

2014 Survey of Fixed-Term Faculty on the UNC-Chapel Hill Campus Preliminary Survey Results - Report to the Faculty Council April 24, 2015

Key Points:

- Over 51% of Fixed-Term Faculty at UNC have ONE-YEAR contracts or less.
- 63% Fixed-Term Faculty were satisfied or very satisfied with their employment at UNC.
- Many Fixed-Term Faculty do not have adequate information on professional progression or career development and do not feel valued by their department or included in departmental faculty affairs.

Committee members:

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Introduction:

Fixed-Term Faculty members serve the University as innovative teachers, productive researchers, caring clinicians and core members of committees. Fixed-Term Faculty are defined as full time (>75%) faculty members. Of 3406 UNC-Chapel Hill faculty, 44% have fixed-term appointments (2014 data). Due to the continual increase in the numbers of Fixed-Term Faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill, inequities in the professional management of Fixed-Term Faculty are surfacing. Therefore, the Fixed-Term Faculty Committee, an appointed committee of the UNC-Chapel Hill Faculty Council, wished to identify the issues and questions relevant Fixed-Term Faculty on campus.

Methods: In July 2014, the Committee developed an online survey, hosted by Qualtrics, to address the following goals:

- Determine Fixed-Term Faculty awareness of their own numbers and representation in faculty governance
- Determine Fixed-Term Faculty's satisfaction levels and perception of UNC's support
- Collect data on contract length
- Find out what works in order to develop a list of Best Practices to ensure the success of Fixed-Term Faculty on campus
- Identify concerns and suggestions not included elsewhere in the survey through open-ended questions (still under analysis)

Two levels of data analysis were performed. First, quantitative data was analyzed from the survey reporting awareness of representation in faculty governance and general satisfaction. A second level of qualitative analysis was performed to capture the comments provided by the respondents. This second analysis is ongoing.

Results:

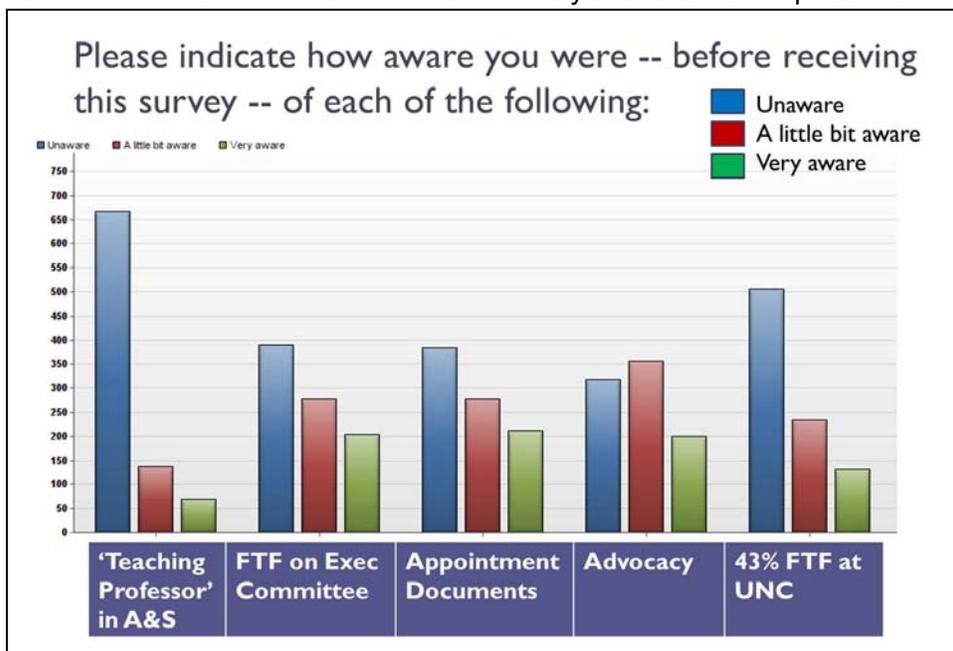
- We received 888 responses from 1400 Fixed-Term Faculty members surveyed.

1. Awareness of Fixed Term Faculty resources on campus

The first questions were about awareness of representation in faculty governance.

'Please indicate how aware you were before receiving this survey of each of the following:

- College of Arts and Sciences Master Lecturer, will be renamed Teaching Professor
- That Fixed-Term faculty serve on the Faculty Executive Committee?
- That every school and college has an updated (as of 2013) appointment, reappointment and promotion document for fixed-term faculty (as per mandate by the Provost's office)?
- That the Fixed-Term Faculty Committee (the committee administering this survey) advocates for the rights and privileges of fixed-term faculty?
- That about 43% of Carolina's full-time faculty hold fixed-term positions'



Results: Many Fixed-Term Faculty members were unaware of their representation in faculty governance or of the resources available.

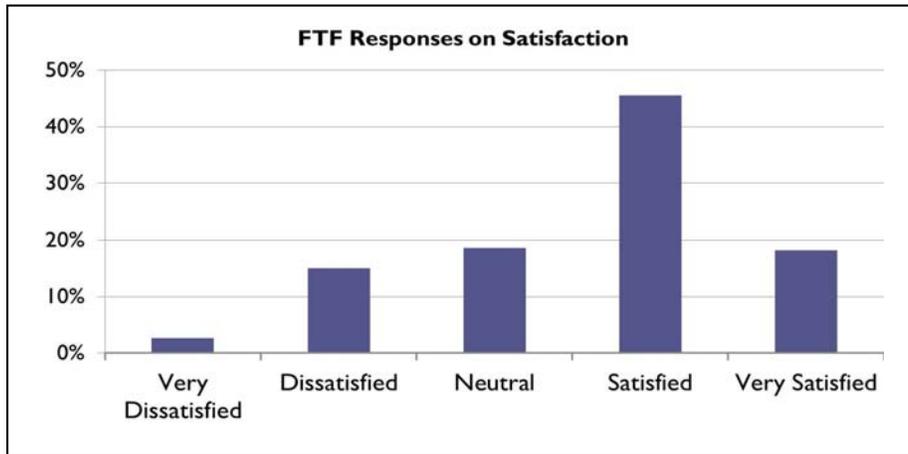
Action: Increase visibility of Fixed-Term Faculty resources on campus. The survey served this purpose in some parts. Many respondents commented that the survey itself was encouraging that some of their issues were being heard. A website is being assembled by the committee with links to some of the school and departmental policies.

<http://provost.unc.edu/policies/> is a good starting place for promotion documents.

2. Satisfaction:

Faculty members were asked: ‘How would you characterize your relative level of satisfaction with your current employment situation at UNC? (Please consider here all factors, from salary to recognition and support to your happiness with the relative mix of activities in your work to your relationship with colleagues.)’

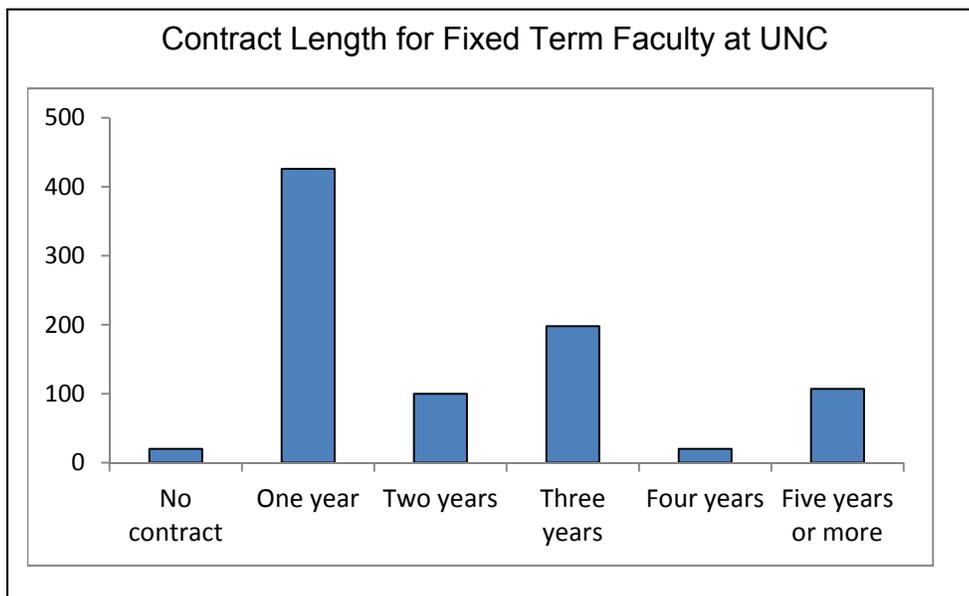
Result: 63% of faculty who responded indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their employment at UNC.



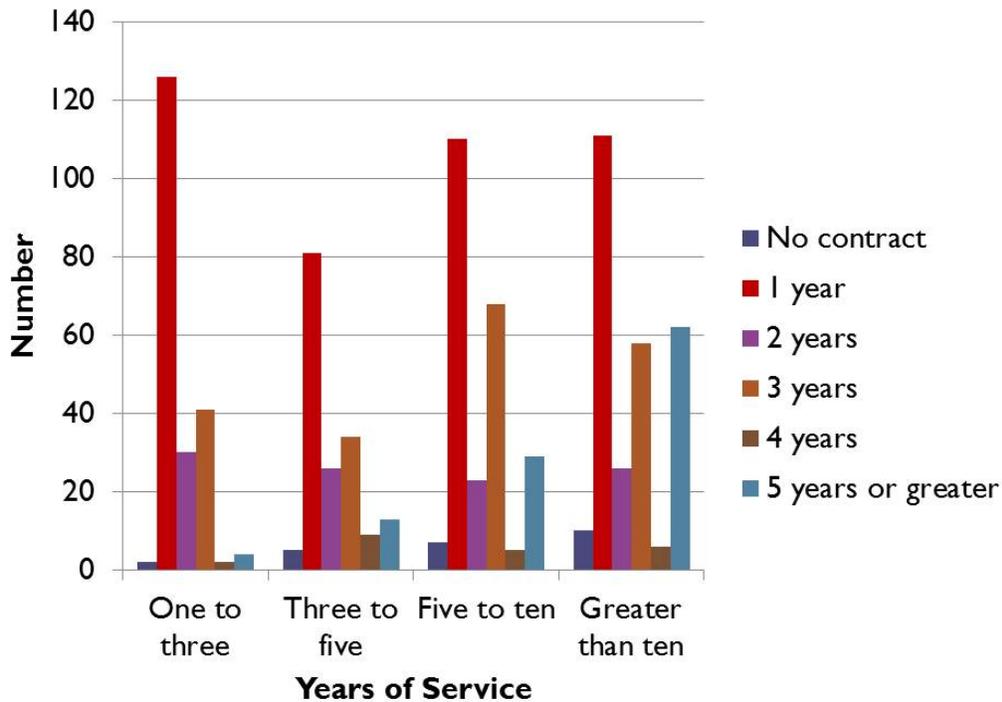
Conclusion: There is not widespread dissatisfaction among UNC Fixed-Term Faculty. However, responses within the qualitative data indicate that there are wide areas that need improvement.

3. Contract Length:

The data below indicates the reported contract length over all and contract length sorted by years of service to the University.



Contract Length by Years of Service



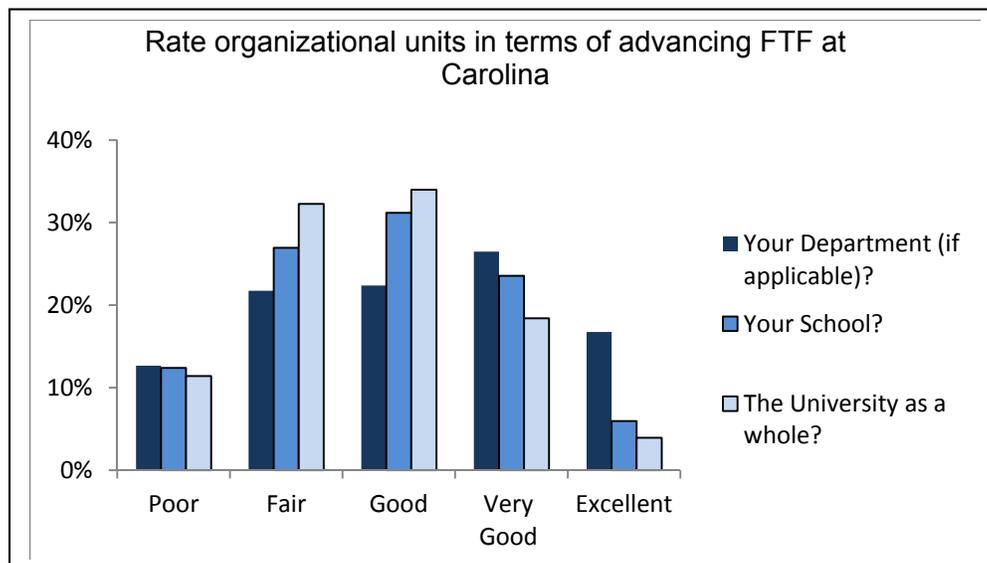
UNC-Chapel Hill Fixed Term Faculty responding to the 2014 survey reported their contract lengths, which were sorted by their individual years of service.

Results: The majority of Fixed-Term Faculty have one year contracts or less. Those with more years of service have a slightly higher proportion of longer contracts.

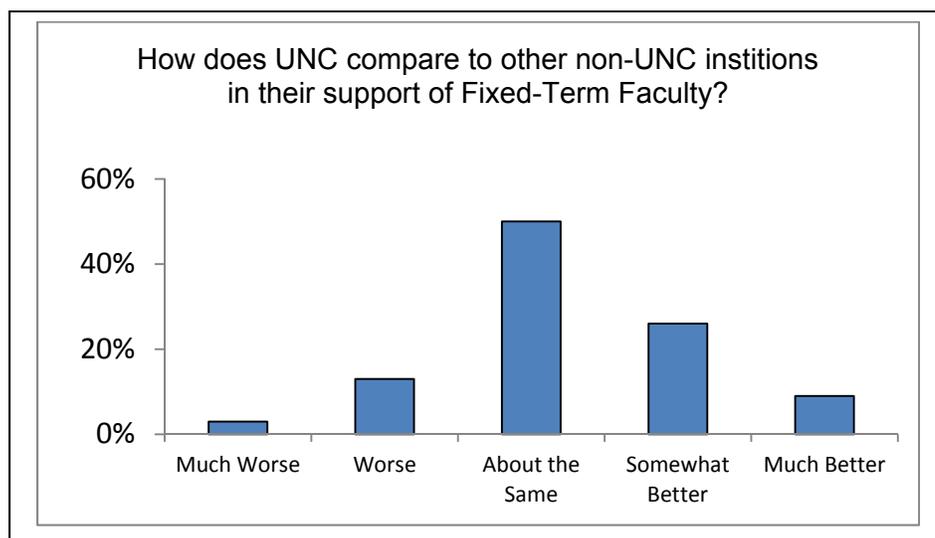
Conclusion: A critically large proportion of the Fixed-Term Faculty members on campus (51%), are required to renew their contracts annually. As the qualitative data show, this is a source of consternation among many Fixed-Term Faculty members.

4. Perception of Department, School and University support of Fixed-Term Faculty at Carolina and comparison to other universities.

'On the whole, how would you rate each of the following organizational units in terms of progress being made in advancing the status of fixed-term faculty at Carolina?'



'Compared either to your experiences working as a fixed-term faculty member at non-UNC institutions or to what you know about the experiences of your fixed-term colleagues at non-UNC institutions, how well do you think UNC-CH supports fixed-term faculty?'



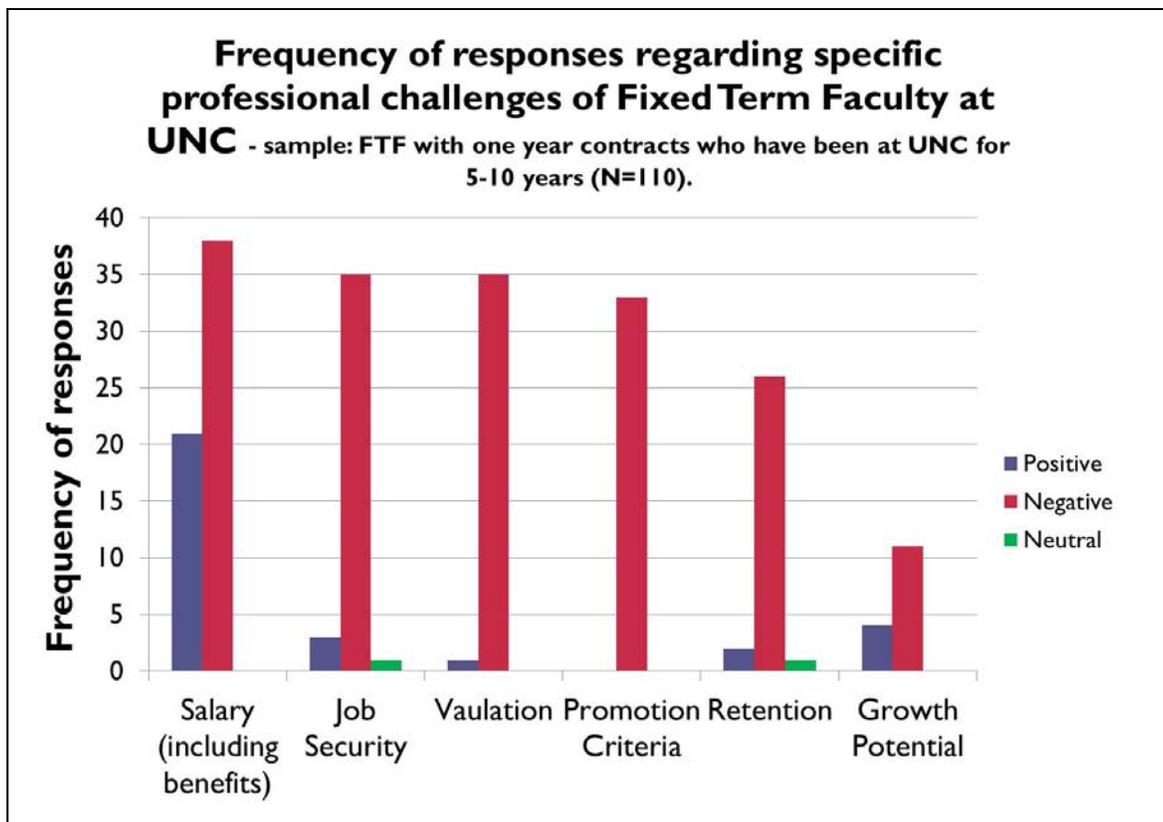
Results: Responses, distributed from Poor to Excellent, indicate a wide perception of how Fixed Term Faculty members are supported at UNC and in their schools and departments. Of interest is that respondents tended to rank their own departments (Mean = 3.13, out of 5.0 as 100% Excellent) slightly

higher than their schools (Mean = 2.84) or the University as a whole (Mean = 2.81). Compared to other universities, Carolina ranked somewhat better overall (Mean = 3.25)

5. Qualitative analysis of Fixed-Term Faculty Survey

Several open-ended questions explored the factors determining the respondents' level of satisfaction, successful practices and any other comments respondents wished to share. Due to the large number of responses, the qualitative analysis has been initially restricted to a subset of faculty: Fixed-Term Faculty who had one year contracts and have been at UNC for between 5 and 10 years. The rationale for this selection is that is the 'mid level' of service and the most common contract length. Data were analyzed by Atlas.ti software.

Of the 110 responses in this group, the most frequent comments were regarding Salary, Job security (including contract length), Valuation, Promotion criteria and Retention. Other topics discussed were Growth potential, Mentoring, Funding, Departmental variation, Retirement, Workspace and Gender inequity.



6. Sample comments

For the purposes of this report, sample comments from across the respondents are included below. Some have been paraphrased to remove any potentially personal identifiable content.

Positive comments:

- There has been no difference in my ability as fixed term to apply for grants or space allocation, salary, etc. compared to tenure track.
- I am fairly satisfied with my salary, benefits, autonomy and participation in decision making in our department at the present time.
- Pay - when factoring in opportunities to teach during the summer - is pretty competitive.
- My department is the greatest in how they treat fixed-term faculty. They treat us no differently than tenure track faculty. It is a wonderful work environment and a great team to be a part of.
- My Chair is very supportive and I have equal voice at faculty meetings, apply for grants, and have a good performance review schedule.
- My department does a great job supporting fixed-term faculty. We have voting rights in faculty meetings and are embraced by the faculty members.
- I am a Research Professor and am very happy with my situation.
- The mentoring committee system is very effective and very supportive. This has really helped in providing support from more senior faculty - regardless of whether they are fixed-term or tenure - and helps me make and accomplish goals which coincide with the guidelines for fixed term faculty.
- I am treated exactly like the other research faculty in my department, regardless of tenure status. My department is very supportive and fair in its treatment of the faculty.
- I am generally satisfied with my fixed term position at UNC. I really love working here and appreciate the university's commitment to teaching.
- As a fixed term faculty, my division is very supportive. There is not a clear distinction between fixed term and tenure in terms of responsibilities. We are encouraged to take opportunities to teach, apply for external funding and have admin support for grant management. All of the faculty members receive annual reviews from the chair.

Negative comments:

- Job security and length of term is very important. Hard to feel secure and committed to your position when you could be let go every year with 1 year terms. 1- 2 years terms also make it very difficult to recruit good faculty. How can you expect someone to pick up and move their families to work here with only assurance of 1 year of work?
- One other reason to worry about 1 year contracts is academic integrity. If a Fixed-Term Faculty on a one year contract sees something that shouldn't be happening, are they in any position to report it?
- Fixed term faculty in some departments don't get a choice in what they teach and often are prepping lots of new courses rather than being able to focus on the same routine.
- Fixed term faculty is considered a second class within the university and does not have the opportunities needed for career success.

- A mentoring program, for me at least, would be helpful. As much as I love this position currently, I am struggling to figure out "what next" since I am not on a tenure track. More generally, a more defined sense of our place within the university structure would be helpful.
- The only two concerns I have are 1) having a 1 year contract, because it makes me wonder how committed I should be to the university long-term (particularly as it affects developing relationships related to research and long-term curricular development projects if I can be let go at any time; and 2) lack of curricular committee leadership by fixed term faculty.
- We have several very successful Fixed-Term Faculty in our department, but our compensation, support and security are all less than tenure-stream faculty. ... Nearly all Fixed-Term Faculty with whom I work have stories of inadequacies.
- As a Fixed Term Faculty, I feel very much like a second-class citizen at Carolina despite the fact that I am routinely told that I am an excellent performer and an outstanding faculty member by my Chair.
- Fixed-Term Faculty can feel isolated, even though we teach an extremely non-trivial percentage of the total classes at UNC.
- I love Carolina but there seems to be a systematic lack of support for many of us, left to find our way.

Summary

The results of the survey indicated that

- The majority of Fixed-Term Faculty members have only one-year contracts, even those who have served at the University for over 10 years.
- Fixed-Term Faculty members were largely unaware of their own numbers, representation of Faculty Council or informational resources available regarding appointment policy.
- 63% of Fixed-Term Faculty members were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their positions at UNC.
- Top issues concerning Fixed-Term Faculty are salary equity, length of contracts, valuation, promotion criteria, retention and growth opportunities.
- Some Fixed-Term Faculty members are not well supported by their departments, resulting in their feeling less valued.

Discussion

While the Committee for Fixed-Term Faculty sent out the survey to 'take the temperature' of Fixed-Term Faculty on campus, the overwhelming response rate indicates the desire of this group to have their voices heard. The fact that the majority of respondents took the time to write in comments rather than just swiftly click through the multiple choice answers also indicates the passion that the Fixed-Term Faculty have toward helping to make our University a better place. While many voiced concerns over pay equity, contract length, clarity on performance and advancement or the emotions of feeling undervalued, many Fixed-Term Faculty members also wrote enthusiastically about how they are paid equitably and are included in their departments as valued members.

The big picture that emerged was that although the majority of Fixed-Term Faculty members were satisfied or very satisfied with their employment at UNC, pockets of inequity remain. Repeatedly, the committee heard from faculty who do not feel valued or are treated as second class citizens in their departments. Although the reasons behind this second tier system in some departments cannot be determined, it can be gleaned that the recent surge in Fixed-Term Faculty on campus has allowed many to be unsupported by their departments or colleagues.

The results of this survey have allowed the Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty to assemble a list of Best Practices (below), which if followed, have the potential to address many of these concerns. In addition, the practices recommended do not have any financial costs beside the time it may take for a department chair to have a periodic conversation with their Fixed-Term Faculty members to be sure that their professional goals are on track.

This is a national conversation as the ranks of Fixed-Term Faculty increase. The Fixed-Term Faculty Committee believes that these simple common sense practices will advance the status of Fixed-Term Faculty campus-wide while improving faculty retention and the integrity of the University.

Best Practices to Ensure the Professional Success of Fixed Term Faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill

The Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty recommends the following “best practices” for the employment and professional support of full-time fixed-term faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill. These recommendations come from an extensive survey of UNC Fixed-Term Faculty as well as practices from other universities.

1. **LENGTH OF CONTRACT** 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, the following guidelines should be observed.

Years of Service to the University	Contract Length
< 1 year	1 year
1 – 5 years or Associate Professor level	3 years
> 5 years or Professor level	5 years

2. **NON-RENEWAL NOTICE** Decisions not to renew the appointments of full-time fixed-term faculty should be made with adequate notice, at least six months prior to the end of the first year’s appointment. Except in cases of urgent financial contingency, notice in advance of nonrenewal 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.
3. **CLEAR PROFESSIONAL PROGRESSION** Academic units should have a clear career ladder system for full-time (>75% FTE) fixed-term positions, and appointments should be made with predictable ranks and titles. This document should be updated and revised every 5 years. Criteria should include responsibilities for teaching, service and scholarship (e.g., scholarship of education, scholarship of application and scholarship of discovery).
4. **COMMUNICATION** 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. 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.

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5. **CAREER DEVELOPMENT** Fixed-Term Faculty members should be mentored and should receive regular feedback (at minimum yearly) 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.
6. **INCLUSION** 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. Teaching faculty should be included in curriculum discussions.