changing research expectations influence promotion, especially as regards mid- and late-career faculty who were hired and tenured under different expectations than those that have developed in recent years.

In addition to reviewing promotion practices for tenure-track faculty, the university must begin to develop a promotion structure for Continuing Non-Tenure-Track (CNT) faculty that recognizes their indispensable role in our community. Villanova should consider adopting the ranking structure in place at more progressive institutions—one that could include ranks such as Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, and Senior Lecturer. This would ensure that CNT faculty are appropriately evaluated, mentored, recognized, and retained. Like their

tenure-track peers, CNT faculty must have the opportunity to advance their careers at Villanova in a manner consistent with the essential work they do.

We encourage the university to address its reliance on adjunct labor conscientiously. Concerns about this matter are unrelated to the professionalism of non-tenure track instructors or to the quality of the courses they offer. Rather, faculty are troubled by deficiencies in compensation and job security that are built into the contingent labor model—a model that has come under increasing criticism in higher education. As a humanist institution committed to Catholic Social Teaching, Villanova must develop scrupulous adjunct labor practices that include appropriate compensation, benefits, and job security. Whenever possible, the university should aim to offer full-time employment to qualified adjunct faculty seeking academic careers.

5. Core curriculum (moderate concern in CLAS)

As Villanova moves into the categories of Doctoral and National institution, we must continue to strengthen the first-year student experience to reflect both the historical and evolving values of the university. Ongoing discussions about a university-wide core might consider how to involve a greater range of faculty in first-year programs, especially research-focused courses that would create direct links between new students and research-driven knowledge creation. We should look to carry on our model of fostering interaction among students from the four different undergraduate colleges while seeking ways to tap faculty research specialization in shaping the first-year experience. We could conceivably develop ways to remove constraints on traditionally non-first-year faculty (i.e., from COE, CON, VSB) so as to create greater cross-disciplinary interaction between students and faculty.

Task Force on Carnegie Reclassification

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