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## Hiring, Promoting, and Valuing Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Kathleen Williams

Karen Poole

Vicki Macready

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## Academic Leadership Journal

Non-tenure track faculty comprise an increasing percentage of full time faculty employed by American universities. In 2001, the Association of American Universities (AAU) reported that 31% of full and part-time faculty were non-tenure track. According to a 2006 report by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), full-time non-tenure track faculty increased from 13% to 18.7% of total faculty between 1975-2003. These faculty often serve in most of the same roles as tenure track faculty, including teaching, research and service. At the same time, they are nearly always paid less, have fewer benefits, few opportunities for research leaves or sabbaticals, less job security, and little or no involvement in faculty governance (AAU, 2001; AFT, 2003; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). In addition, especially in this very difficult economic climate, non-tenure track faculty positions are often the first to be offered up during budget cuts. Curtis & Jacobe (2006) contend that these differences between tenure and non-tenure track status limit academic freedom since many non-tenure track faculty fear that pressing for greater benefits or job security may result in job loss.

Disparities between tenure and non-tenure track faculty are much discussed at the present time (Selingo, 2008; Street, 2008). According to Street (2008), some institutions are beginning to extend some of the benefits outlined above to non-tenure track faculty for example He cites an Instructor Tenure Project at the University of Colorado and The University of California system's extended contracts for non-tenure track faculty. In contrast, a recent statement by the Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Employee Relations at the University of Akron was extensively covered when he said 'Wal-Mart is a more honest employer of part-time employees than are most colleges and universities' (Selingo, 2008). Although that statement focused on part-time employees, full time non-tenure track faculty have many of the same issues.

The University of North Carolina System most recently examined the role of non-tenure track faculty in 2002. The Committee on Non-Tenure Track Faculty of the UNC System examined the roles of these faculty within the 16 campus university system in North Carolina. Not surprisingly, this Committee found many of the same issues observed nationally. As a result, eight recommendations were made to address employment issues of non-tenure track faculty and included extending multiyear contracts, developing position descriptions with 'advanced' titles and appropriate salaries for faculty with greater longevity and accomplishments, and involving these faculty in decision-making activities at all levels of campus life.

It is not clear how many of the UNC campuses have adopted some or all of the 2002 recommendations. There are 'pockets' of change, however, and this paper will focus on one such example, in the School of Health and Human Performance (HHP) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG).

A primary mission of the School of Health and Human Performance at UNCG is to prepare professionals across a range of disciplines, including speech-language pathology, dance, athletic training, physical education pedagogy, therapeutic recreation and community health. As a result, clinical and professional faculty play an important role across the School in the preparation of well-

trained professionals. The Academic Professional (AP) Track was created to provide opportunities for these faculty for advancement and guaranteed longevity, factors critical to recruiting and maintaining excellent faculty members.

In 2001, the HHP faculty developed and approved initial policies related to its AP Track for non-tenure track faculty. It was modeled in many ways on tenure track policies and procedures. In the document describing the new track, the critical and unique roles and responsibilities of faculty in non-tenure track positions were acknowledged as was the need to rectify the 'second class status' of faculty in these roles. From its inception, faculty within the AP Track are categorized at one of four ranks. Individuals with little or no university experience are typically hired at the AP Instructor level, with 1 year, renewable contracts. More experienced professionals have the AP Assistant Professor title, with renewable three year contracts. AP Associate Professors have four year contracts, and AP Professors are on five year, renewable contracts.

As an institution, UNCG is committed to diverse roles and responsibilities for its tenure and non-tenure track faculty. The primary responsibility for most non-tenure track faculty is in teaching, broadly defined. Duties include teaching students in the classroom, studio or laboratory, or online, as well as mentoring and advising students, supervising students in practicum placements, mentoring colleagues, and developing and assessing learning experiences. In addition to teaching, however, AP faculty are expected to participate in service to the institution, community and profession. Many hold key positions on important committees, for example, serving as Chair of the School of HHP Faculty Assembly, as a member of the University's Curriculum Committee and as a member of the University Strategic Planning Committee. Finally, to be eligible for advancement, AP faculty are expected to contribute to the institutional mission with professional scholarship.

The inclusion of professional scholarship as a workload expectation for AP faculty at UNCG may differ from expectations in other units at UNCG and at other institutions. Although some scholarly endeavors may be the same as tenure track faculty (e.g., publishing in research journals and securing external funding), most of this scholarship is applied and professional in nature. In the School of Health and Human Performance at UNCG, AP faculty design and deliver workshops, write for professional publications and newsletters, develop training materials and manuals, design and adapt equipment and software for professional groups, and create works of visual and performing art. In 2008, revisions were made to the AP Track policies to reflect this diversity in professional scholarship and to validate these work products as scholarly endeavors for promotion through the Academic Professional ranks. The revisions also clarified and streamlined hiring and promotional policies.

Writing the initial governance document for AP faculty turned out to be the 'easy' part of the process. Applying its tenets to actual faculty has been a greater challenge. The immediate issue was determining how to rank *currently employed* non-tenure track faculty. What process would allow this relatively large number of faculty to request promotion within this new system without unduly burdening an already busy faculty? The initial proposal called for a two year process, during which the 10-15 eligible faculty members could request promotion. If all of them requested consideration, the most senior individuals would be considered first, and those with less longevity would be considered in the second year. Thus, individuals determined the rank for which they would apply and compiled their materials.

Additional challenges were identified in the *interpretation* of the document's criteria, particularly with

regard to research/scholarly endeavors. There was lengthy discussion of what constituted valid research/scholarly products. Early in the process, it was clear that faculty were most comfortable assessing the traditional products of scholarship such as the number of refereed papers written and accepted, presentations given, and grant proposals written and received. As a result, language in the document was clarified *before* the first round of classifications was completed. During this period, most AP faculty were categorized at the Academic Professional Assistant Professor rank. Following revision of the document, several faculty were re-classified as Academic Professional Associate Professors the following year. One was appointed as an AP Full professor. And, as noted above, additional clarifications to research expectations for promotion of AP faculty were made recently.

Actually applying the principles and definitions outlined in the revised document was revealing. It allowed non-tenure track faculty to be evaluated against criteria similar to their tenure track colleagues and to receive titles that more closely described their accomplishments within their departments, School, and University. A number of the document's weaknesses also came to light during its first application. Many of the shortcomings relate to its being crafted for a single unit (HHP) rather than procedures for the entire University. For example, most of the time, tenure track faculty receive an increase in salary following tenure and/or promotion separate from any merit increase allocated for all faculty. Monies for these salary increases are allocated by the Office of the Provost. Because the Academic Professional guidelines serve only non-tenure track faculty in the School of HHP, there are no automatically allocated funds for this purpose. At present any 'automatic' salary increases might have to be taken from the pool of money allocated for all faculty salary increases (tenure and promotion funds are from a separate pool). Deans can also request these funds from the Provost as part of their yearly salary request.

Another issue is that Academic Professional faculty are not eligible for many of the opportunities available to tenured and tenure track faculty, including many internal faculty grant programs, research leaves (sabbaticals), the phased retirement program, and some university committees, including Faculty Senate. Finally, there is no institutional calendar for the AP track that parallels the tenure and promotion calendar. Those considering promotion from one AP rank to another are on an entirely different calendar for submitting materials for consideration. As a result, there was little or no 'institutional memory' and the process can be easily lost in the busy day to day dealings of the School.

Despite these shortcomings, there are many positive elements to our process for ranking and promoting these non-tenure track faculty. The ability of non-tenure track faculty to advance through a series of ranks has proved to be an important recruitment tool for hiring new AP faculty. Individuals can negotiate their initial rank, based on their level of experience and expertise. Faculty holding higher ranks receive increased recognition in the School. This year, newly promoted AP faculty were included in the University-wide celebration for tenured and promoted faculty. Of course, faculty also appreciate an increase in job security afforded them at the higher ranks.

There are other changes occurring across UNCG. Most of the units on campus that hire non-tenure track faculty now have a policy similar to that described here, or at the least are in discussions about instituting one. The Faculty Senate at UNCG is beginning to discuss issues important to non-tenure track faculty. We do not see a University-wide policy encompassing all of the issues we've discussed on the near horizon, but, perhaps, soon. It is already seven years after the original UNC System report. It is time to move forward on University-wide policies for hiring,

promoting and valuing non-tenure track faculty.

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The authors:

Kathleen Williams is currently Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Professor in the School of Health and Human Performance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She holds master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her undergraduate degree is from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Karen A. Poole is an Academic Professional Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has a master's degree from Appalachian State University and a bachelor's degree from Bishop Otter College, University of Sussex, England.

Vicki McCready is an Academic Professional Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has a master's degree from Western Reserve University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama.

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