

The Personnel Crisis in the English Department

A Personal Report

by

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March, 1969

. . . . let me
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

T. S. Eliot

I see the Indians all right, but where are the good guys?

General Custer

If you don't know how to react, there can be no response.

James H. Knapp

Notes

Anybody who would like to see the conclusions before wading through the statistical evidence and supporting arguments should begin with section IV.

"FTE" means "full-time equivalent." This is an artificial concept with the same function as the common denominator in arithmetic. It represents one third of the number of sections taught by part-time faculty and/or teaching assistants. Thus, 9 sections taught by part-time faculty corresponds to 3 FTE, although the number of individuals doing the teaching might range from 3 to 9.

"1966" refers to the Fall term, 1966-67; "1968" or "today" refers to the Fall term, 1968-69.

The purpose of section II is to reveal trends. I have made comparisons between our present situation and our situation in 1966 (rather than 1965, or 1964, or 1963) because I happened to have the figures handy, having collected them in 1967 while working for a term as Frank Wadsworth's administrative assistant. Nothing in this section is intended as a criticism of Bob Whitman, who happens to have become chairman of the department at the time I was collecting this data.

For the same reason, the figures for the French, German, Hispanic, and Speech departments, and for the English department at Penn State, are for the Fall term, 1966-67. I don't believe the anachronism impairs the validity of the comparisons in section III. The figures for the English department of Indiana University are for the Fall term, 1968-69.

"Indiana" refers to Bloomington, Indiana, not Indiana, Pa.

"Indiana," "Penn State" and "Pitt" generally refer to the English departments of these institutions. When they do not, I trust the context will make the reference clear.

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Table 3 The College (excluding Freshman English)

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>
Full-time faculty (FTE)	9	17
Part-time faculty (FTE)	1	5
Total teachers	10	22
Enrollment	2058	3028
No. sections	29	62
Average section	71	49
Enrollment:full-time faculty ratio	229:1	178:1
Enrollment:total teacher ratio	206:1	138:1

we have been able to reduce the average size of sections mainly because we have allowed much more of our teaching to be done by people who, for the most part, are less qualified than the full-time faculty, less available to students, less committed to the university and the profession, and who do not participate at all in "the life of the department"--in those activities which are ancillary to the manning of classrooms and absolutely essential to the maintenance of a superior academic program.

Another reason why sections in the College are smaller than they were two years ago is revealed by the fact that the number of full-time faculty teaching in the College has risen by the same number as the total full-time faculty. That is to say, all of the additional faculty have been used to alleviate conditions in the College. Meanwhile the number teaching in the School of General Studies has remained stationary, although General Studies enrollments (excluding Freshman English) have risen by 26% and the number

Table 4 The School of General Studies (excluding Freshman English)

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>
Full-time faculty (FTE)	2	2
Part-time faculty (FTE)	1	5
Total teachers	3	7
Enrollment	518	652
No. sections	9	20
Average section	58	33
Enrollment:full-time faculty ratio	259:1	326:1
Enrollment:total teacher ratio	173:1	93:1

of sections has more than doubled. Two years ago, full-time faculty staffed 67% of General Studies sections (6/9); today they staff 30% (6/20). The 11 sections which have been added since 1966 are all staffed by part-time faculty. Thus the slight improvement in the ratio of College enrollments to the full-time faculty teaching in the College (as distinct from the total faculty) has been made possible, in part, by a massive deterioration in the same ratio in General Studies. We should consider carefully, I think, the implications of the fact that the full-time faculty of the department now plays a distinctly minor part in the General Studies English program. Are we going to regard it as an integral part of our program, and an integral part of our responsibilities? Or are we going to regard it as a casual sideline to our "real" business, an inferior appendage to the College and the Graduate School? This, it would seem, is how we implicitly

regard the program now. If we are to take that position as a matter of deliberate policy, then our logical course of action, it seems to me, would be to hand over the administration of the program to the Dean of the School. The academic limbo in which it now exists--as a program for which we accept virtually no responsibility and over which we have virtually no control, but which we administer and with which we identify ourselves--is good for neither the program nor us. If, on the other hand, we accept the program as a serious obligation, we should discharge the obligation seriously. The great bulk of sections should be staffed by full-time faculty, and the teaching of General Studies courses should be part of the normal duties of every member of the department. Part-time teachers should be subject to the same criteria for appointment as members of the full-time faculty.

The same observations must be made, and made even more strongly, about the writing program (and I am not now talking about Freshman English, but about the rest of the writing program). It is the writing program, not the School of General Studies, which is mainly responsible for the great number of part-time people now employed by the department. More specifically, it is the writing program in the College: of the 27 sections taught by part-time faculty in 1968, 17 were writing courses; and 12 of these sections, or more than two thirds, were College sections, as compared to 5 in General Studies. We offer a major in writing; but in 1968, out of 21 writing sections, only 4, or 19%, were taught by full-time faculty. (If the MSA knew about this, would we be in danger of losing our accreditation?) All of our student-faculty ratios are astronomical, compared to other departments in this university and to the English departments of other universities; but the ratio in the writing program is pure science fiction--#38:1!

Table 5 The Writing Program

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>
Full-time faculty (FTE)	2	1 1/3
Part-time faculty (FTE)	1 1/3	5 2/3
Total teachers	3 1/3	7
Enrollment	347	584
No. sections	10	21
Average section	35	28
Enrollment:full-time faculty ratio	173:1	438:1
Enrollment:total teacher ratio	104:1	83:1

The figures for the writing program are considerably influenced by the inclusion of Technical Writing, a service course offered solely for the benefit of the School of Engineering. Of the 17 writing sections taught by part-time faculty, 5 are sections of Technical Writing. Instead of our hiring part-time people to teach this course, which has no relation to the rest of our program, the School of Engineering could as easily hire them and administer the course itself. By the same token, why does the English Department teach Literature for Children, the only purpose of which is to enable students in the School of Education to fulfill one of their requirements? Of the 6 sections of this course taught in 1968, 4 were staffed by part-time people whom we hired especially for the purpose. Thus we swell our responsibilities with 11 sections of courses which, to put it simply, are not our business. If we were to relinquish these courses to the Schools

Table 6 The Literature Program

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>
Full-time faculty (FTE)	9	18
Part-time faculty (FTE)	1	5
Total teachers	10	23
Enrollment	2229	3096
No. sections	28	61
Average section	79	51
Enrollment:full-time faculty ratio	248:1	172:1
Enrollment:total teacher ratio	223:1	135:1

whose business they are, our Chairman could devote that much more of his attention to the rest of our large, complex, and ailing program. Even if we leave Technical Writing out of account, however, we find that part-time faculty now teach 12 of the 16 courses which make up the program for the English writing major. How can we offer a degree for a program in which full-time faculty teach only 25% of the students?

The undergraduate literature program is our largest single program, with 3096 enrollments, 61 sections, and 23 faculty (FTE). This program (specifically, the literature program in the College) has absorbed all of the full-time faculty added in the past two years. About half of the increased ~~enrollments (367/1646) have been concentrated here.~~ undergraduate enrollments have been concentrated here--867, compared to the increases of 599 in Freshman English and 237 in writing courses. The size of the average

section has dropped by about a third, this improvement being due in about equal parts to the increase in full-time faculty and the increase in part-time faculty: without the sections taught by part-time faculty, the average section would be 66 instead of 51. Part-time people now make up 22% of the total faculty teaching literature courses, compared to 10% two years ago; and they teach 23% of the sections, compared to 7% two years ago. These increases have affected the School of General Studies more than the College: two years ago, part-time people taught one literature section in the College and one in General Studies; today they teach 5 in the College and 9 in General Studies. In 1968, full-time faculty taught only 5 of the 14 literature sections offered by General Studies, compared to 6 out of 7 in 1966.

Only in the Graduate Program is it possible to discern unqualified progress. The average graduate class has been reduced from 21 to 15, with no corresponding rise in our reliance on less qualified teachers. But this is not so much due to the growth of the faculty (for we now offer only three more graduate classes than in 1966) as it is due to a drop of 58 in graduate enrollments, as a result of our raising graduate admission standards in 1967.

Table 7 The Graduate Program

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>
Teaching faculty (FTE)	6	7
Graduate faculty	13	17
Enrollment Courses	321	270
Directed Study	26	12
Dissertation	<u>16</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>363</u>	<u>305</u>
No. sections	15	18
Average section	21	15
Enrollment:graduate faculty ratio	28:1	18:1

III

I Have Seen Them Riding Seaward

Whatever progress may be discerned in the foregoing pages is like the progress that Pittsburgh has made in cleaning up its polluted air: the situation has gone from worse to bad. Classes are smaller, but still too large; the faculty is less burdened, but still burdened unduly; the student-faculty ratios are better, but still outlandish. If the progress we have made in these matters seems substantial, that is a sign of the length of the journey, not of our having reached port. If we are more satisfied with how far we have come than concerned about how far we have still to go, we will deceive ourselves in the same way as the Pittsburgher who thinks he breathes clean air. The Pittsburgh of twenty years ago is no place from which to draw one's standard of air quality; the English Department of two years ago is no place from which to draw one's standard of an adequately staffed academic program.

In this section, I will suggest a more reasonable standard by comparing our present situation with that of six other Humanities departments--the French, German, Hispanic, and Speech departments at Pitt and the English departments of Penn State and Indiana. I have chosen only Humanities departments because, in a society oriented primarily toward the solution of technological, economic, and social problems, many considerations may prompt a university to give higher priorities to the Natural and Social Sciences, but no such considerations suggest priorities within the Humanities. I have chosen the French, German, Hispanic, and Speech departments for three reasons: their subject-matter is more like the subject-matter of English than, say, Music, or Fine Arts, or Philosophy, and this

points to close similarities in teaching methods and in the conditions which are necessary for effective teaching; after English, they are the largest "language and literature" departments at Pitt--there seems little point in comparing English with such tiny departments as Linguistics, East Asian, Classics, and Slavic; they do not, I believe, enjoy any advantage over the English department in terms of national prestige, and therefore cannot, on these grounds, make a greater claim on the university's resources (as the Philosophy department, for example, can). I have chosen the English departments of Penn State and Indiana because their enrollments are comparable to ours, whereas French, German, Hispanic, and Speech are relatively small departments; because, like Pitt, Penn State and Indiana are large, state-supported, Midwestern universities; and because, in general, Penn State and Indiana are universities which Pitt can reasonably hope to emulate. (There is another, and very obvious, reason for choosing Penn State: it also gets its funds from Harrisburg.)

As the English departments have large enrollments in Freshman English, so the language departments have large enrollments in elementary language courses; and, in these courses too, most of the teaching is done by teaching assistants and part-time faculty. For our purposes, then, the most significant statistic is the ratio of full-time faculty to enrollments in other undergraduate courses and in graduate courses. Comparison of the departments in these terms ~~sk~~ (Table 8) shows that our ratio is nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the highest ratio among the other departments, and 4 times the lowest ratio. For parity with these departments, then, we would need a full-time faculty of 61-102. The combined ratio of the other departments is 53:1. For parity with this, we would need 75 full-time faculty to handle our present enrollments.

Table 8 Graduate and Undergraduate Ratios (excluding Freshman English and elementary language)

	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Full-time Faculty</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
German	352	9	39:1
Hispanic	358	9	40:1
French & Italian	584	9	65:1
Speech	810	15	54:1
English, Penn State	2363	50	47:1
English, Indiana	3831	66	58:1
English, Pitt	3985	26	153:1

A similar pattern emerges if we look at the average size of sections in these courses (Table 9), although our relative position here is more favorable because these figures take account of the large number of sections taught by part-time faculty. (If we were to discount these sections, our average undergraduate section would be 67 instead of 45.) Although I have separated the figures, it must be remembered that undergraduate and graduate courses are not taught by separate faculties. Thus the fact that our graduate sections are of middling size, compared to the other departments', is less significant when set against the fact that our undergraduate sections are the largest--more than twice the size of sections in the German, French, and Speech departments, and more than three times the size of the average Hispanic section. If a professor teaches one graduate class and two undergraduate classes, then, in the German department, he will be responsible for 59 students; in the Hispanic department, for 39; in the French depart-

Table 9 Size of sections

	<u>average under- graduate section</u>	<u>average gradu- ate section</u>
German	20	19
Hispanic	13	13
French & Italian	19	19
Speech	20	9
English, Penn State	36	11
English, Indiana	43	21
English, Pitt	45	15

ment, for 57; in the Speech department, for 49; and, in the English department, he will be responsible for 105 students--twice as many as in the other departments. The same will be true if he teaches all undergraduate classes, or two graduate classes and one undergraduate. Only the English professor who teaches all graduate classes is likely to find himself teaching fewer students than his counterpart in another department. Of the 12 people who taught English graduate courses in 1968, only 3 taught graduate classes exclusively. The total number of students taught by each of the 12 was, respectively, 209, 154, 137, 107, 91, 79, 68, 49, 45, 41, 27, and 18. Thus the average number of students taught by the people teaching graduate classes was 85--and these are also the people, of course, who have the major share of responsibility for directing dissertations and serving on dissertation committees and other graduate examination committees. By contrast, the most junior professor in the German, Hispanic, French, and Speech departments,

whose only responsibility is to teach undergraduates, will on the average teach no more than 60 students at a time, whereas his counterpart in the English department will teach 135. Taken as a whole, these facts reveal the absurdity--not to mention the hypocrisy--of the not unheard of proposition that the English department can expect greater support from the university only when its faculty achieves greater academic distinction through scholarly publishing and participation in professional activities at the national level. Such a proposition merely sets up a vicious circle from which the department has no hope of escape.

The comparisons with Penn State and Indiana in Table 9 will be misleading unless we take account of the fact that the standard teaching load in these departments is two sections a term, whereas here it is three. Thus the fact that their average undergraduate section is nearly as big as ours is not as significant as it might seem at first. If we take as our norm the professor who teaches only undergraduate courses, then the English professor at Pitt is responsible for 135 students a term, compared to 72 and 86 respectively at Penn State and Indiana. If one looks at the student-loads of the people who teach graduate courses, the contrast is equally striking: the average of 85 at Pitt may be compared with 37 at Penn State and 51 at Indiana. It is obvious that both the junior and senior people in these departments have far more opportunity than their counterparts at Pitt to devote personal attention to their students and to develop professionally.

As pointed out before, the figures in Table 9 are greatly affected by the large number of our sections which are staffed by part-time faculty; on the other hand, the English departments at Penn State and Indiana make virtually no use of part-time teachers. In order to get a clear picture

Table 10 Student-loads of full-time faculty (excluding lecture sections of Freshman English)

	Penn State		Indiana		Pitt	
	<u>no. fac.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>no. fac.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>no. fac.</u>	<u>%</u>
200 & up	0	0	1	1.5%	2	7%
100-199	6	12%	10	16%	9	32%
50-99	14	28%	10	16%	10	36%
35-49	14	28%	14	22%	4	14%
below 35	16	32%	28	44%	3	11%

of the relative student-loads of full-time faculty we need to look, not at averages, but at actual figures, as shown in Table 10. If we draw a line at 100 students, we find that 39% of people at Pitt teach more than this number, compared to 12% at Penn State and 17.5% at Indiana. If we draw a line at 50 students, the figures are 40%, 33.5%, and 75%. And, if we draw the line at 35, the percentage of people at Penn State and Indiana who teach fewer than 35 students is, respectively, 3 and 4 times the percentage at Pitt. And there are 33 Teaching Assistants at Penn State, and 14 at Indiana (in addition to those teaching Freshman English) to assist the faculty with large undergraduate classes. At Pitt there are none.

The average number of students taught by each member of the full-time faculty in the English department of Penn State is 52; at Indiana, the average is 56; at Pitt, it is 95. And these figures may be compared with the figures for the French, German, Hispanic, and Speech departments given on pages 14-16. On the whole, these figures mean that the professor of

Table 11 Size of undergraduate sections (excluding Freshman English)

	Penn State		Indiana		Pitt	
	<u>secs.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>secs.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>secs.</u>	<u>%</u>
100 & up	1	1.5%	9	13%	4	5%
36-99	11	18%	3	4%	36	44%
35 & below	49	80%	58	83%	42	51%

English at Pitt teaches about twice as many students as a professor in any of these other departments. Something of what this means for the student is indicated by Table 11, ~~which should be self-explanatory~~

The practical justification for large classes (I know of no pedagogical justification) is that they help to finance small classes. The principle is supposed to be: let a few classes be large so that a lot of classes can be small. This principle obviously operates at Penn State and Indiana; but we have the worst of both worlds, with almost as many large classes as small ones. And our situation, with 49% of undergraduate classes over 35, should be compared also to the situation in the German, Hispanic, French, and Speech departments, where the average undergraduate section is 20, 13, 19, and 20 respectively. By any standard, too many of our classes are simply too big.

Moreover, classes tend to be smaller where most of the teaching is done by part-time faculty--in the writing program and the School of General Studies. It is obviously easier--and cheaper--to section courses by hiring part-time people. Thus classes are largest in those areas of our program

in which full-time faculty do most of the teaching--the literature program and the College; and these are also the areas in which most of our students are enrolled. Thus Table 11 is an unreliable guide to the experience of most of our students; a more accurate impression may be gained from Table 12.

Table 12 Size of undergraduate sections (excluding Freshman English)

	<u>enrollment</u>	<u>average section</u>
The College	3028	49
General Studies	652	33
Literature Program	3096	51
Writing Program	584	28
The College:		
Literature Program	2619	56
Writing Program	409	27
General Studies:		
Literature Program	477	34
Writing Program	175	29

The literature program in the College accounts for 71% of our undergraduate enrollments, and it is here that the average class is twice as big as in the other parts of our program. This means that, on the average, 7 out of every 10 students do all their work in classes of 56. The number of individual members of the full-time faculty who teach literature courses in the College is 22. Thus the ratio of enrollments to faculty in this area

is 119:1--and that is a measure of the opportunity which 71% of our students have of receiving the individual attention of a professor.

These figures are significantly affected by the enrollment of 657 in four sections of English 80 and 81. If we leave these sections out of account--and thus focus more closely on the experience of the English major--the average literature class in the College is 46. But this figure is itself slightly misleading. In the literature courses which are required for the English major in Arts & Sciences and in Education--English 10, 21, 31, 41, 51, 61, and 115--the average class is 51. And these are the courses which make up about 60% of the English major's program. In the elective courses--English 118-138--the average section is 41. On the average, then, the literature major spends about 60% of his time in classes of 51, and about 40% of his time in classes of 41. Leaving aside 4 Honors classes, with enrollments of 23, 16, 5, and 4 respectively, we find that, out of 28 sections of literature courses taught in the College in 1968, only 4 had fewer than 35 enrollments--English 118, with 20; English 121, with 25; English 134, with 31; and a section of English 41, with 34. Full details are set out in Table 13, on the next page.

It is instructive to compare these figures carefully with the figures for Penn State set out in Table 14. As at Pitt, the English major at Penn State takes a minimum of 30 credits in English, 18 of which must be in the 400's series of courses. These courses, then, are exactly comparable to our 10-61 series. But whereas our average section in this series is 54, the average section in the 400's series at Penn State is 31; and whereas only one of our sections (out of a total of 17) is below 35, at Penn State 17 sections out of a total of 20 are below 35, and the other three sections, with 50 students each, are smaller than our average section. The courses

Table 13 Literature courses in the College (excluding Honors sections
and English 190--Literature for Children)

	<u>enr.</u>	<u>no. secs.</u>	<u>av. sec.</u>
The Literature Major			
English 10	202	4	50
" 21	161	3	54
" 31	160	3	53
" 41	79	2	39
" 51	103	2	51
" 61	209	3	70
" 115	100	2	50
" 118	20	1	20*
" 119	45	1	45
" 121	25	1	25*
" 123	54	1	54
" 124	53	1	53
" 134	31	1	31*
" 137	50	1	50
" 138	43	1	43
" 157	51	1	51
Distribution courses			
" 80	342	2	171
" 81	315	2	157
" 82	104	2	52
" 180	71	1	71
" 181	64	1	64

in the 100's series at Penn State are distribution courses for non-majors and electives for majors, and are therefore comparable to our distribution and 100's series courses. But only 3 of our sections, out of a total of 19, are below 35, whereas the proportion at Penn State is 31 out of 41. Combining these figures, we find that the proportion of classes with fewer than 35 students is, at Pitt, 4:36; at Penn State, 48:61.

Table 14 Literature courses at Penn State (excluding Honors sections)

	<u>enr.</u>	<u>no. secs.</u>	<u>av. sec.</u>
English 406	30	1	30
" 407	60	2	30
" 412	12	1	12
" 413	15	1	15
" 418	3	1	3
" 423	34	1	34
" 433	32	1	32
" 434	34	1	34
" 437	25	1	25
" 438	50	1	50
" 444	29	1	29
" 445	33	1	33
" 446	35	1	35
" 449	30	1	30
" 463	33	1	33
" 467	33	1	33
" 470	32	1	32
" 476	50	1	50

Table 14 (continued)

	<u>enr.</u>	<u>no. secs.</u>	<u>av. sec.</u>
English 488	50	1	50
" 105	293	4	73
" 106	59	2	29
" 107	60	2	30
" 108	119	4	29
" 112	77	4	19
" 113	30	1	30
" 115	20	1	20
" 117	95	4	24
" 119	222	9	25
" 121	35	1	35
" 127	30	1	30
" 131	108	2	54
" 132	149	2	75
" 149	144	1	144
" 189	75	1	75
" 195	35	1	35
" 197	19	1	19

As a final note, it should be pointed out that all of these sections at Penn State are staffed by full-time members of the faculty. A handful of part-time instructors (8, to be exact) are employed to teach sections of Freshman English. The 33 Teaching Assistants who work with the faculty in advanced literature courses do so on a "team-teacher" basis--teaching the class occasionally, writing examinations, and grading papers--under the guidance of the professor in charge.

IV

Do I Dare to Eat a Peach?

Ideally, all of the department's teaching should be done by full-time faculty and teaching assistants. We should not be too quick to conclude that this is an impossible ideal: it is not impossible for the Philosophy department, or the Music department, or the East Asian department, or the Classics department, or the English department at Indiana, none of which employ part-time teachers. It is not impossible for the English department at the University of Rochester, where the chairman simply refuses to make do with part-time instructors, and as a result has 30 full-time faculty to teach about 500 students. Circumstances may sometimes make it necessary to compromise an ideal; but how much compromise is necessary? I would say that when part-time people make up 41% of the total faculty, and teach 34% of all undergraduate courses beyond the freshman level, the ideal has been more than compromised: it has been abandoned. The English department at Penn State finds it possible to staff all undergraduate classes beyond the freshman level with full-time faculty, and employs only 8 part-time people, or 10% of the total faculty, to teach sections of Freshman English. Of course, it is easier for us to find part-time people, because we are an urban university: that is to say, it is easier for us to take the easy way out. But, if we really fix our sights on the ideal, and work vigorously toward it (which means being interested in the best way, rather than the easiest way), we should find compromise no more necessary than it is at Penn State. We might hire part-time people to teach some sections of Freshman English in the School of General Studies, and that is all.

As section II of this report makes clear, we have moved away from this ideal during the past two years, and not toward it; and we have moved away at a very rapid rate. This means that the addition of 8 full-time faculty in this period has been barely enough to keep our heads above water. We have made significant progress in reducing the size of classes only by enormously increasing our reliance on part-time faculty beyond the 1966 level--and that level, in my opinion, was compromise enough. With enrollments increasing at the rate of 922 a year, it has taken 4 additional faculty a year just to keep us even: that is how fast we have had to run to stay in the same place. We could have made the progress that we have made in reducing the size of classes (and that progress, as section III shows, is still far from adequate) without surrendering 34% of our undergraduate classes to part-time teachers, only if we had added 15 full-time faculty, instead of 8 full-time and 7 part-time, to teach undergraduate classes beyond the freshman level. Next year, the full-time faculty will be increased by one for sure, and by two maybe. If enrollments in undergraduate courses other than Freshman English increase at anything like the rate at which they have increased each year for the past two years, an increase of one or two in the full-time faculty will mean either that classes will have to get even bigger than they are now or that still more of our undergraduate classes will have to be staffed by part-time instructors. In either case, the ratio of enrollments (other than Freshman English) to full-time faculty will exceed even the present outrageous figure of 153:1. Only if enrollments in courses other than Freshman English do not increase at all next year will the additional one or two faculty make even marginal progress possible.

In terms of a student-faculty ratio, what is a practicable ideal for us? Granted that one man's practicality is another man's pipe-dream (and that one man's pipe-dream is another man's platitude), I propose, as a practicable ideal, a ratio of 50:1 between enrollments other than Freshman English and full-time faculty, instead of the present ratio of 153:1. I will not belabor you with the reasons why a ratio of 50:1 is better (in terms of educational objectives) than a ratio of 153:1, or why, in the same terms, it is better for 80% of our classes to be below 35, instead of 51%, because I assume that such reasons are too obvious to mention to any educator. Assuming that everybody accepts the reasonableness of the goal, I will only ask anybody who doubts its practicability to tell me why, if a ratio of 50:1 is impracticable for us, a ratio of 39:1 is practicable for the German department, of 40:1 for the Hispanic department, of 65:1 for the French department, of 54:1 for the Speech department, of 47:1 for the English department at Penn State, and of 58:1 for the English department at Indiana. If the English department at Penn State can have 50 faculty to teach 2363 students, and the English department at Indiana can have 66 faculty to teach 3831, why can we have only 29 faculty to teach 3985? Why is it practicable for the German and Hispanic departments, with less than one tenth of our enrollments, to have one third as many faculty? Why is it that the Speech department, with one fifth of our enrollments, can have half as many faculty? What has any of these departments got that we haven't got, except fewer students and, perhaps, a faculty that is less prepared than we are to tolerate compromises with its educational goals? If anybody can give me convincing answers to these questions, I will modify my proposal. If not, I will stick by the proposition that it is both reasonable and practicable that we should have a full-time faculty of 80 to cope with our present enrollments.

Still talking about what is practicable, how quickly can we hire 51 additional faculty without impairing the professional quality of the department? Each year for the past three years we have received 300-400 applications for jobs, and, after sifting through dossiers and interviewing 30 or more people at the MLA, we have drawn up a list of 10-12 people, all of whom would be valuable assets to the department. And, each year, the inadequacy of our budget has prevented us hiring more than 5 one year, and 4 the next, and now 1. If we were in a position to make simultaneous offers to, say, 10 people, I believe it is reasonable to expect that we could, on the average, hire 8 new people a year. In other words, allowing for a few retirements in the interim, we could increase the faculty by 51 in 7 years. Those who prefer waiting for Godot can compare this with the 17 years that it will take at our present rate of 3 a year.

The personnel situation in the English Department constitutes a genuine crisis for the university. This is the university's biggest department, and the most understaffed. It is an extraordinary problem, and will succumb only to extraordinary solutions. The hand-to-mouth financing represented by annual budget requests is responsible for getting us into this mess; we would be naive indeed if we believed that the same methods are capable of getting us out. If we preserve a business-as-usual attitude, we will get the business, as usual. And let us not be so gullible as to have any confidence in vague promises and assurances: we know what happened to the vague assurance that all of our offices would be fully partitioned before very long--probably before the end of this year, certainly "as soon as the money is available."

We can be confident that our personnel problems will be solved only if the administration is prepared to make a firm, long-term commitment to increase our resources in a major way. Only if we can anticipate, and rely

on, a steady growth in the faculty, can we plan the major changes in our program that we must make, instead of merely making changes piece-meal, with no sense of the over-all shape of what is developing--which is again what has got us into our present mess. In short, we need an iron-clad, written guarantee, underwritten by the Dean, the Provost, and the Chancellor (and, if necessary, by the Board of Trustees), committing the university to provide us with x-thousands of dollars for new faculty each year until such time as the full-time faculty of the department numbers 80. If we are to reach this figure in 7 years (and no longer is tolerable, in my opinion), the guarantee will have to be for no less than \$140,000 a year.

Nowadays, it is impossible to hire a full professor (one who is worth his salt, that is) for less than \$18,000, an associate professor for less than \$14,000, or an assistant professor for less than \$10,000. In order to keep some balance in the department, we need to hire people of all ranks in about equal proportions. And, in order to ensure steady growth at the average rate of 8 new people a year for 7 years, we need some room to manoeuvre in the offers we make each year. We need the freedom, it seems to me, to make as many as 10 offers in any one year. I arrive at the figure of \$140,000 a year, therefore, by figuring on 10 slots a year at an average salary of \$14,000. If we were to fill all 10 slots every year, we would have our 51 people in 5 years. But there is no chance whatever of that happening. We need to be able to make offers to 10 just to give ourselves a reasonable chance of getting 8. And if we don't get 8 (which is possible, and even probable) it will take us even longer than 7 years to grow to the size we need to be.

We all know about the university's problems with the state legislature this year, and we all sympathize with the administration's difficulties and the university's general plight. But we deceive ourselves if we infer

that Harrisburg's penny-pinching is the sole cause or even the main cause of our difficulties, this year or any year--although we should not be particularly surprised if a hard-pressed administration should make no particular effort to undeceive those who are so conveniently gullible. We were authorized to hire two new faculty this year. How many other schools and departments were also authorized to hire two? How many were authorized to hire more? And how many of those schools and departments are as drastically understaffed as we are? The answer to the last question is "Not one." The answers to the other two questions should undeceive even the most naive among us.

The decisive factor which determines that we can hire two new people this year, rather than eight, is not Harrisburg's reduction of the university's budget from \$34 million to \$31 million. The decisive factor is the priority which the administration allots to our personnel needs as compared to the priority allotted to the personnel needs of all the other schools and departments financed by general funds. What counts, at the department level, is not so much the size of the whole pie as the size of the slices into which it is cut. And, since the administration consists of humane and gentle men, the size of the slice that is given to us (to tease the metaphor a little further) depends on how lean and hungry we look in comparison to all the others who must also be fed. By my reckoning, we are the hungriest of all, and, if we don't look it, we must blame ourselves--not Harrisburg, and not even the administration--if we fail to receive the largest portion. For another \$60,000 we could have hired another 6 assistant professors this year, and the administration could have found the money, in spite of Harrisburg, by reducing the personnel budgets of 30 other departments by an average of \$2,000 each. But, of course, before the dean could think of

doing that, or could feel justified in doing it, he would have to be convinced that our needs were great enough to deserve that sort of priority. Convincing him of that is our job; finding the money, in spite of Harrisburg, is his.

The basic line of attack on our personnel problems must be through the long-term program of sustained growth that I have outlined. But this will be a slow process. The projected rate of growth (8 a year) is the maximum that we can expect to achieve: even if we had more money, we probably could not find more than 8 people a year, on the average, without impairing the quality of the faculty. But this rate of growth, and the figure of 80 full-time faculty, is predicated on our current enrollments. We will not be able to speed up our recruiting as enrollments increase; so, if enrollments increase, it will take us proportionately longer than 7 years to reach the 50:1 ratio which I have projected, and we will need proportionately more than 80 full-time faculty to achieve this ratio. If our enrollments increase significantly beyond the present level, and if we feel that the department cannot grow much beyond 80 without losing cohesiveness, we may eventually have to settle for a ratio of 60:1 or 70:1. But, for the present, I feel that the department needs some relief from the pressure of numbers, some immediate relief from the constant pressure of increasing enrollments. The need for relief is greatest where the pressure of numbers is greatest--in literature courses in the College. I feel we should attack our problems in this area more vigorously by approaching them from a different angle--by making some selective retrenchments in our teaching program. Our problems in this area are serious enough, it seems to me, to warrant our finding means to stabilize enrollments at their present level--or even to reduce

they have virtually every term, as we do. Some limit enrollments by allowing the student to take 80 or 130, but not both. The language departments, which make up 6 of the 11 Humanities departments in which the student can fulfill distribution requirements, list an impressive array of courses which are available for distribution; but most of these are their core courses, and the student must do two years of work in the language before he can take them for distribution. The other departments in the Humanities restrict their distribution enrollments by establishing demanding prerequisites for some courses and by teaching few courses for which prerequisites are not needed. The effect of these restrictive practices is to increase the pressure on our distribution courses by limiting the range of the student's choice. We would be justified, I think--especially because the other Humanities departments are more adequately staffed than we are--in offering fewer sections of distribution courses each term, and strictly limiting enrollments in the sections we do offer, thus returning to the other departments some of the pressure which they put on us. Again, this is something which is within our own jurisdiction.

If we fail in our best efforts to persuade the administration to guarantee the long-term program of growth projected in these pages, I for one will give up the ship, albeit reluctantly. Only sea-going idiots and those who have no choice will remain in the service once it becomes plain that there are termites in the heads of the officers as well as in the bulkheads. I've been lying awake nights for four years listening to that ticking in the woodwork, and the bilge water rising

Copies to: The English Department Faculty
 The Committee of the Graduate English Club
 The Ad Hoc Committee of Undergraduate English Majors