

Status of Fixed-Term Faculty

Report from Faculty Welfare Committee

This year, the Faculty Welfare Committee discussed several items associated with Fixed-Term Faculty at East Carolina University. Much of our work was based on a resolution that was brought to Faculty Senate by AAUP in April 2019 in the event that we may present a revised resolution to Faculty Senate. At this time, I do have a report to present, not yet a resolution on this topic.

I met with the AAUP, and we agreed one item to really focus on would be single year versus multiyear contracts. I learned there are several faculty members who shared a perception that the majority of fixed-term faculty with single year contracts have no option to request or be granted multi-year contracts. In order to get an idea of the contract lengths for fixed-term faculty, my committee requested the Divisional Human Resources to provide statistics on contracts.

Out of 674 faculty with fixed-term contracts in permanent positions at the time of my statistics request, we learned:

156 of the 282 contracts in Academic Affairs are single year, and 73 of the 374 contracts in the Division of Health Sciences are single year or shorter.

As part of my committee's information gathering, we learned there are some employees who specifically request single year contracts. We also learned there are some departments that include in their unit codes content on recommendations for contract length for subsequent appointment of fixed-term faculty.

Recommendation #1. The committee would like to recommend that Faculty Governance look at the data and sample unit code wording on contract length and potentially recommendation for all departments that hold fixed-term faculty positions to include in their unit codes a path for fixed-term faculty to attain multiyear contracts.

The AAUP resolution included a few other items that I would like to address what we learned.

We learned that converting contracts from one that is fixed-term to one that is tenure-track is a process that occurs at the Division of Health Sciences, but it does not occur in Academic Affairs. This is because the capability to convert contracts from fixed-term to tenure track can only be done without a search if that potential was part of the original job posting for the occupied position.

The committee also looked at circumstances such as health insurance for fixed-term faculty. Only fixed-term faculty who work in permanent positions at over .75 FTE are eligible for state-supported health care benefits, and this is based on state regulations.

We also discussed the process of advancement in title for fixed-term faculty. Each unit would handle requirements for advancement in title similarly as different units have different requirements to attain tenure, but it looks like units provide differing amounts of salary increases after an advancement is attained.

Recommendation #2. Request that the University Budget Committee consider recommending a potential standardized salary increase for when a fixed-term faculty

member advances in title similar to the university's standardized salary increases for tenure promotions.

We invited the University Ombuds to one of our meetings to share about the services that he provides particularly in light of the concerns on fixed-term faculty facing retribution from colleagues/members of Personnel Committees. We learned the Ombuds can confidentially listen to concerns and aid in finding the employee the right person to talk to in order to address any concerns with employment.

While wrapping up business with the committee for the year, we received a suggestion to refer to faculty with fixed-term contracts as Professional Faculty. Fixed-term faculty, by title and definition, hold contracts that can cease to renew due to constraints in funding. The proposals put forward by AAUP and reviewed by Faculty Welfare Committee fundamentally alter the definition of fixed-term. A suggestion was put forward to refer to fixed-term faculty as professional faculty, with note that the term professional faculty would recognize, support, and embrace the professional role of teaching, clinical support, or librarianship that fixed-term faculty provide the university. The term professional faculty emphasizes the profession the employee holds and not the budgetary function of the fixed-term contract.

Recommendation #3: Request that the Faculty Welfare Committee explore the possibility of renaming the category of faculty with fixed-term contracts as 'Professional Faculty'.

My committee did discuss contracts with support for professional development and learned that funding for professional development may vary by unit and would vary due to budget fluctuation. We also learned that fixed term and tenure-track/probationary faculty can grieve and appeal while under contract, but not after a terminated contract. Tenured faculty can continue an appeal to the UNC System. We also talked about a Living Wage floor, similar to the SHRA and EHRA Non-Faculty Living Wage floor. After the AAUP resolution, a faculty salary compression study to analyze salary inequities included some fixed-term faculty was released late 2019, and a fixed-term faculty salary study incorporating more faculty from Academic Affairs is in progress to be released hopefully later in 2020.