

# **Interim Report of the ad hoc Committee to study the status of Non-Tenure Track Faculty (NTTF)**

Submitted on behalf of the Committee

by

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## **I. Introduction**

Faculty not on tenure tracks, including lecturers and senior lecturers, research associates and senior research associates, extension associates and senior extension associates, and librarians serve the University, its colleges, and its departments in capacities that are essential to the mission of the University. Because the work of this faculty is so important, the University recognizes its responsibility to consider the appropriate academic protections for its non-tenure track faculty.

Dean of Faculty Robert Cooke, as directed by the Faculty Senate (10/1/02), appointed an *ad hoc* committee to address the resolution:

*“The Faculty Senate directs the Dean of the Faculty to appoint a Task Force or Task Forces to investigate and make recommendations concerning the status and conditions of employment of non-tenure-track faculty, paying particular attention to such matters as titles, job security, rights to academic freedom, access to appropriate grievance and appeals procedures, eligibility for sabbatic/study leave, eligibility for emeritus/a status, and voting rights”.*

The Committee (thanks to Stuart Davis) developed a web site to assist Committee members (<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/~sad4/NTTF/>) and others interested in the work of the Committee to exchange and access information. We expect to use the site on a continuing basis, to report further work of the committee. This web site is linked to the Dean of Faculty web site at: <http://web.cornell.edu/UniversityFaculty/> under the section on Active Forums/Discussions.

## **II. Instrument for Campus Input**

The Committee decided to focus on a limited number of issues of direct and immediate importance to the governance policies of the University. An e-mail invited comments from tenured and tenure-track faculty as well as non-tenure-track faculty and sought responses to:

1. The first concern is academic freedom to teach students and to conduct research in ways appropriate to a leading university. As broadly construed by the AAUP, academic freedom includes:
  - Economic and job security
  - Grievance procedures
  - Freedom in research and publication

- Freedom in the classroom
  - Due process in all professional matters
2. The second focus of concern was the status of the non-tenure track faculty within their departments and colleges. While recognizing that the particular definition of responsibilities and privileges will necessarily vary, the committee wished to explore issues such as
- Titles
  - Career development
  - Participation in university and academic life
  - Accountability, evaluation, and standards for renewal of contracts

We sought responses to this inquiry in whatever form a person found most suitable and informative. We invited respondents to rank the several concerns listed in order of importance to them; to isolate those that one considered particularly important and comment on them; to consider existing policies and practices and suggest reforms to them. Replies by email were directed to Sandie Sutfin (Dean of Faculty's Office) or through the University Faculty Senate website.

### **III. Summary of Campus Responses**

The response from NTTF to the Committee's request for feedback was excellent. We received 62 replies, almost all from NTTF. Respondents expressed appreciation for an opportunity to provide their thoughts to the Committee. The overwhelming majority of NTTF responding expressed an appreciation for this opportunity, which most indicated was the first time that such input was sought from them. In order of frequency of importance to persons the responses were directed to:

- Job and economic security,
- Career advancement,
- Professional development,
- Ambiguity about status within the University, college and department,
- Salary schedule/incentives,
- Titles, particularly relative to both being able to be a Principal Investigator for a research grant, and to the perception of agencies about the appropriateness of Principal Investigator status for people with certain of our present titles

Generally, NTTF perceived that they are able to enjoy academic freedom in the conduct of their studies, whether in research, the classroom or in outreach. However, there were a number of responses, primarily in the Extension area, where individuals felt substantial pressure from their administration to worry about the impact of their work or statements on outside persons or groups who might perceive a negative impact on their interests.

Very few persons had sought to employ the existing grievance procedures. Almost all respondents expressed a lack of understanding about such procedures, often expressing uncertainty about whether such existed for NTTF.

To conclude this section: One response particularly captured the ideal situation for NTTF as, We want to “1) feel that our contributions are valued by the University just as faculty programs are, 2) work in an atmosphere where colleagues treat us as equals, 3) have the ability to gather resources (e.g. grants) necessary to support our program area, 4) have avenues for promotion built into the system and 5) be adequately compensated”. Our Committee’s work should provide a roadmap to support these ambitions!

#### **IV. The Role of Non-Tenure Track Faculty**

At the present time, the Cornell professorial faculty numbers roughly 1600. In the NTTF ranks, there are approximately 170 persons in each of the most numerous NTTF positions -- Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Associate, Senior Extension Associate.

As our Committee addressed its charge, it took some time to reflect on the role of this substantial cadre of NTTF at Cornell University. Why have NTTF? In addressing this broader question we became aware of two particular studies related to our task, both referenced in the Committee’s web site: (1) A report by Baldwin and Chronister and (2) the recent report of a Committee on NTTF at the University of North Carolina. These studies and our perceptions suggest that our report needs to help Cornell better understand and address the role of NTTF to ensure quality research, education and outreach at Cornell.

We perceive the driving forces for appointment of substantial numbers of NTTF to be:

- The academic profession is in a significant transition as the roles of faculty and higher education evolve in response to changing campus and societal environments.
- There is a reduced cost to the institution because these appointments are made at lower salaries than tenure track faculty. Quality appointments are possible because there is an available academic labor pool.
- There is an ability to fill specific roles and job responsibilities that are not considered comfortably fitted into the broad responsibilities of tenure-track faculty.
- Flexibility comes with short-term contracts, providing an ability to adjust quickly to changing enrollments and fluctuating research funding.
- NTTF carry heavier teaching loads, providing budgetary efficiencies in supporting the basic teaching activities..
- In Ithaca there is a pool of well-educated persons seeking employment, often as a part of a two-body problem, who welcome an opportunity to participate in the academic life.
- Although there is a natural concern that there may be a gender related issue (exploitation of women), the Cornell numbers do not suggest a major problem in gender balance. It is, of course, possible that appointments are made to NTTF positions, rather than an appropriate professorial appointments.

- Aging of faculty, including phased retirements, create a need for NTTF to cover the workload.

## **V. Preliminary Analyses or Assessments from our Committee**

### **A. Terms of Appointment, Performance Evaluation & Job Security**

University bylaws provide specifications for academic appointments. The authority comes from the Board of Trustees via “broad strokes” and from other Trustee legislation, hand-in-hand with University Faculty legislation. There do not appear to be problems in the appointment process, although one area that may need some increased flexibility in implementation is spousal appointments to support dual careers. The Academic Personnel Policy Office is working with others on policies governing early termination and non-renewal.

Performance reviews are not required in general at the University level. Good human resource management would suggest an annual review should be conducted and the Committee is likely to recommend implementation of a process of annual reviews.

Job security was a principal concern among respondents to our feedback instrument. A common suggestion was a “pool” to help a person for a short time between funding sources, particularly in the case of unavoidable breaks between research grants.

### **B. Academic Freedom**

The ninth edition (2001) of the AAUP *Policy Documents and Reports* restates that the AAUP has focused on the principles of academic freedom since its inception in 1915. Of special relevance is a section from the Conclusions of this document, “*Individuals who are offered full-time service only on non-tenure track lines lack the financial, intellectual, and pedagogical security needed for the profession to be an attractive career choice for young scholars. Moreover, and of even greater importance, faculty members who hold such positions lack the security without which academic freedom and the right to pursue one’s own contributions in research and teaching are but illusions.*”

The AAUP (in its 1986 report) raises concerns about the adverse effects of NTTF appointments in the four categories: those on the non-tenure track faculty members, those on the students and learning process, those on institutional morale and academic governance and those on the future of the profession. Our Committee has only scratched the surface of the question of how to give solid protection of academic freedom without the protection of indefinite tenure. It will address this area in significant depth during its future deliberations.

### C. Professional Development

Non-tenure track faculty (NTTF) are faculty in their schools and colleges and not members of the University Faculty. But many of them are continuing long-term employees of the University who support the central mission of the institution in teaching, research and outreach. Because the University has a positive interest in the professional and intellectual growth of all faculty, because resources made available for supporting this growth will need to come from the University as well as from the schools and colleges, and because equity across college and school boundaries requires similar treatment of faculty in similar titles, the Committee expects to call upon the Provost and the school and college deans to establish mechanisms whereby professional development opportunities in the form of paid and unpaid leaves, and, where they do not already exist, resources for attending conferences and professional meetings, can be made regularly available to NTTF. A sub group of the Committee has developed a tentative, detailed plan for a professional development leaves policy. This proposal will be found on the Committee website.

### D. Voting Rights

The *status quo* in this area is described in print on pp. 3 and 4 of the 2002 Cornell Faculty handbook. That entry is a slightly condensed version of an earlier statement approved by the Faculty Council of Representatives (Predecessor of the Cornell Faculty Senate) on March 9, 1994. That statement is reproduced below.

"Each college/school faculty, except the Graduate Faculty, shall be composed of the President, who shall be the presiding officer; the dean or director of the college/school; and all professors, associate professors, assistant professors and instructors in the department or departments under the charge of that faculty. Instructors, senior research associates, senior extension associates and those bearing the adjunct title shall be nonvoting members, unless given the right to vote by the particular faculty. Each college/school faculty may, in its discretion, grant voting or nonvoting membership to senior scholars, senior scientists, and other professional personnel for whom such membership is deemed appropriate by such faculty. Lecturers and senior lecturers are members in both college/school and department faculties and shall participate fully in decisions that are relevant to their roles within the college/school or department and in decisions that pertain to the hiring in their rank or below, **and in any other matters the particular college/school or department may deem appropriate.** In departments where the number of lecturers and senior lecturers is comparable to the number of professorial faculty, the Provost may modify this policy in regard to curricular decisions. Granting of such college/school faculty status will in no way affect other conditions of employment."

The clause in boldface type in this FCR statement is a small but potentially important addition to the current Faculty Handbook, and we expect to recommend its inclusion in the next issue of the Faculty Handbook.

The pattern of decision-making at the departmental level varies greatly across academic departments, and we hesitate to describe any particular guideline. But the spirit of the 1994 FCR statement can guide decisions about voting at the department level.

### **E. Titles**

Our Committee's activities have initially focused on NTTF who occupy positions which carry the titles:

Senior Lecturer, Lecturer  
Senior Research Associate, Research Associate  
Senior Extension Associate, Extension Associate  
Librarians and Archivists (eleven sub classifications)

A subgroup of the Committee focused on the question of whether this list of titles is adequate to represent the academic world of 2003 at Cornell. We believe the single title, "Senior Research Associate", is inadequate to meet the wide-ranging needs of the University's research community in the research world of 2003. A proposal to add two titles, "Research Scientist" and "Principal Research Scientist", was approved by the faculty of the College of Engineering (April 30, 2003). We believe this proposal can nucleate a university-wide discussion of additional titles in the area of research.

At this time, the Committee perceives no immediate need for creation of additional titles in the category of Lecturers. We have not yet addressed the question of need for additional titles in the Extension category.

### **F. Retirement Arrangements for NTTF**

As is the case for professorial faculty, many aspects of retirement arrangements for NTTF employees are covered by the overall Office of Human Resources plans which are described in the two booklets, "Retirement and Beyond (Endowed)" and "Retirement and Beyond (Contract College Faculty and Staff.)" These arrangements are also briefly described in a section of the 2002 Faculty Handbook entitled "Retirement Benefits", beginning on p. 62.

Section 4.2 of the Handbook (beginning p. 64 in the 2002 edition) describes additional arrangements available to *Emeritus* faculty. Our Committee has not yet been able to devote serious study to the matter of possible extension to retiring NTTF of some of the provisions described in section 4.2. The important substantive issue concerns whether the arrangements designed to support continuing professional activity by post-retirement *Emeritus* professorial faculty should be extended to retiring "Senior" employees who fall in the group our committee has been considering.

The charge to our committee included an allusion to possible extension of the title *Emeritus* to a retiring, suitably defined group of NTTF. Our committee has not come yet to consideration of such a change. We are aware of a commonly held belief that, for

professorial faculty, the two terms "retired" and "*Emeritus*" are synonymous. This belief is not consistent with the description of appointment to the position of *Professor Emeritus* given in the Faculty Handbook (bottom of p. 31 in the 2002 edition.) A review of the realities of use of the title *Professor Emeritus* should precede consideration of extension of the honorific title to non-professorial faculty.

## **VI. Concluding Comments**

The charge to this committee covered a large number of aspects of the professional life of non-tenure track faculty at Cornell. We believe that we have made some progress in sorting out where future investigation and possible action is called for -- by the Faculty Senate, by the College administrations, the central administration and the University Trustees, as needed.

Preliminary analyses and preliminary proposals can be found on the website, <http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/~sad4/NTTF/>, maintained by Dr. Stuart Davis, a member of our committee. It is also linked to the Dean of Faculty web site: <http://web.cornell.edu/UniversityFaculty/>.

We believe that, as we complete the work of this Committee, we will bring forth specific recommendations which can improve the quality of life for NTTF and benefit substantially the academic environment of Cornell students and faculty.

## **Committee Membership**

Lynne Abel, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
Nancy Burton-Wurster, Senior Research Associate, Veterinary College  
Stuart Davis, Senior Lecturer, Arts & Sciences  
Donald Holcomb, Prof. of Physics Emeritus, *Co-chair*  
Mary Opperman, Vice-President for Human Resources  
Donald Rutz, Prof. of Veterinary Entomology  
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Susan Steward, Director, Academic Personnel Policy Office  
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