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.