

College Senate Report to University Senate Regarding the Teaching Professional Position

Based on Meetings of 11/13/14, of 12/10/14, 1/28/15, and 4/1/15.

Present 12/10/14: Will Fleeson (Chair), Ed Allen, Sam Gladding, Claudia Kairoff, Nina Lucas, Paul Pauca, Sarah Raynor

Present 4/1/15: Will Fleeson, Cathy Seta, Ed Allen, Sam Gladding, Kathy Smith, Simeon Ilesanmi, Gale Sigal

The Collegiate Senators continued its discussion of teaching professionals within Wake Forest College. We have met multiple times this academic year, including one time with about ten Teaching Professionals. The Teaching Professionals present had experience ranging from four to 25+ years at Wake Forest. They included Divisions 2, 3, 4, and 5.

We recognize that there are multiple similar positions in the University – our discussion primarily focused on the “Teaching Professional” position, but it may apply to other positions as well. “Teaching Professionals” refers to a general category, consisting of two subcategories: “Teaching Professors” “Professors of Practice”. “Teaching Professors” are those who hold indefinite positions at WFU, and whose primary responsibility is to teach. “Professors of Practice” are those who do not hold a Ph.D. in the field but who have relevant experience in the field about which they are teaching, such as business.

In the discussion, the Collegiate Senators recognized that teaching professionals are appropriate for some disciplines and departments. Certain individuals may also desire these types of positions for their careers. There are also examples when these types of positions have been used to help recruit new faculty; spouses or other significant others of tenure-track faculty have been hired as teaching professionals. We also note that Wake Forest College has had individuals in these types of positions for many years. The recent codification of the teaching professional lines that included methods for promotion and longer contracts is a definite improvement for the individuals in these positions. Our discussion was not about individual teaching professionals; our discussion concerned the position itself and its role in the College. Our discussion considered the following issues.

Positives about the teaching professional position

- The position may be appropriate for certain individuals. There are individuals whose career goals do not include all aspects of the Teacher-Scholar Ideal.
- Teaching professional positions may be a benefit for some departments and disciplines.
- For the University, teaching professionals incur less financial resources from the University; salaries of teaching professionals are typically smaller than the corresponding salaries of the tenured/tenure track faculty.
- For the teaching professional, the position provides clarity, structure, institutional support, and respect.
- Thus, there are indeed many short-term benefits to having this position at the university.

Concerns about the teaching professional position

- In some departments, it seems that conflict has occurred in the past and is likely to arise again in the future between teaching professionals and the tenured/tenure-track faculty. While all faculty want what is best for our students, these two groups may have different visions of how to implement departmental programs. It seems clear that there will be conflict between the two groups due to different goals, different priorities, resource allocation, and pressures that may affect one group but not the other. It is highly likely that the result of these differences between these two groups will be an increase in factionalism within departments and within the college. Reports from certain departments indicate that this is already true.
- Two classes of professors will most likely result from this policy.
- Significant increases in the number of teaching professionals would seem to indicate a corresponding decrease in the institutional commitment to the Teacher Scholar Ideal.
- It may be difficult to create uniform policies across departments.
- There is a need to clarify how teaching professionals' time should be allocated, in light of the time allocation of tenured/tenure track professors.
- There needs to be more clarity about the promotion process.
- What role will teaching professionals have in the Senate? Are teaching professionals protected enough to participate freely in debates that may pit members of the faculty against individuals in the administration? Placing teaching professionals on the Senate when such safeguards are not in place may not be in the best interests of the College.
- 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 creates a real threat to the Teacher-Scholar Ideal, to academic freedom, and the image of Wake Forest.
- Teaching professionals have salaries that are much smaller than tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Based on this discussion, we have come to the following four-point conclusion:

1. Based on the recommendations of the American Association of University Professors, we recommend that all teaching professionals have the opportunity to earn tenure. We are particularly concerned that teaching professionals can be fired without cause and that their contracts are very short. This would require serious implementation considerations. This practice would be consistent with Wake Forest values, with the intended contribution and career trajectory of Teaching Professionals to the University, and with the standards of academic freedom.
2. We recommend that no more than 15% of concurrently teaching faculty have the status of Teaching Professional across the College in any given semester.

Similarly, we recommend that at least 70% of the faculty teaching in any given semester be in tenure or tenure-track lines. (The remaining 15% would consist of tenure-track faculty and faculty in various other positions such as postdocs, visiting assistant professors, and adjuncts.) We also recommend that similar percentage limits (to be decided) be established on the number of course credits generated by teaching professionals and other non-tenured faculty in any given semester.

3. We request clarification on five issues:
 - a. What are the various similar positions, and what differences correspond to their naming differences?
 - b. What percentage limits would be set for all classes of teaching faculty in the College? What are the requirements for being hired as a Teaching Professional or for any other similar class?
 - c. What is the evaluation process for Teaching Professionals? Is it of similar rigor as for other tenure track professionals?
 - d. What are the current numbers in each of these positions?
 - e. What is the compensation for these positions?

4. We request that the University address these points with the Senate in early Fall.