

Moving Toward One Faculty at UTSA: Summary Report by the NTT Faculty Committee of the
Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars
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Prepared for Provost John Frederick

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of the Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars

The Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Committee was appointed by the Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars (ADTS) in the fall of 2014 to explore concerns of non-tenured adjunct faculty and lecturers at UTSA. By identifying concerns of adjunct faculty and lecturers, the committee aimed to initiate a conversation about improving the teaching experience of these faculty and the classroom experience of students at UTSA.

Background on NTT Faculty at UTSA

Non-tenure-track positions (also known as “contingent faculty positions” and referred to in this report as adjunct faculty and lecturers) now account for 76 percent of all instructional staff appointments in American higher education.¹ At the University of Texas at San Antonio, the figure is significantly lower. In the fall of 2014, non-tenure-track faculty, including part-time (adjunct) and full-time lecturers (but not teaching assistants), comprised 48 percent of UTSA teaching faculty, or 596 out of a total 1,234 faculty members.² This percentage has remained relatively stable over the past four years. Nonetheless, adjuncts and lecturers teach 64 percent (roughly two-thirds) of all student credit hours and approximately 75 percent of all lower-division credit hours at UTSA.³

Slightly more than half of all adjuncts and lecturers at UTSA hold the Lecturer I title with the remainder holding titles of Lecturer II or III, Senior Lecturer, or other special designations.⁴ Per semester:

- 48 percent of adjunct faculty and lecturers teach 1 or 2 courses;
- 40 percent teach 3 or 4 courses; and
- 12 percent teach five or more courses.

The committee was unable to find data on the percent of adjunct faculty and lecturers paid on a class-by-class basis compared to those holding extended (one- or three-year) contracts.

Literature on NTT Faculty

National research on contingent faculty has identified a number of concerns of this group. The NTT Faculty Committee drew upon a special report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement, *Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-Time Faculty into Focus* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas at Austin, Program in Higher Education Leadership, 2014) to identify some of these concerns. This report was based on a survey of 71,451 faculty from 2009-2013 and 32 focus groups representing a cross-section of U.S. community colleges. The report focuses on contingent faculty at *community colleges*, but some of its findings appear relevant to adjunct faculty and lecturers at UTSA.

Although contingent faculty nationwide often complain about low pay, the *Contingent Commitments* report identifies “marginalization” as equally important. The report notes, for example, that “part-time faculty have infrequent opportunities to interact with peers about teaching and learning...they are rarely included in important campus discussions about the kinds of change needed to improve student learning, academic progress, and college completion.”⁵ Similarly, “Their access to orientation, professional development, administrative and technology support, office space, and accommodations for meeting with students typically is limited, unclear, or inconsistent.”⁶ The *Contingent Commitments* report goes on to emphasize the importance of these concerns for achieving institutional teaching goals. “Colleges depend on

part-time faculty to educate more than half of their students, yet they do not fully embrace these faculty members. Because of this disconnect, contingency can have consequences that negatively affect student engagement and learning.”⁷

At UTSA, Provost John Frederick’s approach to professionalizing adjunct faculty and lecturer positions seeks to address these problems. For example, a recent change to the HOP policy (section 2.02) creates a multi-tier path for adjunct faculty and lecturer promotion based on experience and a history of excellent teaching.

The focus of this committee is another clear indicator of the Provost’s commitment to promoting teaching excellence and student retention—both of which provide a solid footing for the Educational Excellence pillar of the University’s Blueprint 2020. UTSA’s adjunct faculty and lecturers teach most of the core curriculum courses, allowing them to interact in and out of the classroom with the majority of UTSA’s freshmen.

Faculty Focus Groups at UTSA

As an extension of the Provost’s initiatives to professionalize adjunct faculty and lecturers, the NTT Faculty Committee organized several focus groups during the spring of 2015. Based on the recommendations of faculty from the ADTS, department chairs, and others, the committee compiled a list of roughly 40 highly accomplished and well-respected adjunct faculty and lecturers, including members from all colleges. We then sent invitations and formed four focus groups: three at the 1604 campus (February 23 and 26) and one at the Downtown campus (February 24). Moderators for the focus groups were ADTS members Matthew Gdovin and David Vance and English professor Bonnie Lyons. ADTS members Lindsay Ratcliffe and Diane Abdo compiled focus group responses.

Eighteen adjunct faculty and lecturers participated in the focus groups, nine who hold a Ph.D. or terminal degree in their field, and nine who hold a Master’s degree. Seven of the faculty have taught at the university level for 1-9 years, and the remaining 11 have taught for 10 or more years. All but two of the focus group faculty teach at least 4 courses per semester, with most estimating they teach 200-300 students per semester. One-third of the faculty indicated they are aware of the HOP policy regarding salaries and promotion for adjunct faculty and lecturers, but two of these respondents indicated they were not aware of the substance of the policy or how it is supposed to be enforced.

Focus Groups Summary

This section summarizes the notes from the four focus groups. Key concerns raised by focus group participants fell into four general categories: 1) Contracts and salary, 2) Evaluation and promotion, 3) Integration and acceptance, and 4) Professional development and support. Each section below contains a brief summary of key points and participant comments.

1) Contracts and salary summary: no job security, low university commitment, low pay

- Contract offerings are inconsistent. Some departments offer only semester-to-semester contracts, even for lecturers employed at UTSA for many years. This type of employment uncertainty undermines the university’s message, “We want good teaching.”
- Some adjunct faculty and lecturers have taught at UTSA for more than 25 years, yet the department chair will not put them on a multi-year contract.

- Some adjunct faculty and lecturers said they receive their teaching assignments only days before the beginning of the semester.
- Adjunct faculty and lecturers appointed on a semester-to-semester basis hesitate to enroll in yearly university benefits because they cannot be assured full-time spring employment.
- Adjunct faculty and lecturers are often asked to take on additional tasks for no extra pay.
- Adjunct faculty and lecturers report feeling stress related to lack of job security.

“It’s hard to be dedicated when you don’t even know if you’ll be here next semester. It takes its toll.”

“I am willing to dedicate myself to this university, but I don’t have the security of knowing that I’ll have a job after my current contract is up. It’s all about job security and respect.”

“I feel easily replaceable.”

“We have lost a lot of good teachers because they couldn’t survive based on the salary and the uncertainty.”

“The reward I get from teaching comes from my students. But I need better pay.”

2) Evaluation and promotion summary: Ineffective evaluation rubric or no department evaluation, limited opportunity for advancement

- Evaluation and promotion process is inconsistent: some departments do not review adjunct faculty and lecturers annually or at all, and other departments review adjunct faculty and lecturers using rubrics designed for T/TT faculty (with the most significant evaluation criterion being research rather than teaching).
- Promotion structure limits adjunct faculty and lecturers without terminal degrees. Adjunct faculty and lecturers without terminal degrees—regardless of recognized teaching excellence—will never rise above LIII. This ceiling stifles faculty motivation.

“I did not know that there was an established path for NTT promotion.”

“I do not have a yearly performance evaluation.”

“I have proven that I am a good teacher without a Ph.D. Please don’t limit my ability to move through the ranks.”

3) Integration and acceptance summary: Adjunct faculty and lecturers often not recognized as part of the UTSA faculty

- In some departments, adjunct faculty and lecturers are not invited to or allowed to attend faculty meetings.

- In some departments, adjunct faculty and lecturers are not allowed to vote on department issues, even if the faculty member holds an administrative position, such as UGAR.
- Some adjunct faculty and lecturers do not have an office near their T/TT colleagues with whom they could confer and share best teaching practices.

“Information is not provided to new [contingent] faculty. If you want to know about anything that benefits you, you have to ask.”

“I am not invited to attend faculty meetings.”

“I am invited to faculty meetings—but it’s clear that I should be seen, not heard.”

“I have taught for eight years, full time, [but] my office is not even on the same floor as the [rest of the] department, and my office door does not have my name on it because I share it with graduate students.”

4) Professional development and support summary: limited funds for conferences

- Some departments do not provide adjunct faculty and lecturers with funds for travel to professional development conferences or for conference registration.

“I would love more time for professional development, but I teach five days a week. I paid my own way to attend a conference.”

“I love learning, but I seek it out on my own.”

“I’d love course development leave opportunities, similar to TT faculty development leave. I could attend conferences, develop new courses and service-learning partnerships. I could rethink classes and innovate.”

General Comments:

“As professional teachers, we are committed to the university, and the other faculty don’t realize how embedded we are.”

“Please consider the value of a committed teacher and establish university policies that value teachers committed to UTSA. This is our career; UTSA is our home.”

Recommendations

Based on our year-long exploration of adjunct faculty and lecturer concerns, the committee proposes the following recommendations. We view these recommendations as the beginning of a conversation about how to improve adjunct faculty’s and lecturers’ teaching experience and, by extension, the student experience at UTSA.

Recommendation 1: Department chairs should be accountable for evaluating adjunct faculty and lecturers annually according to HOP guidelines. Department chairs should be aware of how to promote and reward adjunct faculty and lecturers through the established promotion ladder, and chairs must make adjunct faculty and lecturers aware of how to be promoted through this ladder.

Recommendation 2: Departments should use different rubrics to evaluate TT and adjunct faculty and lecturers annually. Currently, many departments evaluate adjunct faculty and lecturers based on the TT rubric (the largest component of which is research). The largest component of an adjunct faculty and lecturer rubric should be teaching.

Recommendation 3: Absence of a terminal degree (e.g., MFA, PhD) should not render faculty ineligible for 3-year contracts, nor should it present a barrier to promotion to Senior Lecturer or Distinguished Senior Lecturer where clear evidence of teaching excellence exists (e.g., a teaching award).

Recommendation 4: In the spirit of One Faculty at UTSA, departments should include adjunct faculty and lecturers (or, at the very least, full-time lecturers) in all department meetings and shared governance.

Recommendation 5: UTSA should establish a minimum per-course and full-time salary pay scale for adjunct faculty and lecturers and increase the base pay annually in line with cost-of-living increases (as determined, for example, by the US Social Security Office Cost-of-Living-Adjustment). In establishing a minimum per-course and salary pay scale for adjunct faculty and lecturers, UTSA should reference the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) survey report table *Average Salary, by Region, Category, and Academic Rank, 2014-2015 (Dollars)*. The goal is to offer competitive compensation packages that attract and retain top teaching talent.⁸

Recommendation 6: Departments should strive to make teaching assignments in a timely manner (e.g., several weeks before the semester) whenever possible. Special attention should be given to ensuring lecturers full-time employment *over an academic year* rather than on a semester-to-semester basis.

Recommendation 7: Recognizing teaching as a professional commitment, UTSA should support teaching-related professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty and lecturers (e.g., provide funds to attend teaching conferences; offer course development leave).

¹ American Association of University Professors, “Background Facts on Contingent Faculty.” Accessed April 24, 2015 at <http://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts>.

² The UTSA Fact Book states that 638 faculty members were tenured or tenure track in the fall of 2014, and 767 faculty were non-tenure track. However, the non-tenure track faculty label here includes titles such as professor emeritus, research professor, and others who have a 0% lecturer appointment. The Office of Institutional Research provided the committee with more precise data indicating that there were 596 non-tenure track faculty at UTSA in the fall of 2014. The above estimate is thus based on the following figures: 596 non-tenure track faculty; 638 tenured or tenure-track faculty. UTSA, *Fact Book: Faculty and Staff Information*. San Antonio: Office of Institutional Research, Fall 2014, p. 5. Accessed April 24, 2015 at http://www.utsa.edu/ir/pub/factbook/2014/Faculty_All.pdf.

³ Data on the percent of student credit hours taught by NTT faculty, excluding teaching assistants, was provided by Brian Cordeau of the Office of Institutional Research. Data on the percent of lower division student credit hours taught by NTT faculty can be found in UTSA, *Fact Book: Course Enrollments*. San Antonio: Office of Institutional Research, Fall 2014, p 7. Accessed April 26, 2015 at

<http://www.utsa.edu/ir/pub/factbook/2014/CourseEnrollment.pdf>. The Fact Book states that 81.2 percent of lower-division student credit hours were taught by NTT faculty in the fall of 2014, but this figure includes teaching assistants. Teaching assistants account for about 4 percent of all student credit hours at UTSA (Office of Institutional Research). Even assuming teaching assistants teach only lower division classes, other NTT faculty would still account for 74 percent of all lower-division student credit hours.

⁴ Data from this paragraph was supplied to the committee by Brian Cordeau of the Office of Institutional Research.

⁵ Center for Community College Student Engagement, *Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-Time Faculty into Focus* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas at Austin, Program in Higher Education Leadership, 2014), p.3

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Excerpted from the AAUP’s *Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2014-2015*. Accessed July 15, 2015 at <http://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/files/2015salarysurvey/2015tab6.pdf>.