

CPC 2018–19 Report and Analysis of Spring 2019 Staffing Requests

This report covers the CPC's main activities during the 2018–19 academic year, including its discussions of staffing requests. For the most recent CPC report on the curriculum with data on enrollment and related issues, please see <https://sites.williams.edu/cpc/>.

The charge of the CPC is as follows:

The Curricular Planning Committee analyzes the college-wide curriculum, investigating changes over time and exploring questions about its future. The CPC coordinates conversations among academic units as they make curricular plans and staffing requests. It assesses all new curricular initiatives for their long-term curricular and staffing implications and communicates its views to the CEA before they are brought to the faculty for discussion and a vote. The CPC makes its analysis of the curriculum available for faculty discussion. In light of its analysis and faculty input, the CPC makes recommendations to the CAP on the allocation of faculty positions to departments and programs; a summary of these recommendations is made available to the faculty. After the CAP completes its allocation of faculty positions, the CPC and CAP analyze the staffing decisions for the faculty.

Membership of the CPC for the 2018–19 academic year

Elected faculty members: Mea Cook (Geosciences), Amy Holzapfel (Theatre), Jeffrey Israel (Religion), Nicole Mellow (Political Science), Christopher Nugent (Chinese, CPC chair), Heather Williams (Biology)

Ex-officio members: Denise Buell (Religion, Dean of the Faculty), David Love (Economics, Provost), Maud Mandel (History, President)

Asian American Studies

A substantial part of the CPC's time this year was spent investigating the current and possible future status of Asian American studies at the college. In response to a request to form a program in Asian American studies submitted by a group of faculty in the spring of 2018, the CPC formed a working group on Asian American studies. Mea Cook and Jeff Israel served as co-chairs, putting in considerable work in addition to their regular CPC duties. The CPC charged the working group with answering the following set of questions:

The current state of Asian American studies at Williams

–Which faculty currently offer Asian American studies courses on a regular or semi-regular basis?

–What Asian American studies courses does the college currently offer on a regular and semi-regular basis?

–What courses does the college offer that are not primarily in Asian American studies but that deal with the field of Asian American studies in some way (and would thus both offer support to courses in Asian American studies and benefit from the presence of more courses in Asian American studies as part of the curriculum)?

–What are the enrollments for courses specifically in Asian American studies?

–Do recent and current enrollment figures indicate strong interest in a concentration in Asian American studies (for example, do many students take two or more courses in Asian American studies)?

Future possibilities for Asian American studies at Williams

–Do you recommend a more formal curricular and administrative structure for Asian American studies at Williams than what currently exists?

–If so, what are some possible structures for a program in Asian American studies?

–What resources are currently available for such a program and what additional resources would be needed?

–If the College were to begin the process of establishing a program in Asian American studies, what might the different stages in this process look like and what sort of timeline would be appropriate?

–What might a program in Asian American studies look like in terms of fields and sub-fields?

–How would the offerings in these fields and sub-fields be supported by and complement existing curricular resources?

–Were there to be one or more new hires in Asian American studies in the near future, what should the priorities be in terms of rank and field/sub-field?

–What are some possible structures for a concentration in Asian American studies?

–What curricular and staffing resources would be necessary to sustain a robust concentration in Asian American studies?

A full description of the working group's process and findings can be found here:

<https://sites.williams.edu/cpc/>

While the vast majority of the work on this topic was carried out by the working group itself, the full CPC also devoted multiple meetings to the topic of Asian American studies, including discussions at every stage of the working group's work.

Visitors

In response to a general concern about the increased use of visiting faculty at the college and a specific request from the CPR to examine the issue, the CPC also sent all unit chairs the following questions concerning how their units use visitors:

1. Under what circumstances does your unit request visitors?
2. How does your unit make decisions about leave patterns? How does this relate to your unit's use of visitors?
3. How difficult or easy is it to find visitors for your unit? What are the factors that account for this ease or difficulty?
4. How central have visitors been in the operation of your unit over the past 5 or so years?
5. Have visitors made any contributions to the way your unit thinks about its curriculum? (If so, how?)

Answers to these questions varied widely. Some units rarely employ visitors (e.g. Chemistry, Biology, Geosciences, Physics), while others rely on them frequently for leave replacement (e.g. most foreign language units). Some units find it easy to hire visitors while others, especially Chemistry, Biology, and Computer science, find it difficult to near impossible for reasons ranging from a lab availability to a tight labor market. Visitors fall into different categories, including the following:

- 1) Special visitors: Bolin fellows, C3 postdoctoral fellows, Mellon postdoctoral fellows, Stint-funded fellows, Stanley Kaplan postdoctoral fellows
- 2) Distinguished visitors: visitors with named, endowed titles (e.g. Croghan, Sterling Brown, Sterling Clark, Payne, Boskey, etc.)
- 3) Filling a vacancy: visitor filling a position for which the college is not paying someone else (e.g., a new faculty hire deferring a start date; faculty member taking an unpaid leave)

- 4) Partner/spouse: a visiting position created to recruit a tenure-track hire
- 5) College service replacements: visitor filling in for a faculty member who is serving in an administrative position that carries course release, such as Dean of the Faculty, Associate Dean of the Faculty, Associate Dean for Institutional Diversity and Equity, Provost, Dean of the College, some directors, and occasionally some chairs.
- 6) Leave replacements: visitor filling in for a faculty member on paid leave who will return to the college.
- 7) Term appointments: all other visitors (e.g., new short-term appointments not necessarily expected to continue, created in response to an immediate need such as enrollment pressures or a curricular opportunity; renewable positions that might rotate; anything else)

Some units rarely hire visitors for leave replacement, but regularly hire Bolins and distinguished visitors (e.g. Religion). The general consensus is that visitors play important roles at the college, whether teaching regular, required courses or introducing new areas of study. One negative curricular impact related to visitors is that there is frequently not enough communication between a visitor's home unit and related units to avoid overlap with other courses in the catalog

The CPC also continued discussions about enrollment pressures in certain units, made minor revisions to the tenure track request memo, and undertook wider ranging discussions about the curriculum, including the number, role, and effectiveness of various curricular requirements.

Staffing requests

Following the submission of staffing requests on March 1st (or, in some cases, much later), the CPC focused its energies on evaluating each request and conveying that evaluation to the CAP. As part of this process, the CPC developed rough descriptions of three groups into which staffing requests could be put. They are as follows:

Group 1

The staffing request clearly and persuasively articulates how the position would advance or sustain the core curricular mission of *both* the unit and the College (including key College commitments and curricular objectives). It explains how the position would cover a crucial aspect of the curriculum not covered by other units or by other positions and would, in fact, meaningfully augment the curriculum of other units (as demonstrated through conversations with other units as described in the staffing request). Moreover, the request shows that there is an immediate pressing curricular need for which a tenure-stream appointment is clearly the best

option for both the unit and the college. These are requests that should be given the highest priority in this hiring cycle.

Group 2

The staffing request clearly and persuasively articulates how the position would advance or sustain the core curricular mission of *both* the unit and the College (including key College commitments and curricular objectives). It explains how the position would cover a crucial aspect of the curriculum not covered by other units or by other positions and would, in fact, meaningfully augment the curriculum of other units (as demonstrated through conversations with other units as described in the staffing request). However, the curricular need is either not as immediately pressing as for those requests in Group 1 or it can be reasonably met by means other than a tenure-stream appointment in the immediate future. These requests should be very seriously considered in the near future.

Group 3

The staffing request is less clear about how the position would advance or sustain the core curricular mission of *both* the unit and the College (including key College commitments and curricular objectives), or is not clear about how the position would cover a crucial aspect of the curriculum not covered by other units or by other positions. Moreover, it is not clear that the position would meaningfully contribute to other units based on conversations with other units described in the staffing request. There also is not an immediate and pressing curricular need (at both the unit and College level) for the position at this time. These requests may have strong intellectual justification but do not demonstrate clear current curricular need.

A small number of requests clearly fell into group one or group three; most, however, were more difficult to categorize, with different committee members coming to different conclusions. While these groupings were helpful in thinking about the requests, the committee did not make final determinations about the best categorization of each request, preferring to share a range of thoughts and opinions with the CAP.

The CAP and CPC received twenty-one requests for tenure-stream appointments (the same number as last year) from sixteen units (counting Anthro-Soc and Science and Technology Studies, who made a joint request, separately). The requests, a summary of the CPC's discussions, and the CAP's decisions, are as follows:

Africana Studies

Africana requested 2.5 expansion positions. They asked to have the position they currently share with History moved entirely into Africana and requested two full new positions.

1. Caribbean history and transnational Black radical movements. The request defines this position by the fields and topics Professor Shanti Singham taught in recent years, but notes that the search would likely be focused more broadly on Caribbean studies. The request clearly articulates how the position would advance the core curricular mission of Africana Studies as described in its recent self-study and external review (note: neither of these documents were made available to the CPC). Though the request does not discuss how the position would contribute to the core curriculum of the college, the CPC noted that this has been an area of intended curricular growth in recent years. Professor Saint Just in French works on the Caribbean and both Latino/a Studies and History have recently conducted searches in this area. Spanish has also requested a position in the cultural production of the Hispanic Caribbean that could include an African diasporic element. The college has thus made an implicit curricular commitment to Caribbean studies, though there are still few tenure-stream faculty working and teaching in that area. The CPC saw this as a strong request and encouraged more discussion between Africana, Latina/o Studies, and Romance Languages about possible complementary correspondences and overlaps between their positions/requests.

2. Transnational connections between Africa and African-America. As the request notes, the unit has a problematic gap in its coverage of Africa (as opposed to the African diaspora in the US). While Professors Kenda Mutongi and Ngonidzashe Munemo offered courses in African history and politics in the past, Professor Mutongi has left the college and Professor Munemo is currently serving as Associate Dean for Institutional Diversity and Equity. The request does indicate a willingness to wait and see whether or not History's request for a replacement for Professor Mutongi is granted and what sort of offerings a hire in that position would teach. There was also discussion in the CPC of the possibility of Africana hiring an Africanist who focuses on Environmental Studies, a position that has been discussed in the past and has the support of the CPC (there is currently a Bolin Fellow with a similar scholarly profile).

The CPC felt that the curricular argument made the request for this position strong and thought it may be more urgent than the Caribbeanist position (since Africa is a massive continent with dozens of countries, yet there are very few faculty at the college whose research and teaching focus on it). But because this search would be two years away (proposed for 2021–22 academic year) and partially dependent on other searches that would likely take place before that, the CPC felt it might make sense to wait and see how those other searches play out. That being said, the CPC noted that there was a good argument for the curricular importance of *both* this position *and* the History request.

3. Social scientist, preferable senior-level, who works on an emerging area of Africana Studies. As this search would be three years away and is not described in much detail in the request, the

CPC found it difficult to assess. The CPC looks forward to an expanded request for this position in the future.

The CAP approved one position, for either a Caribbeanist or Africanist, as the unit prefers. The search will take place in the fall of 2020.

American Studies

Open-rank position in Asian American studies. This request for an expansion position is primarily based on the recommendations of the “CPC Asian American Studies Working Group Report.” That report argues for three expansion positions in Asian American studies and indicates a variety of possibilities for units to house such positions. The American Studies request indicates that the position “will need to represent social science (Division II) fields and methodologies,” as they already have a faculty member teaching in the field of Asian American literature.

There are aspects of this request that the CPC found confusing. For example, much of the description of the desired position focuses not on Asian American studies but on American “neoliberalism” and other topics currently covered by a visiting assistant professor. There is no discussion about how the field of Asian American studies specifically would fit with the unit’s curricular goals or what kinds of courses in the field of Asian American studies such a faculty member would teach (beyond the hope that they would deal with neo-liberalism).

Following the recommendations of the “Working Group Report,” however, American Studies would be a natural home for such a position. The “Working Group Report” argues for the important curricular role of Asian American studies at the college in some detail and the CPC found many aspects of that argument fully persuasive. The CPC also discussed rank and there was consensus that a senior hire would offer the most benefits to the development of Asian American studies as a field at the college.

The CAP approved a search for a senior hire in this position.

Art History:

Twentieth-Century European Art (1870–1970). This request asks to replace a faculty member scheduled to retire in June, 2019. The request notes that, following this colleague’s retirement, there will be no faculty who regularly teach courses on twentieth-century European art, and European Modernism in particular. The request argues that these courses are not only important for the overall Art History curriculum, they also traditionally play a key role in the Graduate Program in the History of Art.

While the CPC found the argument for the importance of twentieth-century European art in the college's Art History curriculum convincing, it would have appreciated more explanation about why such courses could not be offered, even on a temporary basis, by other faculty, who might have at least some degree of knowledge and training in this area, or at least enough to sustain the curriculum for a brief time. It would also have been helpful to have some data on current or recent enrollment trends in this area of the curriculum and/or major in Art History. The CPC did note that the department has taken steps over the past several years to expand their curricular offerings in more diverse and global areas of art history and the unit's impressive work to strengthen its curriculum in areas beyond the European canon.

The CAP approved this request.

Asian Studies

Japanese language with an additional specialization in linguistics or another discipline. While the request describes this as a replacement for Reiko Yamada, it is more accurately considered as the conversion of a visiting position into a tenure-track position. The request argues that the unit cannot continue to offer the Japanese major with only two tenure-stream faculty. It also expresses a hope to expand the college's offerings in linguistics with a hire that has expertise in that area. The CPC found the request (which has been made a number of times over the last decade) persuasive. If the college intends the study of Japanese language to be a meaningful part of its curriculum, it needs to adequately staff the program. The CPC believes that the study of Japanese should indeed continue to be a meaningful part of our curriculum, which also includes rich offerings on Japanese history, literature, and art. There remained some disagreement on the CPC about whether or not linguistics should be the additional focus (beyond language teaching).

The CAP approved this request.

Chemistry

Physical/environmental/analytical chemist. This request asks to replace a faculty member who has left the College. The CPC had mixed thoughts about this request. Some members lauded Chemistry's desire to reduce the size of their intro classes, which are currently quite large. At the same time, there is less indication in the request that their upper-level courses suffer from high enrollments in the same way. There was also some concern that the possibility of *not* hiring an environmental Chemist was left open in the request. As the departing faculty member's courses have been an important part of the Environmental Studies curriculum, some CPC members felt it would be unfortunate if a new hire could not teach similar courses, for which there is demonstrated curricular need. The request asks for a search to be conducted in 2020--21, with the explanation for the earliness of the request being a desire to nail down future FTE so that departmental discussions about curricular restructuring can proceed. Some on the committee,

while sympathetic to this goal, argued that the request might be premature (Chemistry has a self-study coming up) and that further discussions with Environmental Studies were in order.

The CAP did not approve this request.

Cognitive Science

Cognitive scientist. This request asks for an expansion position to be filled by a cognitive scientist who uses computational approaches (such as machine learning, Bayesian modeling, neural networks, or computational neuroscience). From a curricular standpoint, the CPC felt that this was a very strong request. Cognitive Science is a deeply interdisciplinary field that brings together disciplines as distant as psychology and linguistics. It also has important connections with computer science and benefits the increasing number of students pursuing that field of study. The Program in Cognitive Science has also been successful in training students for graduate school and encouraging student research in the field. As the request indicates, the chairs of Computer Science, Psychology, and Neuroscience are all supportive of the creation of this position.

In terms of enrollment pressures, the Program in Cognitive Science has been able to staff its core courses only through various faculty teaching overloads; it fears that it will be unable to consistently offer either its introductory course or its senior seminar without additional dedicated FTE. The introductory course is often heavily over-enrolled (as it is for the fall 2019 term). Given the increased focus on data science at the College, a position in computational approaches to cognitive science could play an important role in this area going forward. Some committee members expressed concern about hiring into a unit with no dedicated FTE and wondered if this request could be fulfilled with a line in Computer Science or through Psychology's request for a Neuropsychologist. It seems that the answer to the latter question would likely be "no," given the different requirements and orientations of the two fields. The CPC found this request to be persuasive, while acknowledging possible administrative complications for a unit with no previous dedicated FTE.

The CAP did not approve this request.

Computer Science

The Computer Science Department request originally asked for two positions, which appeared likely to be replacements, as two senior faculty were likely to resign (and have done so as of June 30, 2019). While the CPC is very sympathetic to their enrollment pressures and difficulties in hiring Computer Science, because the unit was able to make four hires last academic year, it was not clear to the committee that there were strong curricular justifications for an additional two positions until the status of possibly departing faculty became clear (as it later did).

The CAP approved one position.

Economics

Two positions in economic development policy making, with one focusing on financial regulation in developing countries and the other on development macroeconomics. This request asks to replace two faculty soon to begin phased retirement. The request notes that at least one and possibly both of the hires ought to be at the senior level. The curricular argument focuses on the importance of these positions for the Center for Development Economics, both in terms of staffing the director position and offering appropriate courses. The CPC agreed that a senior economist in one of these areas would be necessary to serve as director for the CDE. The CPC felt the curricular argument for the second position to be strong as well, given its importance to the CDE and the fact that Economics, which regularly has over 100 majors (118 in the class of 2021), is under substantial enrollment pressures that impact its curricular offerings. However, because neither departing faculty have yet fully retired, some CPC members argued that the curricular gap could adequately be filled by a single senior hire next year.

The CAP approved one (senior) position.

History

1. African history. This request asks to replace a faculty member who has left the college. The request indicates a willingness to conceive of the position in broad temporal and geographic terms. The CPC felt the curricular argument for the position is strong, both in terms of History's own curriculum and the larger curriculum of the college. As noted in the discussion of the Africana Studies requests, Africa ought to play a much larger role in the curriculum than it currently does, given its size, diversity, and historical importance. Moreover, there is no one else in the unit (or any other unit) who could cover what the faculty member in this position would cover.

2. Medieval Europe and the World. This request asks to replace a faculty member who has left the college. The request notes that medieval Europe has long been a key part of the curricula of both History and the college. Courses in this area have also had consistently high enrollments. As the request notes, this thousand-year span cannot be adequately covered by other faculty in the unit. Moreover, courses on medieval Europe are important for many other fields and disciplines at the college. The CPC regards the fact that this position has been slightly reconfigured to focus more on contact with non-European cultures and societies as a positive development that accords with changes in the field. Some CPC members further argued that an understanding of the medieval period is crucial for any informed understanding of the transition to modernity worldwide. Others noted that the college curriculum currently skews very heavily

towards the modern and even contemporary, and that we should be wary of losing more courses on the somewhat more distant past.

The CAP approved one position and History has elected to use it for an Africanist.

Psychology

Behavioral neuroscience. This request asks to replace a faculty member who is scheduled to retire in June of 2020. The request argues for the important role of neuroscience in the Psychology curriculum, especially in terms of providing students with sufficient research opportunities. It also articulates the importance of the field for the college as a whole, citing multiple interdisciplinary opportunities. One CPC member noted that since the early 1990s, Psychology and Biology have had an understanding that each unit would have three faculty members who could contribute courses (both core courses and electives) to the Neuroscience program and provide research opportunities to students with interests in the area. When leave patterns coincide, maintaining such offerings becomes difficult. With a key faculty member's retirement, Psychology will be short of staffing within that subdiscipline. The CPC agreed there are both strong curricular and enrollment reasons for approving this request.

The CAP approved this request.

Physics

Physicist. This request asks to replace a faculty member who has left the college with a theoretical or computational physicist, with other possibilities including a physicist whose work integrates biology and physics, or could be connected to data science (with multiple possible subfields). The request points out that a failure to replace this position would mean a loss of one or more courses for non-majors. While curricular areas mentioned in the request include biophysics and computation/machine learning, the request does not reference any discussions about the position with Biology or Computer Science. Some committee members noted that in the recent past, Physics majors and students in allied fields have been very interested in courses and thesis work connected to environmental science and global phenomena, suggesting that there is demand for applied physics. The sense of the CPC was that it would be useful for Physics to have conversations with other departments and potentially re-frame the request.

The CAP approved this request

Religion

Asian American Religions with a research and teaching focus on non-Abrahamic traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, and Daoism are named possibilities). This request, which asks for an expansion position, is best considered as a response to the "CPC Working Group on Asian

American Studies Report,” which noted the Religion Department as one possible place for a hire. The request explains that the unit’s highest curricular priority at the moment is a specialist in pre-modern Asian religions. At the same time, the request explains that a scholar of Asian American religions would fit well within the general structure of the department, which is primarily structured along modernist-premodernist lines (with JJ Storm being the modernist for Asian religions, though his research and teaching has shifted more towards European critical theory in recent years). Some CPC members noted that the unit and the college already have a substantial number of faculty whose research and teaching focus on religion in America, with at least five tenure stream faculty whose work is focused on this area (and an addition faculty member for whom this is a partial focus). The request is clear in stating that the department would expect to get a replacement position for a current faculty member working on pre-modern Asian traditions when that faculty member retires. One concern expressed by some CPC members was the possibility that the unit would not be granted such a replacement position, , which would leave a major gap in the coverage of religious traditions in Asia.

The CAP approved this request and a search will be conducted in the 2020–21 academic year.

Russian

Russian language and culture. This request asks to replace a faculty member who has left the college (thus reducing the tenure stream FTE in Russian at the college to two). The request argues that it is impossible to sustain a program in Russian language and the literature and culture of Russia and the former Soviet Union with only two FTE. Though language instruction is an immediate pressing need for the Russian program, the request notes that any potential hire could contribute to post-Soviet studies, film and media studies, area studies, visual arts, and popular culture studies. The CPC found this argument convincing and noted the successful efforts the program has made to increase enrollments in Russian language. Enrollment in the courses they offer in literature and culture have been consistently strong. The CPC was also impressed that a number of other units, including Comparative Literature, Anthro-Soc., History, Jewish Studies, Global Studies, and Political Science wrote in support of this request. Finally, the CPC noted the substantial contributions of faculty in Russian to such other units as Comparative Literature and Women and Gender Studies.

The CAP approved this request.

Science and Technology Studies and Anthro-Soc.

Sociology of science and technology. This joint request from Anthro-Soc. and the Science and Technology Studies Program asks for a position with .5 FTE in each unit. The CPC Working Group on Science and Technology Studies Report from 2018 argued for the importance of STS in the College’s curriculum and the request builds on that report to articulate why Sociology is a

good place to put such a position. The CPC finds the argument for STS in general to be quite strong, though some members were less convinced by the need for a .5 position in Sociology in particular. Some committee members argued that it might make more sense to have a position fully in STS. There was also some concern about the burden for a new colleague spearheading STS alone with no possible reprieve for the STS introductory course. The CPC noted that there is a Strategic Academic Initiative proposing a Center for STS that would include multiple hires. A number of members were enthusiastic about the possibility of a postdoc and a New Scholar Series as ways to think about possibilities for this position.

The CAP did not approve this request.

Romance Languages: Spanish

Romance languages requested two positions: 1) a conversion of a repeating visiting position that has existed since 2012; and 2) a “pre-replacement” for the next departure from the Spanish program.

1. **Spanish language and Mexican literature/cultural production** (search to be conducted in 2019–20)
2. **Spanish language and the literature/cultural production of the Hispanic Caribbean** (search to be conducted in 2020–21)

As with a similar request last year, the request emphasizes the vast range of literary traditions for which RLSP is responsible (including, to give just two examples, medieval Spain and contemporary literature of the “Southern Cone”). The request also notes the increasing number of heritage learners of Spanish at the college who desire to study both language and culture but come possessing a set of linguistic and culture-based skills that are often different from those of second-language learners.

The CPC was convinced that both positions would advance or sustain core curricular objectives of the unit. They would allow for more regular offerings of heritage language classes that are currently offered only periodically and by LATS rather than RLSP. They would also allow for significantly more curricular offerings on Mexico and the Hispanic Caribbean. Courses offered on Mexican literature and the Hispanic Caribbean by recent visitors have had very strong enrollments, indicating that this is an area for which there is demonstrated demand (for courses that are *not* offered by current faculty). Recent hires and approved searches in Afrolatinidad studies indicate a broader College commitment to Caribbean Studies (though the request did not indicate any conversations with other units teaching in this area). The courses aimed at heritage learners would also contribute to the College’s stated commitment to supporting groups that

have been historically underrepresented at the College. Courses on Mexican and Hispanic Caribbean literature are not currently offered by any other units and the request notes that RLSP has had discussions with LATS that show these positions would meaningfully augment the LATS curriculum. They could also potentially augment the Africana curriculum, but there is no mention of a discussion with that unit.

The CAP approved the request for a position in Spanish language and Mexican literature/cultural production