

April 4, 2024

Dear AFPSF colleagues,

Thank you for your feedback on the draft Teaching Professor (TP) proposal and for helping us with this important project. Below, we respond to comments from your feedback to indicate how we have revised the proposal.

All best,
Charlie Van Loan and Michael Clarkson
T4 Co-Chairs

Responses to AFPSF comments on TP proposal

AFPSF Comment 1:

“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.”

Agreed.

AFPSF Comment 2:

“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.”

We think this comment is in response to the following paragraph in the draft resolution and the associated slide in the overview:

“Impact on Education. The research professor (RP), CP, and PoP titles bring certain types of expertise to the campus that enhance the education of our students, including those enrolled in PhD and professional degree programs. Similarly, the creation of the TP track will improve education at Cornell, including (though not exclusively) at the undergraduate level.”

Trying to improve the teaching *environment* is not an indictment of current *teaching*. The premise here is that we can improve the teaching environment. Nonetheless, we agree this rationale can be improved and (thanks to your feedback) we have now revised the paragraph.

We know that 35% of all credit hours taught are provided by about 500 full-time RTE faculty, and approximately 370 (70%) of those faculty are on the L track. Creating a TP title affirms the importance of the teaching those faculty do. We believe that improving the status of that group will have an overall positive impact on education at Cornell.

Perhaps most germane to that impact is that by creating a three-rank track we increase the opportunities to reward professional advancement of those faculty, including activities such as curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, degree program leadership, and external visibility. The problematic “ceiling” of the current two-rank L track was previously noted by the Senate’s RTE Working Group in the [addendum](#) to Resolution 189 “Structural equity and inclusion for RTE faculty.”

AFPSF Comment 3:

“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.”

We agree with you and have urged the DoF to act on creating a professorial extension title. As stated by the DoF in the Faculty Forum on March 27, 2024, that work is beginning, and the TP proposal can serve as a time-saving template.

AFPSF Comment 4:

“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.”

We agree that it would be good to gather data on how the RTE and TT environments have changed through the addition of these titles. The next iteration of the [Academic Work Life survey](#) could be an opportunity to pursue that. The 2022 iteration unfortunately did not address the complexity of the RTE situation. For example, it [asked](#) TT faculty, “how satisfied are you being a *faculty member* at Cornell?”, whereas it asked RTE faculty, “how satisfied are you being an *academic* at Cornell?” [emphasis added]. The results of the survey as

published in the [Executive Summary](#) and as presented to the Senate's RTE Working Group in February 2024 lump together all the various RTE titles under the single heading "RTE Academics" whereas those same results split out Assistant, Associate, and Full TT Professors. We hope that AFPSF or anyone else reading this letter will take these issues into consideration in future surveys.

AFPSF Comment 5:

"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."

Agreed.

AFPSF Comment 6:

"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)."

Thank you for pointing out the unclarity of "professional expertise" in that statement. It was meant to encompass the areas of responsibility that are assigned to TPs. We have now revised the title description to state that.

You write, "one could argue that a degree of scholarship should be necessary for all Professorial titles." The TP proposal addresses that as follows:

“The teaching professor titles may not be used to replicate the combined teaching and research responsibilities of the tenure track faculty. Accordingly, job duties of a teaching professor appointment should not require conducting research, publishing its results, or advising graduate research students. Teaching professors may choose to participate in such activities, especially when related to pedagogy, and should stay current with research in their area to best incorporate it into their teaching. Nevertheless, research activity must not be required for appointment, reappointment, or promotion along the teaching professor track.”

Our rationale for excluding research activity is stated in the first sentence of that paragraph. Were we to add active research requirements to TPs, we would risk creating a non-tenured shadow of the tenure track. We have now moved up that statement about research from §I.D to §I.B so as not to keep the reader guessing.

We are aware of DBER (discipline-based education research) faculty who have been hired in the TT with the expectation of conducting research on pedagogy. The requirement of research for DBER, and the anti-requirement for TP, distinguishes them.

AFPSF Comment 7:

“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.”

We agree with you on the need for careful consideration by the colleges in maintaining the premier status of Cornell as an R1 institution and in maintaining accreditation in specific units. With that in mind, we respond to two points that you raise.

Point 1. “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.”

Response to Point 1: The EL says, “R, the number of RTE teaching *faculty*”, not “R, the number of RTE teaching *professors*” [emphasis added]. Further, the EL says, “extension and research faculty could also be incorporated in the calculations.”

Point 2. “The 45% is implied as an upper limit and is without clear justification.”

Response to Point 2: The EL offers a justification: “this results in at least a 55 percent TT majority.” The implication here is that an upper limit of 45% clearly maintains a majority of TT faculty with some “wiggle room” that keeps the percentage comfortably below 50.

Another response to Point 2: We have data from IRP on Fall 2022 faculty headcounts that were stated in Table 1 of our September Senate [presentation](#). Those data indicate that the current percentage (as stated in the EL as the hypothetical model for calculation — and excluding research and extension RTE faculty) ranges from 18% to 45% for the various colleges, with four colleges in the 40–45% range.¹ So the ground truth is that parts of Cornell are already at this 45% upper limit for RTE teaching faculty.

To address these points, we have now revised the discussion of percent limitation in the EL to include the need to maintain R1 status, accreditation, and the importance of considering a cap on all RTE faculty.

¹ One college is actually at 60% according to those data. We consulted with the T4 representative from that college. We learned that the IRP data did not include 0% appointments, which are used heavily for TT faculty in that college. When including those TT faculty, the college satisfied the 45% bound.