

Report on the MLA's 2004 Survey of Hiring Departments

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IN THE fall of 2004 the MLA surveyed departments about the outcomes of searches to hire new full-time faculty members that they had conducted in the academic year 2003–04. Departments invited to participate in the survey were all 1,307 that placed ads in the 2003–04 MLA *Job Information List (JIL)* plus a sample (1,182) of those departments that have records in the MLA file of departmental administrators but did not advertise in the *JIL* that year. We surveyed a 20% sample ($n = 576$) of the 2,880 non-*JIL* departments in four-year institutions and a 50% sample ($n = 606$) of the 1,213 departments in two-year colleges, because so few two-year colleges place ads in the *JIL*. Of the 1,307 *JIL* departments, 716 (55%) responded; of the 1,182 non-*JIL* departments, 298 (25%) responded. Of the 606 non-*JIL* departments in two-year colleges, 135 (22%) responded. The overall response rate was 41%.

The MLA received the data file for this study in January 2005. In all, 811 departments reported on the outcome of 1,470 searches. An additional 203 departments (20% of the respondents) reported that they had conducted no search. The departments listed in the 2003–04 *JIL* (the *JIL* group) had conducted 1,277 searches. Of the 298 responding departments that were not listed in the 2003–04 *JIL* (the non-*JIL* group), 120 (40.3%) had conducted at least one search; these departments had conducted a total of 193 searches. Departments in the non-*JIL* group that conducted searches were 71 (52.6%) of the 135 responding departments in two-year colleges and 49 (30.1%) of the 163 responding departments in four-year institutions.

Overall, 371 English departments conducted 745 (50.7%) of the 1,470 searches covered by the survey; 275 foreign language departments conducted 452 (30.7%). The remaining searches were

conducted by departments that combine English and foreign languages (50 searches [3.4%] by 32 departments), comparative literature departments (18 searches [1.2%] by 13 departments), interdisciplinary departments or programs (56 searches [3.8%] by 37 departments), or by programs that identified themselves under some other classification (149 searches [10.1%] by 83 departments).

This report focuses on findings for departments that classified themselves either as English or as foreign language.

How many positions did departments seek to fill?

The 811 departments that reported searches conducted an average of 1.8 searches each for full-time faculty members: 53.1% conducted one search, 28.4% conducted two, 9.9% conducted three, 4.7% conducted four, 3.9% conducted five or more. The most searches conducted by any department (one) was eleven.

The sixteen two-year college English departments in the *JIL* group conducted the most searches, an average of 2.6 each. The 299 four-year English departments in the *JIL* group had the next most, an average of 2.0. The 275 foreign language departments, two- or four-year, conducted 1.6 searches on average. The 96 two-year departments conducted 1.7 searches on average—2.2 searches for departments in the *JIL* group, 1.6 searches for those in the non-*JIL* group.

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What percentage of the positions departments sought to fill were for tenure-track assistant professor, what percentage for a full-time, non-tenure-track person?

Of the 618 positions that four-year English departments in the *JIL* group sought to fill, 73.1% (452) were advertised as appointments at the level of tenure-track assistant professor; 15.4% (95) were for a full-time, non-tenure-track person. The assistant professor searches resulted in a hire 87.2% of the time, and 97.8% of these appointments were made as the positions were advertised. There were 5 searches (1.2%) advertised as tenure-track assistant professor positions that resulted in hires at the rank of associate professor, 4 (1.0%) that resulted in a non-tenure-track appointment.

Of the 421 positions that four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group sought to fill, 63.7% (268) were advertised as appointments at the level of tenure-track assistant professor; 25.4% (107) were for full-time, non-tenure-track positions. The assistant professor searches resulted in a hire 81.0% of the time, and 94.9% of these appointments were made as the positions were advertised. There were 4 searches (1.8%) advertised as tenure-track assistant professor positions that resulted in hires at the rank of associate professor, 7 (3.2%) that resulted in a non-tenure-track appointment.

Only 19 four-year non-*JIL* departments reported conducting searches in 2003–04 (11 English and 8 foreign language departments). They conducted 31 searches (16 English, 15 foreign languages). Of the searches that the English departments conducted, 12 were for a tenure-track assistant professor appointment, the remaining 4 for full-time, non-tenure-track positions. Of the 15 searches that the 8 foreign language departments conducted, 6 were for an appointment at the level of a tenure-track assistant professor, 9 for a full-time, non-tenure-track position.

Of the 111 searches conducted by the 59 English departments in two-year colleges, 47.7% (53) were to fill positions advertised as tenure-track assistant professor appointments; 25.2% (28) were for a full-time, non-tenure-track instructor or other type of appointment.

Of the 16 searches conducted by the 11 foreign language departments in two-year colleges, 12 were for a tenure-track assistant professor, 4 for a full-time, non-tenure-track person or an appointment of which the rank and tenure status were open or undefined.

How many searches ended successfully with a hire?

Of the 618 searches that the four-year English departments in the *JIL* group conducted, 539 (87.2%) ended with a hire. Of the 79 cases where they did not, 32 were because candidates refused the offer (5.2% of all the searches), 23 because the search attracted an unsuitable candidate pool (3.7% of all the searches), 10 because the position was withdrawn for lack of funding (1.6% of all the searches), 10 because the position was withdrawn for other reasons, 4 because the administration disapproved of the candidate the department wanted to hire.

Fifteen of the 16 searches that the four-year English departments in the non-*JIL* group conducted ended with a hire.

Of the 421 searches that the four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group conducted, 347 (82.4%) ended with a hire. Of the 74 cases where they did not, 35 were because candidates refused the offer (8.3% of all the searches), 18 because the search attracted an unsuitable candidate pool (4.3% of all the searches), 13 because the position was withdrawn for lack of funding (3.1% of all the searches), 8 because the position was withdrawn for other reasons (1.9%).

Thirteen of the 15 searches that the four-year foreign language departments in the non-*JIL* group conducted ended with a hire.

Among the two-year college English and foreign language departments, both *JIL* and non-*JIL*, 115 (90.6%) of the 127 searches ended with a hire. Of the 12 searches that did not, 6 failed because of an unsuitable candidate pool, 5 because the position was withdrawn for lack of funding, 1 because the candidate refused the offer.

When searches ended with a hire, in 99% of all cases—English and foreign languages, *JIL* group and non-*JIL* group—respondents said that their department was either very satisfied (87%) or somewhat satisfied (12%) with the outcome. Among the departments in four-year institutions, when a search ended with a hire, satisfaction in the *JIL* group was higher than in the non-*JIL* group (*JIL*-group respondents were very satisfied in 87.9% of searches, non-*JIL*-group respondents were very satisfied in 79.4% of searches). Two-year college responses were more even (84.0% and 83.7%, resp.).

How many applications did departments receive?

Of the searches conducted by the four-year English departments in the *JIL* group, 36.8% had

fewer than 50 applications, 33.3% had between 50 and 99, 29.9% had 100 or more. In the non-*JIL* group, 93.8% of the searches conducted by four-year English departments had fewer than 50 applications; none had 100 or more.

There were fewer than 50 applicants for 62.5% of the searches conducted by the four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group, between 50 and 99 for 27.2%, 100 or more for 10.3%. In the non-*JIL* group, 100% of the searches conducted by four-year foreign language departments had fewer than 50 applications.

Among the two-year college English and foreign language departments, 26.0% of searches conducted by those in the *JIL* group received fewer than 50 applications, 16% received between 50 and 99, and 58.0% received 100 or more. The pattern is reversed for two-year college departments in the non-*JIL* group: 58.7% of searches received fewer than 50 applications, 24.0% received 50 to 99, and 17.3% received 100 or more.

Did departments interview candidates at the MLA convention?

Of the searches that four-year departments in the *JIL* group advertised as for a tenure-track position, 59.9% included an interview at the MLA convention. A convention interview was part of 63.3% of tenure-track searches conducted by four-year English departments in the *JIL* group, 56.8% of tenure-track searches conducted by four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group. Where the position was advertised as a tenure-track assistant professorship, an MLA interview was part of 65.0% of searches conducted by four-year English departments in the *JIL* group, 59.2% by foreign language departments.

An MLA convention interview was part of 25.3% of non-tenure-track searches that four-year departments in the *JIL* group conducted. The figure for English department searches was 24.2%, for foreign language department searches 27.4%.

Only 4.1% of the searches conducted by departments of all types in the non-*JIL* group included an MLA convention interview—7.5% conducted by departments in four-year institutions, 1.8% conducted by departments in two-year institutions.

In what months did candidates hired accept offers?

Searches by departments in the *JIL* group that resulted in hires concluded most often in Febru-

ary (19.9%), March (28.1%), or April (21.2%). For only 1.5% of searches was the position accepted before January 2004; for only 2.8% was the position accepted in January. In May, 13.7% of searches concluded in a hire; after May, 12.7%.

In the searches for tenure-track assistant professors that four-year departments in the *JIL* group conducted, 34.6% of positions were accepted in March 2004, 26.1% in February, 20.2% in May. Only 3.5% were accepted in January 2004, 0.9% before January. In 14.7% of the searches, positions were not accepted until May 2004 or after.

Searches by four-year departments in the *JIL* group for non-tenure-track appointments concluded with hires later in the year—perhaps because these appointments receive lower priority: 26.2% of such positions were accepted after May 2004, 21.3% in May, 23.6% in April, 16.3% in March, 9.1% in February, and 3.4% in January or before.

Searches conducted by two-year college departments follow a later calendar. In the *JIL* group, 78% of the searches that ended with a hire concluded in May (48.0%) or after (30.0%). In the non-*JIL* group, 76.9% of searches concluded in May or after, but the percentage of hires completed after May was much higher (60.6%).

What academic degrees did candidates hired have?

Of candidates hired to a tenure-track position in a four-year department in the *JIL* group, 84.8% had a PhD in hand, 8.1% were ABD, 5.5% held an MFA, 0.9% held a master's degree. For four-year English departments in the *JIL* group that hired tenure-track assistant professors, 82.6% of candidates hired held a PhD, 9.2% held an MFA, 5.5% were ABD, and 2.7% held a master's or other degree. For four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group that hired tenure-track assistant professors, 85.6% of candidates hired had a PhD, 12.9% were ABD, and 1.4% held some other degree (none hired held a master's degree).

When four-year departments in the *JIL* group made non-tenure-track hires, 53.4% of candidates hired held a PhD, 21.2% held a master's degree (other than an MFA), 6.4% held an MFA, and 16.5% were ABD.

In tenure-track hires made by two-year colleges, 45.6% of candidates hired held a master's degree other than an MFA (the figures are 61.8% for hires by two-year departments in the non-*JIL* group,

20.0% in the *JIL* group), 34.4% held a PhD (16.4% for the non-*JIL* group, 62.9% for the *JIL* group), 14.4% were ABD, and 4.4% held an MFA.

When two-year colleges made non-tenure-track hires, 70.0% of the candidates hired had a master's degree, 12.0% were ABD, 6.0% held a PhD, 6.0% held a bachelor's degree, 4.0% held an MFA, and 2.0% held some other degree.

In what year did candidates who held a PhD and who were hired for a tenure-track assistant professor position receive their degree?

When candidates who held a PhD were hired by a four-year department in the *JIL* group for a tenure-track assistant professor position, 34.0% received their doctorate degree in 2004, 19% in 2003, 14.3% in 2002, 8.2% in 2001, and 24.5% in 2000 or before. The percentages for four-year English and foreign language departments in the *JIL* group are the same.

For two-year college positions (tenure-track and non-tenure-track both), 15.8% of candidates hired who held a PhD received their degree in 2004; 42.1% in 2001, 2002, or 2003; and 42.1% in 2000 or before. When candidates hired held an MA, only 3.8% received their degree in 2004; 43.4% in 2001, 2002, or 2003; and 52.8% in 2000 or before.

What were the prior employment situations of candidates hired to a tenure-track assistant professor position?

When candidates were hired as a tenure-track assistant professor by a four-year department in the *JIL* group, 18.1% already held a tenure-track position at another institution. (Of this 18.1%, 11.1% received their PhD degree in the year 2000 or earlier, 5.8% in 2001, 2002, or 2003.) Of those hired as a tenure-track assistant professor, 33.1% already held a full-time temporary position, 8.2% held a part-time position, 3.9% held a postdoctoral fellowship, and 34.4% were still in graduate school. There were 1.3% hired who had been employed outside academia, and 1.0% who were unemployed.

Among four-year English departments in the *JIL* group, 19.8% of candidates hired as a tenure-track assistant professor already held a tenure-track position at another institution, 30.6% were

hired from a full-time non-tenure-track position, 10.8% from a part-time position, 4.5% from a postdoctoral fellowship, and 32.3% were still in graduate school. There were 1.0% hired who had been employed outside academia, and 1.0% hired who were unemployed.

Among four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group, 16.2% of candidates hired as a tenure-track assistant professor already held a tenure-track position at another institution, 35.2% were hired from a full-time non-tenure-track position, 4.8% from a part-time position, 2.4% from a postdoctoral fellowship, and 37.6% were still in graduate school. There were 2.4% hired who had been employed outside academia and 1.4% hired who were unemployed.

Among all the two-year departments, 17.1% of candidates hired who held a PhD (35 cases) already held a tenure-track position at another institution, 31.4% were hired from a full-time non-tenure-track position, 34.3% were in a part-time non-tenure-track position, and 8.6% were still in graduate school. Two hired candidates had been employed outside academia, one from a postdoctoral fellowship. When hired candidates held an MA (83 cases), 6.0% already held a tenure-track position at another institution, 28.9% were hired from a full-time non-tenure-track position, and 55.4% from a part-time non-tenure-track position. Three hired candidates were still in graduate school, three had been employed outside academia, and two were unemployed.

What percentages of men and women candidates were hired to positions at the various ranks and tenure statuses?

There were significant differences in the percentage distribution of men and women hired when departments filled positions at different academic ranks and tenure statuses. Across all the four-year departments, candidates hired for positions leading to or carrying tenure were 53.7% women and 46.3% men; for full-time non-tenure-track positions, 66.2% women and 33.8% men. (We do not know the gender breakdown of the applicant pools, although we do know from the United States Government's Survey of Earned Doctorates that women have received 55% or more of doctorate degrees in English and modern languages and literatures since 1984 and 58% or more since 1993.)¹

Our survey covered only a small number of senior searches—that is, searches to hire at the rank of professor or tenured associate professor—about 5% of all hires that the responding departments reported. The findings nonetheless offer some evidence, if limited, that men are more likely to be hired to more senior positions. Tables 1 and 2 show the gender breakdown of hires from the searches conducted by four-year and two-year departments and the rank and tenure status at which the positions were filled. Beyond the rank of assistant professor, the number of tenure-track hires by two-year colleges that are covered in the survey is so small that the percentages become meaningless for the purposes of discovering patterns.

What was the citizenship status of candidates hired by departments?

Students in foreign languages have been interested to know how many faculty openings are filled by people who are citizens of countries other than the United States or Canada. When foreign language departments in four-year institutions completed a hire to a tenure-track position, 50.0% of the people hired were United States citizens, 39.4% citizens of a country other than the United States or Canada. Citizenship was unknown for 7.2% of those hired.

Canadian students and departments have been interested to know how many vacancies in Canadian departments are filled by citizens of Canada

Table 1
Sex of Candidates Hired by Four-Year Departments, by Rank and Tenure Status

Rank and Tenure Status of Position at Time Hire Was Made	Number of Cases (Percentage)		Total
	Female	Male	
Tenure-track appointments			
Tenure-track assistant professor	410 (55.1)	334 (44.9)	744 (100.0)
Tenure-track associate professor	11 (44.0)	14 (56.0)	25 (100.0)
Tenured associate professor	11 (47.8)	12 (52.2)	23 (100.0)
Professor	12 (38.7)	19 (61.3)	31 (100.0)
Non-tenure-track appointments			
Full-time, one year	67 (65.0)	36 (35.0)	103 (100.0)
Full-time, renewable	112 (65.9)	58 (34.1)	170 (100.0)
Total number of cases (percentage)	623 (56.8)	473 (43.2)	1,096 (100.0)

Table 2
Sex of Candidates Hired by Two-Year Departments, by Rank and Tenure Status

Rank and Tenure Status of Position at Time Hire Was Made	Number of Cases (Percentage)		Total
	Female	Male	
Tenure-track appointments			
Tenure-track assistant professor	43 (61.4)	27 (38.6)	70 (100.0)
Tenure-track associate professor	4 (50.0)	4 (50.0)	8 (100.0)
Tenured associate professor	2 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)
Professor	6 (60.0)	4 (40.0)	10 (100.0)
Non-tenure-track appointments			
Full-time, one year	10 (76.9)	3 (23.1)	13 (100.0)
Full-time, renewable	14 (56.0)	11 (44.0)	25 (100.0)
Total number of cases (percentage)	79 (61.7)	49 (38.3)	128 (100.0)

and how many by citizens of the United States or other countries. Of the 1,014 responding departments, 965 (95.2%) were located in United States institutions, 49 (4.8%) in Canadian institutions. Thirty-four of the 49 Canadian departments conducted a total of 70 searches, of which 63 (90%) ended with a hire. Nineteen English departments conducted a total of 45 searches, 40 of which ended with a hire. Thirty-five of these hires were to tenure-track, 5 to non-tenure-track positions. Eleven Canadian foreign language departments conducted a total of 16 searches, 14 of which ended with a hire. Seven of these 14 hires were to tenure-track, 7 to non-tenure-track positions. (Four additional Canadian departments conducted the other nine searches, all of which ended with a hire, seven to tenure-track appointments and two to non-tenure-track appointments.)

Of the people the four-year Canadian English departments hired to fill 35 tenure-track appointments, 24 (68.6%) were Canadian citizens, 7 (20.0%) were United States citizens, and 4 (11.4%) were citizens of other countries. All those who filled the 5 non-tenure-track positions were Canadian citizens.

Of the people the four-year Canadian foreign language departments hired to fill 7 tenure-track appointments, 6 (85.7%) were citizens of countries other than the United States or Canada, 1 (14.3%) was a Canadian citizen. Of those hired to fill 7 non-tenure-track appointments, 6 (85.7%) were Canadian citizens, 1 was a citizen of a country other than the United States or Canada. Considering the small number of cases, these percentages should not be given too much weight.

Four-year English departments in United States colleges and universities completed 514 searches—420 leading to full-time tenure-track, 94 leading to full-time non-tenure-track appointments. Of the tenure-track appointments, 379 (90.2%) were filled by United States citizens, 4 (1.0%) by Ca-

nadian citizens, 25 (6.0%) by citizens of other countries, and 4 (1.0%) by persons with dual citizenship. There were 8 people hired (1.9%) whose citizenship was unknown.

What did the survey reveal about the ethnic and racial characteristics of individuals departments hired?

Tables 3, 4, and 5 summarize departments' reports about the racial and ethnic characteristics of people they hired to full-time faculty positions. Of the 443 candidates hired to tenure-track positions by four-year English departments in the *JIL* group, 77.0% were white and non-Hispanic, 3.6% were Hispanic, and 18.3% were nonwhite and non-Hispanic. The race and ethnicity of the remainder were unknown.

Of the 58 candidates hired to tenure-track positions by two-year English departments (both *JIL* and non-*JIL*), 75.9% were white and non-Hispanic, 5.2% were Hispanic, and 12.1% were nonwhite and non-Hispanic. The race and ethnicity of 6.9% were unknown.

Of the 233 candidates hired to tenure-track positions by four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group, 57.1% were white and non-Hispanic, 30.9% were Hispanic, and 10.3% were nonwhite and non-Hispanic. The race and ethnicity of the remainder were unknown. Outside the four-year foreign language departments in the *JIL* group, the number of hires reported is too small to be meaningful.

Note

1. The Survey of Earned Doctorates can be accessed through the Web site of NORC, a national organization for research at the University of Chicago: www.norc.org/. The path is Projects; Education and Child Development; The Survey of Earned Doctorates. Summary reports are provided from 1997 to 2004.

Table 3

Racial and Ethnic Identity of People Hired by Four-Year English Departments That Advertised in the *MLA Job Information List*, by Tenure Status of Position

Racial or Ethnic Category	Tenure Status of Position at Time Hire Was Made		Total
	Full-Time Tenure-Track	Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track	
White, non-Hispanic			
Number of cases	341	77	418
Percentage by tenure status	81.6	18.4	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	77.0	80.2	77.6
Hispanic			
Number of cases	16	3	19
Percentage by tenure status	84.2	15.8	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	3.6	3.1	3.5
Nonwhite, non-Hispanic			
Number of cases	81	10	91
Percentage by tenure status	89.0	11.0	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	18.3	10.4	16.9
Other or unknown			
Number of cases	5	6	11
Percentage by tenure status	45.5	54.5	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	1.1	6.3	2.0
Total number of cases	443	96	539
Total percentage by tenure status	82.2	17.8	100.0

Table 4

Racial and Ethnic Identity of People Hired by Two-Year English Departments (both *JIL* and non-*JIL*), by Tenure Status of Position

Racial or Ethnic Category	Tenure Status of Position at Time Hire Was Made		Total
	Full-Time Tenure-Track	Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track	
White, non-Hispanic			
Number of cases	44	25	69
Percentage by tenure status	63.8	36.2	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	75.9	78.1	76.7
Hispanic			
Number of cases	3	1	4
Percentage by tenure status	75.0	25.0	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	5.2	3.1	4.4
Nonwhite, non-Hispanic			
Number of cases	7	6	13
Percentage by tenure status	53.8	46.2	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	12.1	18.8	14.4
Other or unknown			
Number of cases	4	0	4
Percentage by tenure status	100.0	0.0	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	6.9	0.0	4.4
Total number of cases	58	32	90
Total percentage by tenure status	64.4	35.6	100.0

Table 5
Racial and Ethnic Identity of People Hired by Four-Year Foreign Language Departments That Advertised in the MLA *Job Information List*, by Tenure Status of Position

Racial or Ethnic Category	Tenure Status of Position at Time Hire Was Made		Total
	Full-Time Tenure-Track	Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track	
White, non-Hispanic			
Number of cases	133	70	203
Percentage by tenure status	65.5	34.5	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	57.1	63.6	59.2
Hispanic			
Number of cases	72	22	94
Percentage by tenure status	76.6	23.4	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	30.9	20.0	27.4
Nonwhite, non-Hispanic			
Number of cases	24	16	40
Percentage by tenure status	60.0	40.0	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	10.3	14.5	11.7
Other or unknown			
Number of cases	4	2	6
Percentage by tenure status	66.7	33.3	100.0
Percentage by racial or ethnic category	1.7	1.8	1.7
Total number of cases	233	110	343
Total percentage by tenure status	67.9	32.1	100.0