

Supporting Full Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty: Creating Respectful and Inclusive Cultures for Institutional Transformation

Prepared by Laura E. Sponsler, Clinical Assistant Professor, Higher Education,
with support from Shenhaye Ferguson, Graduate Assistant, Higher Education

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide up to date information about faculty off the tenure track and their experiences in higher education. Currently making up more than 70% of the professoriate, non-tenure track faculty provide essential teaching, research and service to institutions of higher education. This literature review focuses specifically on full-time non-tenure track faculty (not adjunct faculty) to highlight the unique experiences and challenges of this role including collegiality and satisfaction, as well as their roles in shared governance and academic culture.

Introduction

Approximately 70% of faculty in the United States are off the tenure track (AAUP, 2018) – a statistic that is widely cited to highlight the changing role of the faculty in U.S. higher education. This number takes into account all non-tenure track faculty – those in full time, part time, adjunct instructor, lecturer, or research roles. Increasingly literature and research are parsing these groups to better understand the differences among faculty roles and experiences.

NTTF are expected to perform their instructional and administrative duties without any guarantee of job security (Alleman & Haviland, 2017). As faculty roles continue to change, if NTTF are expected to maintain their teaching roles, Alleman and

Haviland (2017) emphasized that NTTF jobs need to be sustainable. This sustainability could be achieved through some of the principles outlined by Kezar (2011) such as having a standardized hiring and evaluation process for NTTF, equitable benefits and compensation packages as well as opportunities for promotions. Additionally, Ott and Cisneros (2015) stated that “faculty who are uncommitted to their organization are less productive in their teaching, research, and service responsibilities as well as less motivated to engage in professional growth and development (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Lawrence et al., 2012; Jing & Zhang, 2014), which can lead to intentions to leave the university” (p. 5). In response to this trend and the “adjunctification” of higher education (Harris, 2019), institutions are hiring full-time faculty – off the tenure track.

There is a growing body of literature and research about full-time non-tenure track faculty (FTNTTF) (Drake et al., 2019; Haviland et al., 2020; Hollenshead et al., 2007). FTNTTF make up approximately 17% of all faculty (AAUP, 2018) and approximately 60% of new faculty (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). The University of Denver is joining a growing cadre of higher education institutions that are changing policies and procedures to honor the contributions of full-time faculty off of the tenure track (Pullias Center, n.d.)

Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty (FTNTTF) Experiences

There are many pathways to the professoriate for FTNTTF (Gappa et al., 2007; Hollenshead et al., 2007). Gappa and colleagues (2007) identified four pathways or reasons FTNTTF were not on the tenure track. In their typology, there were faculty who were described as 1) Tenure-track rejectors; 2) Non-tenure track choosers; 3) Trailing spouses or partners; and 4) Second-career selectors. Other FTNTTF report choosing

NTT roles for work life balance or geographic constraints (Hollenshead et al., 2007). Additionally, some opt-in to FTNTTF roles because at some institutions, FTNTTF report not as many challenges as part-time faculty or the disadvantages experienced by tenure/tenure track faculty (Gappa et al., 2007).

FTNTTF are referred to by many different titles - titles that may or may not capture the work and responsibilities of faculty off the tenure track. Studies have found that there are no standard professional titles for NTTF (Kezar, 2012, Morling & Lee, 2020). There are over 150 titles or descriptors for non-tenure track faculty in the literature (full time, part time, adjunct, contingent, teaching, research, assistant, associate, full, etc.) (Kezar, 2012). This certainly has implications for research on this group as with so many different titles used to describe, it is challenging to track a true representation of NTTF. In a recent study, Morling & Lee (2020) found that there was no perceived difference between FTNTTF Titles (e.g. Assistant Teaching Professor, Instructor, Lecturer) by lay people and students. However, it is notable that faculty perceived FTNTTF to have lower status and be less respected outside the university (Morling & Lee, 2020).

FTNTTF themselves report feeling less respected and marginalized in their own institutions (Drake et al., 2019). FTNTTF Research Faculty feel marginalized, lack role clarity, desire respect; yet enjoy collaborative work and being a part of the academic community (Bergom et al., 2010). As teachers, FTNTTF express satisfaction; yet as professors, they report feeling restricted and lower job satisfaction (Levin & Shaker, 2011). FTNTTF report feelings of invisibility and exclusion; unclear perceptions of their roles and undervaluation by colleagues (Drake et al., 2019). These tensions and

ambiguities can cause FTNTTF to seek legitimacy in their roles and exhibit isomorphic tendencies by mimicking the work of tenure track faculty (Sponsler et al., forthcoming).

Collegiality and FTNTTF

The experiences of FTNTTF depend greatly on the institutional culture and norms of particular institutions. Alleman and Haviland (2017) suggested that institutions focusing on building a collegial culture would help to engage FTNTTF. Their qualitative study found that FTNTTF wanted to be treated as equals, therefore being engaged socially and working towards a common goal as well as having both formal and informal voices within their departments. To this end, there is a need for inclusive academic work environments and FTNTTF should be included as faculty. There can be no advancement if institutions are not able to create an environment where all scholars can thrive, including NTTF.

According to Gappa et al. (2007) there are numerous factors that affect faculty performance including collegiality. Kezar (2013) further highlighted the importance of Gappa's central theme of respect. To this end, respect is key to ensure positive outcomes such as professional growth and faculty satisfaction. Hatfield (2006), in citing AAUP, also supports this notion of respect being an important dimension of collegiality. Hatfield further notes that a lack of collegiality can result in several challenges such as conflicts, isolation, dissatisfaction and increased stress within departments and the wider institution. Ott and Cisneros (2015), in looking at the work environment at the departmental and institutional level, cited collegiality as one of the influential factors for both tenure and non-tenure faculty. Ott and Cisneros (2015) study found that "Non-tenure track faculty had significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the collegiality of

their workplaces (i.e., professional and personal interactions with colleagues) compared to both probationary and tenured faculty, and also lower levels of satisfaction with equity compared to pre-tenure faculty” (p. 16).

NTTF work is just as essential as tenured faculty, as they teach, publish, serve on committees although the work distribution might seem balanced in many ways, the culture may not (Cuciarre, 2014). Cuciarre (2014) questions the inclusion of faculty within the academy and the importance of creating a space where NTTF are valued for their work by their colleagues. Seipel and Larson (2018) stated that given the differences between NTTF and Tenured/Tenure-Eligible faculty, “it is logical that they may have different needs and experience their work environments in different ways” (p. 155). They further explained that the one’s academic department will inevitably impact their well-being and performance. Therefore, a supportive campus environment will yield more satisfaction among faculty.

A more supportive, collegial environment can lead to greater satisfaction among all faculty, and especially NTTF. Seipel and Larson (2018) created a self-determination theory (SDT) model based on Larson et al. (2015) adaptation of Deci and Ryan (1985). Seipel and Larson’s model includes supportive components representing, personal and family support, administrative and departmental support among others. They argue that if there is a connection with these components, this will lead to teaching/service and global satisfaction. In particular, Seipel and Larson (2018) posited that departmental support has various dimensions, this includes “support from the department chair, recognition for one’s contributions and achievements, and support for both promotion and contract

renewal” (p. 158). They further conclude that “...administrators need to implement policies designed to foster a greater sense of relatedness for NTT faculty” (p. 167).

Administrators may not support NTTF and other scholars have looked at faculty agency as a way to overcome these barriers (Drake et al., 2019). Drake et al.’s (2019) qualitative study examined FTNTTF at a research university and how power structures impact the experiences of FTNTTF. They found that FTNTTF had feelings of invisibility, exclusion and feeling undervalued by their peers or the institution. The study concluded that institution’s “leadership, policies, and culture must clearly and consistently embrace and engage FTNTTF if these faculty are to operationalize their agency and serve as full members of their academic community” (Drake et al., 2019, p. 168). One of the ways to distribute power in the university is through shared governance.

Shared Governance

The views of NTTF by T/TT faculty impact both the experiences of FTNTTF as well as the opportunities for NTTF in shared governance. Jones et al. (2017) state that there is an “overall lack of empirical knowledge” about NTTF experiences and their involvement in institutional governance which inhibits the field. While understudied for NTTF, participation in shared governance is an important component of faculty work and experiences (Gappa et al., 2007). In 2010, the AAUP study found that faculty in part-time, postdoctoral, or graduate-student employee positions are less often included in governance than their full-time non-tenure-track colleagues. In the same study, approximately “three-quarters of respondents indicated that at their institution, full-time non-tenure-track faculty are eligible to serve in governance roles” (AAUP, 2010). Only about a quarter of institutions surveyed indicated that part-time faculty are eligible, and

the percentages reporting eligibility for graduate-student employees (5.8 percent) and postdoctoral fellows (2.9 percent) were extremely low (AAUP, 2010). While the actual involvement of NTTF in shared governance varied greatly among institutions, NTTF consistently reported wanting to be more involved in governance (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001).

In the most recent study about NTTF participation in Faculty Senates, Jones and colleagues (2017) greater participation for FTNTTF. At 85% of institutions, FTNTTF are eligible for senate and PTNTTF are eligible at 11% of institutions. Overall, approximately ten percent of seats in faculty senates were reserved for NTTF (Jones et al., 2017). Perhaps the most interesting finding was that there were no discernible and distinguishable. Only TT faculty eligible for senate Full-time 15% institutional characteristics associated with whether the senate involve NTTF. The size, location, prestige or number of NTTF at the institution did not affect if NTTF were eligible for seats.

Including NTTF in shared governance does influence institutional culture and climate (Kezar, 2013). Kezar (2013) identified how NTTF involvement in governance leads to a more positive departmental and campus climate that shapes how willing and able NTTF serve as teachers and department colleagues. In this study, the major finding was participation in shared governance can play an important role in institutional well-being, climate and morale. By involving NTTFs in governance, there are increased opportunities for relationship building and trust. The involvement in governance by NTTF can lead to institutional policy changes in support of this population that ultimately improves overall institutional functioning (Kezar, 2013).

The rationale for including NTTF in governance is clear: participation in faculty governance is a primary right and responsibility for faculty (Gappa et al., 2007; Kezar 2012). Moreover, differentiating between lines is an equity issue that impacts climate and culture (Kezar, 2013) and may impact student learning (Kezar et al., 2013).

As the AAUP (2018) has noted:

On the whole, the exclusion from governance of faculty with contingent appointments is the greater danger to the integrity of the profession and the quality of higher education. In order for the faculty's voice to be heard and for the faculty to retain its ability to contribute substantially to academic decision making, the expectation of service in governance must be expanded beyond tenured and tenure-track faculty as it has been expanded in the past: a century ago senior faculty members generally were the sole participants in university governance.

A Framework to Examine Faculty Culture

There are many frameworks to study and understand academic culture in higher education (Gappa et. al 2007; Kezar, 2013; Schein, 1993). For the purposes of this literature review paper the frameworks of Gappa et al. (2007) and that framework adapted by Kezar (2012) will be used to explore creating a respectful culture for all faculty.

Gappa et al. (2007) identified six key areas that create supportive culture and environments for faculty and the areas include employment equity, academic freedom and autonomy, flexibility, professional growth, collegiality and respect. In their work, if institutions have these six essential elements in place for faculty, there are myriad

benefits to the institution. These positive outcomes include positive working environments, faculty satisfaction, increased commitment to the organization, and a more diverse faculty. At the center of this figure is respect, which Gappa et al. (2007) defined as “the fundamental entitlement for every faculty member and is at the core of any reciprocal relationship between faculty members and their institutions” (p.139).

Five Essential Elements of Faculty Work
Gappa, Austin & Trice (2007)



Figure 1: Five Essential Elements of Faculty Work

Kezar (2012) adapted the framework from Gappa, Austin and Trice (2007) to identify the essential elements for effective faculty work to include the essential elements for non-tenure track faculty. Kezar’s (2012) research includes national policy reports, an extensive literature review and case studies. Her adapted framework includes:

- Employment equity - regularize hiring; clear role definitions; revise contracts; compensation and benefits; appropriate office space; clerical support and equipment;
- Academic freedom and autonomy - protection, policies, and involvement in governance;
- Flexibility - involvement in governance;

- Professional growth - promotion and evaluation; professional development; mentoring;
- Collegiality - regularize hiring; systematic socialization; involvement in governance;
- Respect - all policy recommendations relate to this area (Kezar, 2012, p.13)

Kezar’s adapted framework is useful to understand the elements necessary for non-tenure track faculty development and also centers the idea of respect. Institutions vary in their ability and in their process to create cultures that respect and support NTTF (Kezar & Sam, 2011). To create equitable processes and practices for NTTF, Kezar and Sam (2011) found there were stages to development of their culture as depicted in Figure 2.

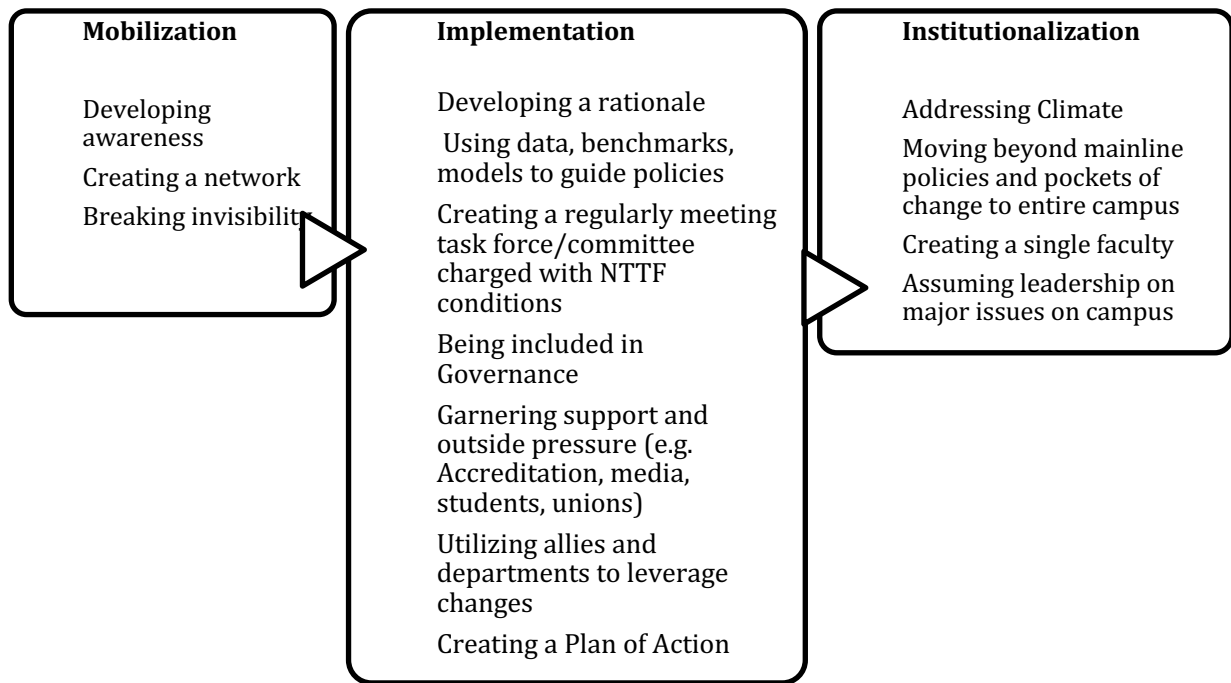


Figure 2: Creating Equitable Practices and Processes for Faculty

Most institutions in the study were in the mobilization or implementation phases (Kezar, & Sam, 2011).

Building on how departmental and institutional cultures develop, Kezar (2013) used culture and cultural analyses at the department level as a way to understand how departmental culture and associated policies and practices affected the performance, growth and development of NTT faculty. In her work, Kezar (2013) examined working conditions and performance outcomes unveiling four kinds of cultures impacting faculty performance: destructive, neutral/invisible, inclusive and learning environments. The destructive culture is reflective of NTTF feeling disrespected within their department. The desired respect is given to those who are tenured or on the tenure-track but NTTF receives the opposite as they are actively disrespected. It is described as inhumane and making one feel as second class or hired help. As for those classified as neutral culture, NTTF are faced with active disrespect, however, they are ignored. Kezar (2013) indicated that this culture is one where NTTF are not called upon to participate in meetings or sought after for their input in departmental matters. In the inclusive culture, NTTF is content with their experiences in a particular department and are likely to be respected and acknowledged. Kezar's examples included being invited to meetings and departments valuing their contribution to governance or curriculum decisions. Finally, the learning culture is similar to the inclusive culture as it relates to feeling valued and respected. Kezar (2013) indicated that the main distinction between the is that "faculty, chairs, and staff in the learning culture typically thought about support for NTTF , not just as an issue of equity but rather tied the support to a commitment to students and the goals of the institution around learning" (p. 175).

Key findings indicated that the destructive and neutral cultures affected commitment levels of NTT faculty while inclusive and learning environments

demonstrated NTT faculty often engage in considerable amounts of unpaid work (Kezar, 2013). Additionally, inclusive cultures did not automatically equate to supportive student learning environments and department chairs' involvement greatly impacted academic culture and the quality of education conveyed to students (Kezar, 2013).

Conclusion

In order to fully support and value the contributions of FTNTTF in higher education, one must look to a cultural analysis. Gappa et al. (2007) and Kezar (2012) provide practical frameworks to examine all aspects of culture. Supportive culture for FTNTTF and NTTF will provide an inclusive and respectful culture for all faculty. (rising tides lift all boats) making higher education institutions more equitable for faculty can improve student learning and student experience.

Institutional leaders must rethink how they can create a holistic experience for NTTF, one that is equitable, inclusive and valuable. In rethinking, new models would need to reflect a positive departmental and institutional culture. As stated in the introduction, the number of NTTF are constantly increasing and as such more and more students are interacting with and being taught by these faculty members. It is now a matter of ethical responsibility to ensure that all faculty regardless of their status should be treated with the highest level of collegiality and respect. This culture should be one where their contributions and knowledge are valued, and professional growth supported with the necessary resources.

References

- Alleman, N.F. & Haviland, D. (2017). "I expect to be engaged as an equal": Collegiality expectations of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members. *Higher Education*, 74, 527-542.
- American Association of University Professors. (2010 and 2018). *Policies and reports*.
<https://www.aaup.org/reports-publications/aaup-policies-reports>
- American Association of University Professors. (2017). Trends in the academic labor force, 1975-2015.
https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Academic_Labor_Force_Trends_1975-2015_0.pdf
- Baldwin, R. G., & Chronister, J. L. (2001). *Teaching without tenure*. Johns Hopkins University Press
- Bergom, I., Waltman, J., August, L., & Hollenshead, C. (2010). Academic researchers speak. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 42(2), 45-49.
- Cucciarre, C. (2014). Happily and shamefully non-tenure-track: Hypocrisy in academic Labor. *College English*, 77(1), 55-63.
- Drake, A., Struve, L., Meghani, S., & Bukoski, B. (2019). Invisible labor, visible change: Non-tenure-track faculty agency in a research university. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(4), 1635-1664.
- Gappa, J. M., Austin, A. E., & Trice, A. G. (2007). *Rethinking faculty work: Higher education's strategic imperative*. Jossey-Bass.

Harris, A. (2019, April 8). The death of an adjunct. *The Atlantic*.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/adjunct-professors-higher-education-thea-hunter/586168/>

Hatfield, R. (2006). Collegiality in higher education: Toward an understanding of the factors involved in collegiality. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 10(1), 11-19.

Hollenshead, C., Waltman, J., August, L., Miller, J., Smith, G., & Bell, A. (2007). *Making the best of both worlds: Findings from a national institution-level survey on non-tenure track faculty*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Education of Women

Jones, W. A., Hutchens, N. H., Hulbert, A., Lewis, W. D., & Brown, D. M. (2017).

Shared governance among the new majority: Non-tenure track faculty eligibility for election to university faculty senates. *Innovative Higher Education*, 42(5-6), 505-519.

Kezar, A. (2011). Organizational culture and its impact on partnering between community agencies and postsecondary institutions to help low-income students attend college. *Education and Urban Society*, 43(2), 205–243.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124510380041>

Kezar, A. (Ed.). (2012). *Embracing non-tenure track faculty: Changing campuses for the new faculty majority*. Routledge.

Kezar, A. (2013). Departmental cultures and non-tenure-track faculty: Willingness, Capacity, and opportunity to perform at four-year institutions, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 84(2), 153-188, DOI: [10.1080/00221546.2013.11777284](https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2013.11777284)

- Morling, B., & Lee, J. M. (2020). Are “associate professors” better than “associate teaching professors”? Student and faculty perceptions of faculty titles. *Teaching of Psychology*, 47(1), 34–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00986283198888087>
- Ott, M., & Cisneros, J. (2015). Understanding the changing faculty workforce in higher education: A comparison of non-tenure track and tenure line experiences. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(90), 1-28.
- Pullias Center for Higher Education (n.d). <https://pullias.usc.edu/>
- Roach, R. (2013, April 25). Tenuous tenure. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 30, 14-15. <https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/1350968109?accountid=14608>
- Schein, E. (1993). On dialogue, culture, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 21, 40-51.
- Schuster, J., & Finkelstein, M. (2006). *The American faculty: The restructuring of academic work and careers*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Seipel, M. T., & Larson, L. M. (2018). Supporting non-tenure-track faculty well-being. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 26(1), 154–171.