

The Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Status of Faculty was asked for input on the proposed legislation on a Teaching Professor Title (3/28/24)

The committee supports adoption of the Teaching Professor title, recognizing the importance of the title and the status and opportunities it brings to RTE faculty. Based on multiple avenues of discussion, opinions primarily voice support with minimal dissent. We strongly agree that there should be equity among RTE faculty regarding the Professorial title, which is currently not available to faculty who are currently appointed as lecturers or extension associates. This notwithstanding, the support for the impact and rationale for the title is largely anecdotal and not substantiated by solid data. For example, no data shows that adding other RTE titles has improved student education. Indeed, the statement that the title will enhance the quality of teaching has negative implications on the current teaching being performed by faculty, including those who would transition to the new title. Given the equity issue, future consideration should be given to RTE faculty in extension positions, as recommended in the document “Follow-up Topics worthy of discussion”, which this committee endorses and elaborates upon below.

The patchwork creation of Professorial titles for RTE faculty has been in response to established and perceived problems with the current hierarchy in faculty (and staff) positions. However, there is no evidence showing that a change of title has altered the climate and working environment for RTE faculty, provided access to opportunities that were previously unavailable, or changed the hierarchical status quo. Looking forward, we recommend that the University administration and Senate consider various means of changing our institution's overall culture. This future assessment would address the hierarchy and nature of titles, positions, job security, benefits (e.g., salary, professional development leave), privileges (e.g., voting rights), and opportunities for career advancement for faculty, as well as creating a minimum standard to the greatest extent possible, across the University, as suggested in “Follow up Topics” and comments by various faculty. As part of this endeavor, data should be collected on opportunities currently available to tenure track and RTE faculty in different units, e.g., voting rights, access to mentorship or professional leave, etc.

We are also concerned about the definition of a Teaching Professor, i.e., “*Assistant, associate and full teaching professors are expected to achieve a similar level of professional expertise as their counterparts on the tenure track*” (from the enabling legislation document). It is unclear how RTE Teaching Professors will be distinguished from tenure track faculty whose focus is pedagogy. It is only later in the legislation (section D) that the distinction is based on scholarship, which is required in a tenure-track position but is optional for a Teaching Professor (one could argue that a degree of scholarship should be necessary for all Professorial titles). Given that certain units have hired faculty with a primary teaching expectation into tenure track positions, the lack of distinction could lead to “blurring of the lines” and the possibility that faculty with similar expectations may be hired into tenure track or RTE appointments in different units (again creating inequity).

The proposed limitation in numbers needs to be more consistent among the documents. For instance, 45% is a suggested percentage of R faculty, and the definition of R faculty is unit dependent, i.e., it could apply to only one group of RTE faculty or any

combination thereof. Per the enabling legislation, the example provided only applies to RTE teaching professors, which means that the sum of all RTE faculty (not just teaching faculty) may substantially exceed that of tenure-track faculty in the unit or College. The 45% is implied as an upper limit and is without clear justification. As an Ivy League premier research (R1) institution and with ever-increasing numbers of RTE faculty in our ranks, there is concern about preserving sufficient tenure track faculty to maintain our status as an R1 institution and any required accreditation from outside organizations for specific units. Each unit and the University as a whole should consider the implications of the percentages of the RTE and tenure track faculty (within and across departments) on the longevity and sustainability of the unit within a premier research institution. We also recognize that limiting the number of RTE faculty in Professorial titles may continue to create inequity within units.