

Non-tenure Track Professorships in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

October 21, 2001

Introduction:

During the Spring 2001 semester, the advisability of introduction of non-tenure track professorships (clinical and research tracks) was considered by the faculty of the College of Veterinary Medicine. Several issues were raised and discussed, and a need for additional information and clarification was expressed. This document aims to address these questions as a component of the faculty discussion leading to a vote on non-tenure track professorships in the College during the Fall semester.

Background:

Cornell University's set of available academic titles may no longer be adequate for all academic appointments. The current proposal seeks specifically to address the titles of some individuals carrying out essential teaching (through patient care or other professional service) primarily in clinical departments, and others carrying out certain research functions (usually on soft money) primarily in basic science departments. Those in clinical settings are currently typically in (senior) lecturer positions, and those in research positions are employed as (senior) research associates. In each case, the title may not be adequately descriptive of the responsibilities, may hamper our ability to hire the best individuals, may diminish our competitive stance with funding agencies, and may limit career development and professional satisfaction of those pursuing these activities as a career option.

In a sometimes overlapping processes, the advisability of introduction of non-tenure track professorships was discussed by a committee within the College of Veterinary Medicine and by a Task Force assembled by the Dean of Faculty to address the question on a University-wide basis. The latter task force has developed a proposal for a framework allowing the option of new professorial titles on a College by College basis. The Task Force is planning to sponsor university-wide discussion groups and, if the proposals have sufficient support, to ask the University Senate to consider adoption of a motion supporting such overarching legislation. As a prelude to these activities, the Task Force is anxious to secure an indication that at least one of the Colleges of the University is in support of the proposal.

Procedure:

After a positive vote by the Faculty of the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Task Force on Professorial Titles would initiate campus-wide discussion opportunities and introduce a motion to allow enabling legislation to the Faculty Senate. Should the proposal secure the support of the Senate and of the central University administration, it would be forwarded to the University Trustees. Trustee approval is required for introduction of new academic titles.

Even after approval by the trustees, the legislation would only allow adoption of the new titles on a College-by-College basis. That means that each College would have to frame its own legislation for approval (presumably by the Provost) before being authorized to recruit and hire individuals into the new non-tenure track positions.

Appointment of individuals already employed at Cornell to new titles

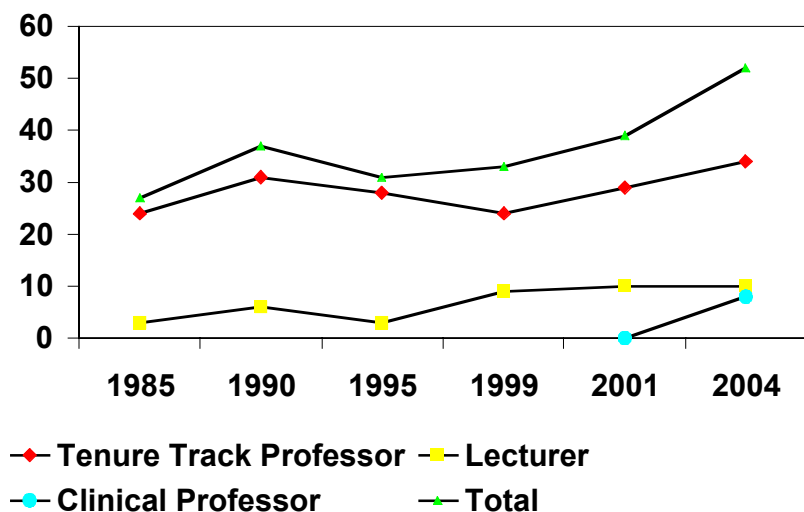
The situation is likely to arise in which individuals already at Cornell University apply for and are considered for transfer to new titles. It is certainly not proposed that all, or even most, individuals currently employed as (Senior) Lecturers or (Senior) Research Associates would be considered as Clinical or Research (Assistant / Associate / Full) Professors; rather it is anticipated that a relatively small subset would be considered for such reappointment.

Individuals currently serving as (Senior) Lecturers or Research Associates wishing to be considered for appointment as Clinical or Research (Assistant / Associate) Professors would make that application to their department chairs after consultation with the chairs. The applicant would then compile a dossier documenting academic accomplishments similar to dossiers prepared for current appointment and promotion decisions as appropriate for the level of appointment. The application would be considered, discussed and voted upon by the tenure track faculty (and, as they come into being, the clinical / research professors) of the appropriate department. The Department Chair would then write a recommendation to the Dean. At his (her) discretion, the Dean may appoint an ad hoc committee for advice on each case. The Dean would then make a decision regarding appointment of each individual as a Clinical or Research (Assistant / Associate) Professor. People whose applications for appointment to the Clinical or Research Professor track are unsuccessful will retain their current titles without modification of their appointments.

Impact of new titles on faculty in clinical departments:

During faculty discussions earlier this year questions arose as to the impact of Clinical Professors on the structure of the faculty. The College remains committed to filling the full complement of allowed tenure track positions (137) as funding allows. The number of tenure track appointees with significant clinical responsibilities in the Department of Clinical Sciences (adjusted to exclude faculty in the Ambulatory and Production Medicine Section, transferred to Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences) peaked in about 1990, followed by a drop in the next several years. The number has grown steadily since 1997. With current commitments to searches, it is expected that this number will exceed the 1990 number within 3 years, after which some additional growth is anticipated, contingent on funding availability following projections. The number of Lecturers in DCS has also risen since 1995. Recently, this has occurred in parallel with the increase in professorial appointees. It is anticipated that introduction of a Clinical Professorial track will slow down the growth in Lecturer appointments, but that tenure track appointees will continue to grow at the projected rate. These trends are depicted in Figure 1.

CUHA Staffing by DCS 1985-2004*



*Excludes consultants and part time staff.

Figure 1: Trends in academic personnel from DCS with significant clinical service responsibilities (*Projected)

Effect of Clinical Professors on Gender Equity

Concern was expressed during debates regarding a potential negative effect of a new professorial track on equitable appointment of women into tenure track positions. Data were presented from a veterinary school with a clinical educator track demonstrating that recent appointments of women tended to be in non-tenure track positions. While the data are not disputed, they are open to other interpretations. Throughout the country, universities hired many new faculty members during the 80s. Financial exigencies at the end of that decade and removal of mandatory retirement meant that hiring in tenure track lines slowed considerably. This phenomenon was observed in many universities and is not limited to clinical or medical centers. The fact that relatively few hires into the tenure track were made in the early 90s means that most new hires, in general, were in nontenurable positions. Since this coincided with a period in which many institutions were increasing efforts to attract women, this inevitably meant that women were overrepresented in clinical professor ranks and at lower levels.

This is not to deny that there are real barriers to appointment and career progression for women in academic (veterinary) medicine, but merely to aver that the roots of this malady should be sought elsewhere. Indeed, there is much evidence for obstacles in the career paths of women in academic medicine (Colletti, et al., 2000; Foster, et al., 2000; Fried et al., 1996; Nonnemaker, 2000; Tesch, et al., 1995). Employment, retention and promotion of women at appropriate levels are priorities for the College of Veterinary

Medicine. The experience of some medical schools is encouraging in this regard. For example, a relatively simple, but comprehensive and vigorously implemented policy at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine resulted in substantial improvement appointment, retention and promotion rates for women on the full time faculty (Fried et al., 1996).

Impact of non-tenure track professors on research productivity

Concern has been expressed that appointment, particularly of clinical professors, has the potential to diminish overall research productivity of the College, especially in clinical departments. There already exists a cadre of non-tenurable faculty in clinical domains – principally in the rank of lecturer. In general, the requirements for scholarship from this group are limited. Clinical professors, as described in the proposal before the faculty, would have clearly stipulated responsibilities for scholarly productivity. In this sense, their appointment could even be seen as enhancing the capacity for original scholarship above that provided by the current range of titles, particularly when viewed in the context of appointments that do not replace the aggregate tenure track positions in a department.

The appointment of research professors is motivated primarily by the need to attract and retain talented scientists and to enhance their competitive stance with funding agencies. This strategy, too, should enhance rather than impair, institutional research capacity.

The limit on the numbers of nontenable professors in departments is a further protection against undue dilution of the professorate or the research mission.

Distinction between tenure track and non-tenure track professorial appointments

The establishment of veterinary colleges within universities was a major step in veterinary education and science. In North America it took place about 100 years ago, and Cornell University was a leader. Integration of veterinary faculty with university faculty meant that veterinary colleges adopted the values of discovery and teaching common to all professors. Especially in the environment of a leading research university like Cornell, it is fair to expect significant original scholarship from tenure track professors. The corollary is that these professors should have a profile of responsibilities that makes significant original scholarship possible.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of clinical specialties. Very strong arguments can be made for their inclusion into the veterinary curriculum; our students will be required to have knowledge and expertise in these fields to function competently after graduation. However, it is not feasible to hire sufficient professorial faculty in each domain to allow each individual substantial protected time, free of teaching responsibilities, for satisfaction of tenure requirements. It is, however, possible to attract leading professionals, who by their training and enthusiasm provide excellent education and clinical innovation, published or otherwise disseminated in a relatively small proportion of their time. Incorporation of such faculty as part of the team strengthens our ability to provide a comprehensive education at an affordable cost, and achieve excellence in other aspects of our mission in a more efficient manner.

In other cases, teaming clinical track with tenure track professors allows the institution to pursue accomplishment across a spectrum of teaching and discovery components of our mission. This also allows maintenance of a consistent clinical presence – something appreciated by students, clients and referring veterinarians.

The clinical track will facilitate recruitment of exceptional clinical faculty, and more appropriately recognize the contributions of some already in our community.

Research professors are envisaged as substantially or entirely supported by soft money, without an automatic claim on independent space or other resources. In general, they are envisaged as directly supportive of existing programs or as directing core facilities in support of a range of programs. While such an arrangement does not address all concerns of existing (senior) research associates, it does provide enhanced status and competitiveness.

Assault on tenure / Erosion of professorial prestige

Some are concerned that expansion of the range of professorial titles might erode the prestige of professors. After all, it is unquestionably a significant achievement to become a professor at Cornell University. The appointment of people to non-tenurable professorial positions will require approval of the existing faculty, just as addition to the professorial ranks currently does. This check, coupled with the quality of individuals targeted for appointment as clinical or research professors establishes procedures that will ensure that those appointed will be worthy of the title and even enhance our reputation.

The College remains committed to filling the allocated number of tenurable lines available to it as funding allows. This means that no reduction in tenure track lines, and an increase above current numbers of tenure track professors is envisaged. The Dean has also given assurance that tenure track lines will not be migrated from clinical domains to other areas of the College. The recent increase in tenure track faculty with significant clinical responsibilities, to equal the heights achieved in 1990 (Figure 1) and additional increases projected, provides reassurance.

Practices of other Colleges of Veterinary Medicine

Clinical professor tracks are common in medical and veterinary schools. In 1987, 61 of 112 medical schools in the USA had a non-tenurable clinician educator pathway. By 1997, 66 of 115 had either a separate promotion track or separate promotion criteria (Levinson and Rubenstein, 1999). Leading medical schools, including Stanford University, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania are amongst those utilizing a clinical track. For veterinary colleges, 19 of 26 (excluding Cornell) utilize the clinical professor title. In 4 colleges, the introduction of this category has occurred within the last few years. Of the 7 Colleges that do not use the clinical professor track, one is Tufts University, which has no tenure appointments in the veterinary school. Three other schools indicated that they were developing plans for a clinical professorship. Current practices of USA veterinary colleges are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Use of Clinical Professor track by Veterinary Colleges in the USA.
(Data collected by Ms. Jill Short, Department of Clinical Sciences)

Veterinary Colleges (alphabetical order)	Clinical Professor Titles	Number	Comments
Auburn University	Yes	3/71	1 vacant position
University of California – Davis	Yes	2	people would share information
Colorado State University	Yes,		special appt faculty >10%
University of Florida	Yes		emailing their protocol
University of Georgia	Yes (new)	1	guidelines for promo to be developed
University of Illinois – Urbana	Yes		no voting rights, annual appts.
Iowa State University	No	8/44	
Kansas State University	No	6	asst prof (term)
Louisiana State University	Yes	6/99	
Michigan State University	Yes		Paid titles (professor-Health system) Nonpaid titles (clinical professor)
University of Minnesota	Yes (new)	32/82	clinical specialist
Mississippi State University	Yes	8	
University of Missouri	Yes	27/100	
North Carolina State University	Yes	10/111	
The Ohio State University	Yes	10/100	
Oklahoma State University	No		developing a plan for clinical educator
Oregon State University	Yes (new)	0	
University of Pennsylvania	Yes	36/104	
Purdue University	Yes	2/39	
University of Tennessee	No	4/80	
Texas A&M University	Yes	7/180	
Tufts University	No		no tenure system
Tuskegee University	No		
Virginia-Maryland Regional College	No		instructor (clinical)
Washington State University	Yes (new)	4	advertised for 1 or 2 more
University of Wisconsin – Madison	Yes	29.7/96.7	

Summary:

- There are 19 Veterinary Colleges that utilize the clinical professor titles, this is out of 26 Veterinary Colleges surveyed.
- Four of the colleges indicated that the use of these titles is a new program with the last few years.
- Of those that do not use the clinical professor titles, they use instructor (clinical) or assistant professor (temp) or that type of system.
- Of the 7 colleges that do not use the clinical professor titles, Tufts University has a unique system of no tenure appointments; 3 colleges were developing plans for clinical professorships when polled.

Voting rights

The current proposal is that clinical professors would have full voting rights at departmental and college levels, except in matter pertaining to tenure and promotion of faculty in tenure track appointments. This is justified on the basis of the anticipated level of participation of clinical professors in essential components of planning and delivery of the professional curriculum. Research professors are expected to be granted voting rights in departments, but not automatically in the college faculty. (The college faculty have the right to grant such privileges on an individual basis).

Number Limits

The current proposal suggests that the total number of non-tenure track professors (Clinical or Research) in any department be limited to 25% of the number of tenure track positions in that department.

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