

**Faculty Council**  
**Committee on Fixed Term Faculty**  
**Annual Report**  
**2009**

**Members:**

Lucia Binotti, Suzanne Gulledge (chair), Donna LeFebvre, John Papanikolas, Shielda Rodgers, Richard Weinberg, Anne Mitchell Whisnant . Ex Officio: Joe Ferrell, Joe Templeton.

**Meetings in 2008-2009:**

September 12, 2008; October 10, 2008; November 7, 2008; December 12, 2008; January 16, 2009; February 20, 2009; March 20, 2009.

**Committee Charge:**

Resolution 2005-9 that established the Council Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty reads:

Section 1. Pursuant to Section 2-8(b)(1) of the *Faculty Code of University Government*, the Council Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty is created. The Committee has six members, appointed by the Chair of the Faculty from among sitting members of the Faculty Council at the September meeting of the Council each year. Four of the members are fixed-term faculty members, and two are tenure-track faculty members. The Chair of the Faculty designates the chair of the committee. Members are eligible for reappointment.

Sec. 2. The committee addresses working conditions and the status of full-time and part-time fixed-term faculty members. In this regard it monitors implementation of policies and recommendations concerning fixed-term faculty; reviews school, college, and departmental policies governing such faculty members; and formulates and proposes new policies and procedures for consideration by the Faculty Council. The committee reports to the Council as appropriate to its agenda, but at least annually.

Sec. 3. This resolution is effective upon adoption.

**Summary of Activities of the Committee 2008-09:**

1. Reviewed previous resolutions passed by the Faculty Council related to Fixed Term Faculty;
2. Held "listening forum" for university faculty in November, 2008 to gather information, hear concerns and suggestions. Sessions for individuals who wished to speak with committee members were scheduled in the morning and an open, town hall meeting forum was held in the afternoon (summary of comments included below);

3. Identified general issues and areas of particular concern that relate to Fixed Term faculty considering issues addressed by former resolutions and additional concerns of faculty;
4. Sent representatives to meet with committee on Fixed Term Faculty in Medical School and the Committee on Fixed Term Faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences;
5. Considered proposed changes from the UNC System Board of Governors that coined the term "special faculty" instead of "fixed term" faculty and communicated concerns to the university counsel and Committee representatives with the result that the university will not use the coined term in its own policy guidelines;
6. Met with Executive Assoc. Provost Ron Strauss to share information from the forum and discuss implementation of the Faculty Council resolutions that relate to Fixed Term faculty;
7. Drafted set of recommendations based on data gathered from the above named activities.

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### **Fixed-Term Faculty Concerns at UNC-Chapel Hill**

#### **Summarized from Responses Received at the November 7, 2008 Fixed-Term Faculty Committee's "Listening Forum"**

#### **Philosophy and Purpose of Fixed-Term Hiring**

Clarify rationale for fixed-term hires and better define the role of fixed-term faculty in fulfilling the University's mission. Suggestions include:

- The University should examine the reasons for hiring faculty on fixed-term appointments and should study larger trends in this area. Are fixed-term faculty marginal or central to the University's mission? How do fixed-term faculty help the University fulfill the goals that were outlined during the last SACS accreditation process? Are there ways in which the hierarchies created by having parallel faculty tracks may be reinforcing other inequities such as gender inequity?
- The University should discuss and define the categories of fixed-term faculty and the purposes of fixed-term hires: are they "specialists" who focus on only one area (e.g. only teaching or only research), and, if so, how does each group relate to faculty decision-making about curriculum and other matters? Campuswide clarity about terminology would help: "Adjunct" has different meanings everywhere, and other terms such as "non-tenure track" or "contingent" (AAUP's term) or "special" do not convey clear meanings and suggest a sense of second-class status.

- The University should carefully consider and evaluate legacy rules that bar or seem to exclude fixed-term faculty from particular roles on campus. For example, why could a fixed-term faculty member not be director of the Center for Faculty Excellence? Can fixed-term faculty members chair doctoral committees?
- The University should create some standardized university-wide policies so that work conditions for fixed-term faculty are not so subject to changes in personnel at the department chair level.
- To the degree possible, the University should bring fixed-term faculty work conditions in line with the work conditions of tenured/tenure-track faculty, especially in terms of pay equity, the possibility of advancement, and stability and security, especially for those who have longer periods of service at the University.

### **Basic Work Conditions, Rights, and Privileges**

- **Definition of Job Duties:**
  - Job duties (course load, number of preparations, administrative or service work, summer work) should be clearly elaborated and specified in employment contracts.
  - Fixed term faculty members who take on administrative or service work should be compensated on a consistent and fair basis in each department.
  - Part-time fixed-term positions that would enable employment of qualified scholars who also do consulting or contract research should be developed.
- **Salary:** Fixed-term positions should pay a living wage, and they should be funded from permanent sources beyond a unit's instructional budget. There should also be clarity about the institution's commitment when the salary is grant funded or other "soft" money.
- **Administrative Support:** Fixed-term faculty (whose work involves high levels of student contact and related requests for letters of recommendation, advising, or other interactions) should have sufficient staff support to facilitate their work.
- **Work Environment:** Fixed-term faculty members should be provided with an adequate, well-equipped workspace, including office space, library carrel, and computer.
- **Professional Development & Support:**
  - Fixed-term faculty should be eligible for the same kinds of professional development support available to tenured and tenure-track faculty, including travel funds, research leave, research grants, leadership development programs, teaching and other awards – both at the university and the departmental level.

- Professional development opportunities should be developed that are targeted especially to the needs of fixed-term faculty.
- Policies about the eligibility of fixed-term faculty to participate in university-wide programs like first-year seminars, the Carolina Center for Public Service, APPLES, the Office of Undergraduate Research, Study Abroad, the Institute for Arts and Humanities, Summer School teaching, maternity leave, etc. should be standardized and clarified.
- Mentoring programs for fixed-term faculty members should be developed.
- Basic Respect:
  - Job titles matter to faculty members and may make a difference in student outcomes. Some fixed-term faculty fear that some of the terms currently associated with fixed-term faculty (e.g. “lecturer”) are not respected outside the university and hurt students for whom they write letters of recommendation.
  - Many fixed-term faculty members feel like “second-class citizens” in their departments. Although changing faculty culture is difficult, simple changes (such as altering departmental practices about how names are listed in building directories) that mean a lot should be encouraged.

### **Job Security**

Most of the concern in this area has to do with making longer-term contracts available and developing a clear and predictable process for contract renewal. Fixed-term faculty note that security becomes progressively more important the longer a person has been at UNC.

Recommendations in this area include:

- The policy in the College that ties terms of appointment to terms of the department chairs should be eliminated.
- After a set period of service, there should be a presumption that contracts will be renewed unless there is documented cause not to renew. This becomes especially important as one’s responsibility grows during a lengthening tenure at the university.
- Develop clear, written procedures by which to evaluate fixed-term faculty for contract renewal. Include specific standards for the level of performance that is required for contract renewal (e.g. more specific than “do your job well”) and explain the conditions under which contracts would legitimately not be renewed. Implement a regular system of performance feedback for each fixed-term faculty member.
- Implement a requirement for more advance notice in the case of contract non-renewal.
- Make longer-term (three- to five-year) contracts available on a predictable basis to fixed-term faculty as they accumulate years of successful service at UNC. Develop clear, written statements about what is required to qualify for a longer-term contract.

### **Career Progression and Advancement**

Faculty in fixed-term appointments describe their careers as somewhat stagnant and desire a clear path of advancement and promotion that would give fixed-term faculty a greater sense

both of forward motion in their careers and of having a stake in the larger university community. A system of career progression and advancement would entail:

- A clear set of job titles and a transparent career ladder for clinical and fixed-term faculty.
- The availability of a normal path of conversion from fixed-term to tenure track in cases where that may be appropriate.
- A path of advancement that is tied to predictable and achievable salary increases.
- A clear set of written expectations for what one needs to do to be promoted and advance through the fixed-term ranks.
- A transparent system of regular performance evaluation that is appropriate for job description and tied clearly to career and salary advancement.

### **Governance/ Voice**

Since December of 1995, the Faculty Code of University Government has extended voting rights in university-wide faculty elections, voting membership on university-wide standing committees, and voting membership on the Faculty Council to fixed-term faculty members who meet certain longevity conditions. However, fixed-term faculty voting and governance participation rights at the departmental and/or school level are either unclear or vary widely. Voting rights and governance participation expectations need to be systematized and clarified across schools or colleges.

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### **A Recommendation for Best Practices for Appointments and Promotion of Full-Time Fixed-Term Faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill**

General:

1. Fixed-term faculty represent 40% of UNC-CH's full-time faculty and are central to fulfilling the University's teaching, research, and service missions. Fixed-term faculty are an integral part of the faculty community and should be recognized as such.
2. Fixed-term faculty whose length of service in the position is at least three years have, since 1995, had voting rights under the *Faculty Code for University Government*. Other rights, professional considerations, and privileges for fixed-term faculty should also be defined and made clear.
3. Resolutions regarding Fixed-Term Faculty that were passed by Faculty Council in 2003 and 2006 have been forwarded to the Provost and should be implemented. Toward this end, we recommend that annual reminders be sent by the Provost to Deans and Department Chairs to urge implementation of resolutions and recommendations regarding fixed-term faculty that have been adopted by the Faculty Council.

4. The Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty is appointed annually by the Chair of the Faculty from among the members of the Faculty Council. Recognizing that addressing the concerns of Fixed-Term faculty is an ongoing process, we urge the new Chair of the Faculty to appoint a Fixed-Term Faculty Committee soon after taking office.

We recommend the following “best practices” for the employment and professional support of full-time fixed-term faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill:

1. When an appointment with fixed term fills an ongoing role in the appointing unit’s academic program, employment contracts should be longer than one year. Thus, except in unusual circumstances, after three years of continuous service, contracts should extend for at least two years; after five years of continuous service, contracts should extend for at least three years; and after ten years, contracts should extend for at least five years.
2. When feasible, academic units should have a clear career ladder system for full-time fixed term positions, and appointments should be made with predictable ranks and titles.
3. Standards and criteria for reappointment and progression in rank should be written and widely distributed to both full-time fixed term faculty and those who perform the evaluations and who make recommendations and decisions.
4. The process of reappointment should be communicated to individuals who are offered a fixed term appointment. At the point of inception it should be made clear if a career ladder system is in place in the unit and whether or not its benefits might extend to the position. Individuals under consideration for reappointment should be given an opportunity to prepare evaluation dossiers and make a case for their continued participation in the appointing unit’s academic program.
5. Decisions not to renew the appointments of full-time fixed term faculty should be made with adequate notice, at least one month prior to the end of the first year’s appointment. Except in cases of urgent financial contingency, notice in advance of non-renewal should progressively increase to twelve months for individuals with at least ten years of continuous service. Individuals with appointments that fill an ongoing role in the unit whose contracts are not to be renewed should have access to an expedited process of review, so that a final decision can be made in a timely and responsible manner.
6. Fixed-term faculty members should be mentored and should receive regular feedback on their performance, as well as the support necessary to advance their careers. Support might include access to training, competitive leaves, internal grants and awards, and travel funds.
7. When they have met the criteria for faculty voting rights as specified in the *Faculty Code of University Government*, fixed-term faculty should be fully integrated into their departments. This includes incorporating them into departmental governance by

allowing them to participate in departmental faculty meetings and advancing appropriate voting privileges. It also includes listing their names in university academic catalogs, faculty building directories, and departmental websites, and including them in all routine departmental and university mailings.