

Make their jobs secure

The latest recommendation by the Department of English's executive committee to limit the number of years lecturers can teach full-time is a cruel and pointless move by tenured English faculty, who evidently believe their jobs are cheapened by the presence of non-tenure-track colleagues.

Burgeoning University enrollment in the late 1970s forced the English department to hire a higher number of temporary faculty, now called lecturers, to teach lower division English courses. English lecturers, who number 60 this year, teach mostly writing courses but earn lower salaries than tenure-track faculty. Their presence has been viewed as an affront to tenure system orthodoxy, and much controversy has surrounded the procedure for hiring them.

Last year, the lecturers' quest for "security based on seniority" culminated in a special departmental report that supported this idea. But a seniority system for lecturers was deemed incompatible with the UT System *Regents' Rules and Regulations*.

So now the department's executive committee recommends a new policy that forces English lecturers who have taught full-time for seven years to either accept a part-time position if they're hired in their eighth year, or to seek work elsewhere. In fact, this recommendation can be viewed as an attempt to drive out lecturers — as if doing so also would eliminate the need for them.

This classic bureaucratic solution does not address the crucial problem: someone must teach the bulk of lower-division composition courses. Most tenured faculty consider teaching those courses difficult and distasteful, and prefer instead to teach upper-division literature courses.

One argument, that the current lecturer-hiring policy conflicts with American Association of University Professors principles, is a red herring. AAUP provides that any person who teaches full-time for seven years, regardless of the title, assumes tenure in the eighth year of ser-

vice. But AAUP principles are not mandated.

Ironically, those principles originally were designed to protect people who had earned tenure through teaching longevity. However, they are now being used as a weapon against lecturers — who were hired with the understanding that *Regents' Rules* defines lecturers as one-year temporary appointments that do not accrue tenure.

Regents' Rules implies that lecturers can be rehired every semester indefinitely. But allowing lecturers to teach full-time more than x number of years means that eventually they are going to start questioning the obviously flawed tenure system. To rehire lecturers indefinitely appears to grant them *de facto* tenure — an offensive idea to tenured faculty, many of whom regard lecturers as subprofessionals and are embarrassed by their presence at the University.

Another recommendation of the English executive committee, to be voted on Wednesday by the departmental senate, "clarifies" hiring priorities by placing lecturers who have taught more than eight semesters full-time, but who wish to teach part-time, in line for jobs after those who have just received UT doctorates in English, continuing part-time lecturers and those who have taught fewer than eight semesters full time. This recommendation does not take into account seniority or the fact that lecturers who have taught several years have been rehired year after year based on high evaluations.

Though, of course, it never will, the Legislature should appropriate enough money to make all English lecturers' positions line items in the UT budget. Later, decreases in enrollment plus increases in tenure-track positions would add up to lower teacher-student ratios.

As long as the Department of English continues to exploit lecturers and strip them of their job security, it will be students who suffer.

— Laura Fisher