

Report from the Collegiate Senators to the Dean of Wake Forest College Regarding Teaching Professionals

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2015-2016 Collegiate Senators: William Fleeson, Ed Allen, Susan Borwick, Stewart Carter, Jay Ford, Stavroula Glezakos, Simeon Ilesanmi, Claudia Kairoff, Nina Lucas, Paul Pauca, John Pickel, Sarah Raynor, Peter Siavelis, Gale Sigal, Kathy Smith

Traditionally, two of the central concerns of the Wake Forest University Faculty Senate have been to protect academic freedom and promote effective faculty governance. The members of the Faculty Senate who represent Wake Forest College, also known as the Collegiate Senators, are interested in building appropriate structures that protect all College faculty on these two important issues.

In recent years, teaching professional faculty lines have been formally established within Wake Forest College. Prior to this time, some current teaching professionals served as lecturers or adjunct faculty, without long-term contracts. The faculty in these temporary positions had few rights or privileges in the departments or the college. Leaves, promotions, prizes, awards and salary raises were focused on tenured/tenure-track faculty, so that those in lecturer or adjunct positions had few ways to demonstrate professional growth or to receive recognition for their work. Current teaching professional faculty describe some actions taken by the administration and tenure-track/tenured faculty in those years as somewhere between “quiet indifference” and “outright hostility.”

As part of the establishment of the teaching professional faculty positions, ranks were established that allow teaching professionals to become assistant, associate and full professors within either the Teaching Professor or Professor of the Practice faculty lines. Furthermore, their rights to participate in discussions and faculty governance within the Wake Forest University community were explicitly described. Current documents state that teaching professionals are “a vital part of our academic community and are essential to fulfilling the core teaching and service missions of the College”; yet there are many vestiges of the prior situation still lingering within the Wake Forest University community that need to be discussed and addressed.

The Committee of Collegiate Senators met several times over the course of the year to discuss these issues. We also held two forums with Teaching Professors from several departments and divisions of the College. Across these meetings, the Committee of Collegiate Senators have identified three primary issues of concern:

1. The length and strength of the contracts. Some questions include:
 - a. AAUP guidelines suggest that teaching professionals should be able to earn tenure. The Senators endorse the position that all individuals who are long-term members of the faculty, regardless of position, should be able to earn tenure. How should these guidelines be implemented within Wake Forest University?
 - b. With contracts renewed on 5 year- (full professors), 3 year- (associate professors) and one or two year- (assistant professors) terms, teaching professionals do not really enjoy the rights associated with academic freedom and faculty governance. A

teaching professional might rightly be concerned about whether or not the next departmental chair or dean will recommend a contract renewal. Hence, it may not be a good strategy for a teaching professional to get strongly involved with potentially conflictual faculty governance issues within the College or a department.

- c. If tenure-track faculty are denied tenure, they are given one additional year at the College. Do teaching professionals have the same privilege?
 - d. Teaching professionals are now expected to participate in university committees. What protections do they enjoy if their opinions differ with those of powerful individuals?
 - e. What protections do teaching professionals have if their contracts are not renewed? Is there an appeal process?
 - f. What protections do teaching professionals have if the administration decides to terminate their contracts early? Is there a committee to which they can appeal?
 - g. When teaching professionals are promoted in mid-contract, why are their contracts not automatically renewed to reflect a term appropriate to their new rank?
2. After serving in the university for many years without a voice, teaching professionals now have some protections and are beginning to share issues of frustration and neglect. While the concern of academic freedom and faculty governance are among the most important issues to the Faculty Senate, teaching professionals may have additional concerns which may be of equal or greater importance to them.
 3. The proportion of tenured faculty and teaching faculty in the college concerns the Senate. Although the teaching professional position may be appropriate for certain individuals, the College Senators strongly believe that the percentage of faculty in these lines should be relatively small. Long-term danger exists that the number of faculty in these types of positions will continue to increase. This potentially could create a threat to the Teacher-Scholar Ideal, to academic freedom, and to the image of Wake Forest.

The discussions at the forum meetings with Teaching Professors confirmed the concerns of the Collegiate Senators. In the discussion, it became clear that there is a lack of clarity surrounding the conditions of employment for teacher professionals, a concern for basic academic freedom protections, a concern for appropriate avenues for teaching professionals to have a voice in faculty governance, and other concerns that are unique to individuals in these faculty lines. It was also clear that these issues have not been fully discussed by teaching professionals as an organized group—so that at this time there is no consensus among these faculty members on these important issues. There was also a difference of opinion among teaching professionals in different departments on whether or not an appeals process existed and what protections teaching professionals enjoy.

The discussion of methods for resolving the current situation revolved around the creation of a Committee on Teaching Professionals that included teaching professionals chosen to represent different divisions, departments, disciplines and ranks. Such a committee would be able to clarify exactly what protections teaching professionals enjoy and make recommendations to and seek support from the College Faculty, the Senate, the Dean's Office and other members of the administration of Wake Forest concerning issues affecting teaching professionals.

This is an issue of ongoing importance to the University, and it is one with which the Senate will continue to engage. At this time, the Committee of Collegiate Senators would like to make the following two recommendations regarding teaching professionals:

1. The Committee of Collegiate Senators supports the expressed interest of several Teaching Professors to create a self-governing body of teaching professionals which can develop its own voice and create recommendations on its own behalf.
2. The Committee of Collegiate Senators thanks the Dean for the continuous goal that at least 70% of college faculty be tenure-track or tenured. We also request current data on how well this goal is being met.