

University Task Force Report on
Fixed-Term Faculty

March 2, 2020

Committee Members

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Charge

The Provost charged this committee with examining the job responsibilities, hiring and promotion policies, and pay for Fixed-Term Faculty at TAMU-CC. The term “Fixed-Term Faculty” refers to non-tenured faculty, and includes Professional, Clinical and Research Faculty, at the levels of assistant, associate, and senior. Faculty Librarians, while also Fixed-Term Faculty, have already developed and approved policies for many of the issues listed below and are not included in this report unless specifically designated.

Research/Process

The committee met four times as a group in the fall 2019, and also met once in the spring of 2020. We collected and reviewed documents from comparison institutions, other universities in and outside the A&M system, as well as documents from non-academic institutions. We also met and reviewed current system, university and college handbook policies and procedures on Fixed-Term Faculty. Committee members also met separately with representatives of Fixed-Term Faculty in their college, and Fixed-Term Faculty were also representatives on the committee. Committee members also reviewed recent CUPA data. A draft of this document was developed and circulated to the committee after each meeting.

Problem Overview

Through research, interviews, and discussion, the task force identified uncertainties over the minimum qualifications needed for Fixed-Term Faculty; the absence of uniform policies across and within colleges; and the lack of planning for promotion, job security, and pay equity. The committee believes that each of the concerns listed below are problems that need to be addressed, and while the urgency of each issue differs, it is important to recognize that when taken together they underscore the confusion and lack of security that surrounds this job category.

- 1) **Minimum Qualifications:** As a consequence of the grandfathering in of certain faculty into Fixed-Term Faculty positions, and because of the differing needs, budgets and work forces available, different colleges have used different standards for determining the qualifications necessary for Fixed-Term Faculty. As a result, faculty with differing degrees, certifications or job experience have been hired into the same job title and have received similar pay. In addition, the differing qualifications, sometimes within the same college and for the same position, add to the sense that the position of a Fixed-Term Faculty member is undefined.
- 2) **Job Titles:** There is confusion over job titles and how they are used, specifically the difference between Professional Assistant Professor and Clinical Faculty. There is also a lack of context in the academy over what a Professional Assistant Professor means, making it difficult to draw parallels among other institutions.
- 3) **Promotion Track:** There is a lack of a clear path to promotion in some colleges, in the sense that path is not based entirely on what Fixed-Term Faculty are asked to do but is created comparatively (in some cases) to tenure-line faculty. This need for comparison adds to the uncertainty over how the position of a Fixed-Term Faculty member is defined as a stand-alone job title.

4) **Job Security:** There is a lack of clear policy over job security, making it difficult for Fixed-Term faculty to know exactly what their “fixed term” is. University and system language are vague concerning their length of appointment, saying “appointments may be made for [certain] periods” (12.07.3.2).

5) **Pay Equity:** There has been a failure to implement a pay equity plan for Fixed-Term Faculty that mirrors the plans developed for tenure-line faculty.

6) **Workload:** There are concerns that there is inequity in the determination of workload in some colleges for Fixed-Term Faculty and a lack of clarification over job responsibilities.

7) **Messaging:** Some of the messaging to Fixed-Term Faculty concerning job security and pay equity has been inconsistent and has left faculty unsure over what to expect.

Recommendation Overview

In general, the committee believes that many of the issues discussed above could be mitigated by the development of clearer college or department policies concerning the hiring, the promotion and the job responsibilities of Fixed-Term Faculty. We do not believe a university-wide policy would be effective given the different needs across the colleges.

We suggest also a greater use of the Instructor position to hire faculty whose experience or qualifications fall short of Fixed-Term Faculty status. We also believe the creation of a Fixed-Term Faculty committee at the university level would provide the opportunity for increased communication between administration and faculty and would allow for the continued exploration of the ideas raised in this document. Finally, we believe it important to create more job security for Fixed-Term Faculty and a pay equity plan that mirrors the plan developed for tenure-line faculty.

Specific Recommendations

Issue #1: Minimum Qualifications: As a consequence of the grandfathering in of certain faculty into Fixed-Term Faculty positions, and because of the differing needs, budgets and work forces available, different colleges have used different standards for determining the qualifications necessary for Fixed-Term Faculty. As a result, faculty with differing degrees, certifications or job experience have been hired into the same job title and have received similar pay. In addition, the differing qualifications, sometimes within the same college and for the same position, add to the sense that the position of a Fixed-Term Faculty member is undefined.

Recommendations: The committee agrees that this is a difficult problem to solve. Not only have Fixed-Term faculty been in place in this university for many years, but different colleges have different needs, and differing ways of classifying expertise. For example, the College of Liberal Arts may determine expertise by requiring a PhD. This will not work in University College or the College of Nursing, where it may be the earning of a certain certification, degree, or combination thereof, which would show the necessary training.

- A) As a consequence, the committee recommends that each college, or, if necessary, each department, create a specific, written policy that defines the minimum qualifications necessary for Fixed-Term Faculty.

- B) The task force recommends that individuals who have been hired or grandfathered in to a Fixed-Term position without the minimum qualifications continue to remain eligible for merit raises but not promotion.
- C) The committee recognizes the faculty who do not have these minimum qualifications continue to provide a valuable service to both students and the university. As a result, we recommend the increased use of the “Instructor” title for the hiring of these faculty in the future. This will allow them a specific path to promotion. Over time the development of the Instructor line will also help to resolve the inequity over differing qualifications and similar pay.

Issue #2: Job Titles: There is confusion over job titles for Fixed-Term faculty and how they are used, specifically the difference between Professional Assistant Professor and Clinical Faculty. There is lack of context in the academy over what a Professional Assistant Professor means, making it difficult to draw parallels among other institutions.

Recommendations: The title Professional Assistant Professor is confusing, since it is not clear what “professional” means and what qualifications distinguish PAPs from tenure-line Assistant Professors. That there are no universities that we found in our comparison schools who use this title, and that there are no CUPA comparisons available, only encourages the confusion that surrounds the position.

- A) The committee suggests changing the title of Professional Assistant Professors to the more common “Professors of Practice.”
- B) We also recommend changes to the University Faculty Handbook 12.07.99.C0.01. We recommend that point 2.3 should be changed to include the category “Non-Tenure Track Teaching Faculty” and beneath this section should be included Instructors, Clinical Faculty and Professors of Practice. Each of these categories should align in terms of promotion, by adding under Instructor: Assistant, Associate, and Senior Instructor.

Issue #3: Promotion Track: There is a lack of a clear path to promotion in some colleges, in the sense that path is not based entirely on what Fixed-Term Faculty are asked to do but is created comparatively (in some cases) to tenure-line faculty. This need for comparison adds to the uncertainty over how the position of a Fixed-Term Faculty member is defined as a stand-alone job title.

Recommendations: As it currently stands some colleges do not have a defined policy for promotion. In the College of Liberal Arts, it is defined by absence—using the same criteria as for tenure-line faculty, only not considering research. Because teaching can play such a large role for some Fixed-Term Faculty, equaling up to 80% of their workload, as compared to 40% for tenure-line faculty in some cases, it is important to have a dedicated policy that speaks to what a Fixed-Term Faculty member needs to do to earn promotion.

- A) As stated above, colleges and/or departments need to create transparent policies which describe when promotion can occur and what the faculty member needs to do to accomplish it. This policy might take in account Professional Development activities, class loads, new class preparations, difficult courses, number of large classes, class evaluations etc.
- B) This policy needs to make clear how the requirements for promotion differ from the requirements for those who are Instructors or tenure-line faculty.

Issue #4: Job Security: There is a lack of clear policy or transparency over job security, making it difficult for Fixed-Term faculty to know exactly what their “fixed term” is. University and system language are vague concerning their length of appointment, saying “appointments may be made for [certain] periods” (12.07.3.2).

Recommendations: As it currently stands, the university does not have a defined policy over job security for Fixed-Term faculty. This absence in many cases seems to contradict the actual job title, given there is no fixed term for these faculty that is known in advance. Instead, the title is perceived to be used retroactively—faculty are said to be hired for a fixed term only when they are no longer needed.

- A) This uncertainty on the part of faculty in these positions—this lack of fixity as it were—could be resolved by drawing on System document 12.07.3.2 which states “Professional Track faculty member appointments may be made for periods not to exceed five years in length...For beginning Assistant Professional Track Faculty, an appointment of no more than three years may be appropriate.”
- B) We recommend that the ambiguity of “may” be replaced by “will” in our university policy. The committee recommends renewable appointments for all Non-Tenure Teaching Faculty according to the following 1, 3, 5 scale: 1 year for Assistant Faculty, 3 years for Associate Faculty and 5 years for Senior Faculty.
- C) This scaling would make sense given that it allows the university to reward experienced teachers, since it reserves the longest appointment term for those individuals who have been through multiple promotion reviews and have taught at the university for a minimum of 12 years.
- D) Notices of Appointment or Annual Faculty Reviews should signify to Fixed-Term Faculty their length of appointment (i.e., they should state “Associate Faculty member in the first year of their three-year appointment”).

Issue #5: Pay Equity: There has been a failure to implement a pay equity plan for Fixed-Term Faculty that mirrors the plans developed for tenure-line faculty.

Recommendations: Currently, Fixed-Term Faculty receive a salary bump for promotion to Associate or Senior, but since these amounts have not changed since this faculty category was established (and previously had a long history for tenure-line faculty), it is likely faculty members are not being adequately compensated based on the median salary range for other faculty in the same fields. For tenure-line faculty, CUPA data provides the baseline for salary adjustments, but since Professional Track Faculty are not represented in this data, a similar baseline does not exist for them. If baseline data is unavailable or insufficient, an alternative plan needs to be developed.

- A) It is important that an equity plan for Fixed-Term Faculty be developed. Given the concerns raised in Issue #2 above, and that both staff and tenure-line faculty have received (or will receive) salary adjustments based on the median pay for their position, not developing an equity plan for Fixed-Term Faculty creates the perception of a lack of commitment to their value to the university.
- B) As identified in Issue #3 above, a change of job title to Professors of Practice and Instructors would allow CUPA data to be used.
- C) There are also other ways of determining an appropriate raise which need more investigation. One way might be maintaining a similar percentage difference to tenure-line colleagues. If a

Fixed-Term Faculty member is hired at 15% less than a tenure-line faculty member, for instance, this 15% could be used as a guide for future salary adjustments.

- D) If money is unavailable to provide raises at the moment, it is important that Fixed-Term Faculty are informed about if and when these equity adjustments might occur, what work is being done to develop a possible plan and how these raises are being determined.

Issue #6: Workload: There are concerns that there is inequality in the determination of faculty workload in some colleges for Fixed-Term Faculty and the lack of clarification over job responsibilities.

Recommendations: Comparing the workloads of tenure-line faculty and Professional-Track Faculty in the College of Liberal Arts, for instance, creates the appearance of inequality. Tenure-line faculty in the college are asked to teach three courses and are given one course release for research. They are also required to do service. Professional-Track faculty are not required to do research but are asked to teach five courses and perform service, creating questions over how a “full-time” load is defined, whether it is based on a 12-hours or 15.

- A) We believe this issue speaks to a larger concern over how job responsibilities are defined for Fixed-Term Faculty across the different colleges.
- B) If the workload for all faculty is 15 hours, and that tenure-line faculty receive a three-hour course release for service, we recommend that Fixed-Term Faculty be given a course release for service as well. Since different colleges have different service requirements, how this service is defined can be left up to each of the colleges, but currently CLA, for instance, requires service on top of 15 hours of teaching, meaning Professional-Track faculty in the college are working more than a full-time load.
- C) We recommend the Instructor position, then, be differentiated from Fixed-Term Faculty lines by being a teaching position only. The Instructor position will not include any service.
- D) We recommend a more detailed Notice of Appointment be provided to faculty at the beginning of the semester which would both clarify expectations and provide further clarity for the process of promotion. Rather than the boilerplate language which is currently used for all faculty, we suggest additional language is used that could spell out the specific expectations for Fixed-Term Faculty in different colleges.

Issue #7: Messaging: Some of the messaging to Fixed-Term Faculty concerning job security and pay equity has been inconsistent and has left faculty unsure over what to expect.

Recommendations: A Faculty Senate email from October 2018 made it appear that non-tenure track faculty would have the opportunity for a salary raise based on baseline data (see Appendix 1). That this was later deemed inaccurate, combined with rumored promises of job security that did not occur, led to a sense of confusion, and emphasizes the need for increased transparency concerning the status of Fixed-Term Faculty.

- A) The committee believes this confusion will be lessened by the making of specific college or department policies that speak to promotion and job security.
- B) It would also be helpful if an email was sent to Fixed-Term Faculty underscoring the steps the administration is taking to resolve the confusion faced by Fixed-Term Faculty. The provost’s letter mentioned the development of this task force, but one could see another email providing

a link to the task force report or announcing the development of a standing Fixed-Term Faculty committee to revisit this document and to bring forward other concerns.



October 2, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Islander Faculty

SUBJECT: A Message from the Merit and Equity Task Force

Fellow Faculty,

Last year, President Quintanilla formed the Merit and Equity Task Force, which included faculty, senators, and past speakers representing the five academic colleges. The charge of the Task Force was to develop a comprehensive plan to address faculty salary compression and inversion issues that have become commonplace throughout higher education. The Task Force worked diligently with the President, Provost, and Director of Budgets to design a compensation structure that addresses systemic faculty salary compression and more fairly rewards faculty earning promotion and post-tenure review. The Merit and Equity Task Force is pleased to share the following six-year plan that was approved by the President for implementation this fall:

Systemic Plan for Faculty Salary Compression/Inversion

Tenure-Track Faculty

- Promotion to Associate Professor – Candidate will receive a \$5,000 salary increase or the median salary for the new rank based on salary benchmark data*, whichever is greater.
- Promotion to Professor – Candidate will receive a \$7,000 salary increase or the median salary for the new rank based on salary benchmark data*, whichever is greater.
- Successful Post Tenure Review for Associate Professors – Candidate will receive a \$2,500 salary increase or the median salary for the current rank based on salary benchmark data*, whichever is greater.
- Successful Post Tenure Review for Professors – Candidate will receive a \$5,000 salary increase or the median salary for the current rank based on salary benchmark data*, whichever is greater.

Non Tenure-Track Faculty

- Promotion to Associate Professor – Candidate will receive a \$5,000 salary increase or the median salary for the new rank based on salary benchmark data*, whichever is greater.
- Promotion to Professor – Candidate will receive a \$7,000 salary increase or the median salary for the new rank based on salary benchmark data*, whichever is greater.

* Salary benchmark data will be determined by the College and University Professional Association (CUPA) and will include like and aspiring peer institutions.

In order to compensate existing faculty for the increase in promotion raises, the President has agreed to a one-time equity adjustment of \$2,000 for qualifying Associate Professors, and \$4,000 for qualifying Full Professors. Annual merit pay will continue to reward faculty based on performance.

Some faculty have reached out to myself, the Provost, and President regarding concerns specifically related to their adjustments. As soon as fiscal year closing processes are complete, the President and Director of Budgets will review the data for any errors. If errors occurred, they will be corrected. An FAQ will be sent out as soon as that is complete.

In closing, the Merit and Equity Task Force and Faculty Senate would like to thank **President Kelly Quintanilla, Provost Clarenda Phillips, and Director of Budgets, Jaclyn Mahlmann**, for supporting faculty in such an important endeavor. In addition, please join me in thanking the members of the Merit and

Equity Task Force, who worked tirelessly and effectively on behalf of the TAMUCC faculty:

- Dr. Tim Klaus, COB (Faculty Senator)
- Dr. Marilyn Spencer, COB (Past Speaker, Faculty Senate)
- Dr. Frank Spaniol, COEHD (Speaker, Faculty Senate)
- Dr. Joshua Watson, COEHD (Faculty Senator)
- Dr. Miguel Moreno, CLA (Faculty Senator)
- Dr. Josh Ozymy, CLA (Past Speaker, Faculty Senate)
- Dr. Theresa Garcia, CONHS (Faculty)
- Dr. Mark Reinhart, CONHS (Faculty Senator)
- Dr. Patrick Larkin, CSE (Past Speaker, Faculty Senate)
- Dr. Cherie McCullough, CSE (Faculty Senator)

Best Regards,

Frank Spaniol, Ed.D., CSCS*D, FNCSA

Speaker, Faculty Senate

Chair, Merit and Equity Task Force