2019-2020 CLAS Finance Committee Report

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College Office Representatives: Chris McCarty and Uma Sethuram

In Fall 2019 the Finance Committee was charged with creating a template to collect data on the use of OPS funds within departments. OPS stands for Other Personnel Services. These state funds are primarily used to pay for teaching assistants. This was part of a college wide initiative spearheaded by Associate Dean Chris McCarty to take a fresh look at how OPS funds are distributed. Note that the role of our committee was to design a method for collecting data – not make recommendations as to how these funds are distributed. It was anticipated that this reevaluation of OPS funding would take two years with the first year spent gathering data, and the second year having an open discussion with the college office and departments as to how best to distribute OPS funds. We do not know how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect this.

Initially the committee was provided with data from Uma Sethuram and Elizabeth Lynch for departmental aggregate statistics on the total OPS funds for teaching and research, as well as other departmental details like the number of faculty and total student credit hours taught. We could also have obtained every single OPS transaction in the college for an academic year; however, the committee felt that neither the macroscopic averages nor the microscopic details of every transaction were a useful starting point.

The CLAS finance committee has broad representation from departments in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. When we compared TA roles in our departments, we found that duties varied widely from department to department and sometimes even within one department. A discussion TA might be responsible for 120 students, but only grading weekly quizzes, while another TA might be the instructor of record for a course of 30 students and be responsible for grading and revising essays. Still another TA might have a lab class of 12 students, but be responsible for setting up and maintaining equipment as well as grading extended lab reports.

To capture the diversity of TA roles in CLAS departments the committee has created a spreadsheet where chairs enter the course, number of TA's, number of students, a generic role such as discussion TA, lab TA, or instructor of record, and a sentence describing the TA's duties. There is also space for non-TA roles such as administrative assistant or even research assistant. In this way one can capture information about how OPS funds are used without being overwhelmed by the amount of data. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak Chris McCarty was going

to alpha test this form with a few departments and eventually present it at divisional chair's meetings.

Additional files:

- OPSDirections.docx – directions for how to fill out the template
- OPSTemplate.xlsx – blank template
- OPSExample.xlsx – template with some sample fields completed