**To:** Carey Clark, Writing Department Chair

**From:** Writing Department Faculty

**Date:**   November 18, 2015

**Re:** Visiting Lecturer Term Limits

The Writing Department proposes that the three-year renewal limit on Visiting Lecturer terms be repealed at the university level, and that individual departments be given the freedom to create their own policies in regard to managing lines. For the Writing Department, these temporary appointments have degraded the quality and productivity of both our teaching and our administration and should be replaced by permanent, full-time appointments.In the meantime, to increase the stability of our Department, and specifically our First-Year Writing program, it is essential to suspend the three-year renewal limit at the university level.

**Background**

The *Faculty Handbook* defines the Visiting Lecturer as “the temporary hire of full-time faculty to meet ‘emergency’ programmatic needs” (May 2015, p 34). The Writing Department currently has six Visiting Lecturers, who cover 24 sections of First-Year Writing a semester. Each semester, the program runs between 80 and 90 sections of 1310 and 1320.While  First-Year Writing benefits from having a variety of faculty positions, in order to accommodate changes  in enrollment from year to year, it is clear that the 24 sections staffed by Visiting Lecturers are an ongoing need, rather than than a temporary measure to accommodate fluctuations in enrollment.

The Indianapolis Resolution, a document created by compositionists to address unfair and insecure labor practices, decries the contingent labor system that currently exists in many writing programs at the university level. The Indianapolis Resolution calls not only for reform, but also for action to resolve ongoing labor inequities in our discipline. In the spirit of fulfilling that request, the UCA Writing department, as labor responsible faculty, do hereby request the suspension of the three-year rule in order to create more stability for our program, faculty, and students while moving toward an eventual goal of converting these positions to permanent faculty lines.

**Departmental Difficulties**

The high turnover created by having such large number of positions limited to three years has created some unforeseen problems.

***Problems with the 3-year limit for First-Year Writing faculty***

* Degraded assessment scores due to continual influx of new faculty who aren’t trained to meet departmental objectives
* Depletion of pool of qualified local/regional applicants
* Competition for limited pool with institutions offering permanent positions
* Increased training and mentoring load for First-Year Writing Director, Assistant Director, and Department Administrative Staff
* Resource drain of perpetual faculty searches
* Institutional learning curve

**Rationale**

Recently, UALR filled three permanent lectureship lines by offering positions to contingent faculty from UCA: Melvin Beavers, Greg Graham, and Tammy Scaife.  Ms. Scaife and Mr. Graham had been with the Writing Program for many years; and while it was Mr. Beavers’ first year of employment at UCA, his situation highlights the problem with temporary positions—they preclude not only job security for talented compositionists, but also prevent the opportunity for advancement, benefits, or professional status.

The most significant benefit of reducing faculty turnover by creating permanent lines, however, is the greater stability it provides for our students. Longer-term faculty are more knowledgeable about institutional and departmental objectives and policies, more familiar with the needs of our student body, and more familiar with the curricular and pedagogical priorities of our program. A more stable faculty is in a better position to grow and innovate, establishing both a regional and national identity for our program.

At this time, the Writing Department maintains that our students will be best served by a combination of permanent lecturer and tenure lines. While we are also asking our department chair to again request the conversion of these lines to permanent positions, we respectfully ask that Senate forward to the Handbook Committee our request to allow departments/programs to reappoint Visiting Lecturers beyond the three-year limit.