

April 4, 2024

Dear RTE Working Group 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.

Your feedback caused us to look back at the watershed resolution your group sponsored last year, [Resolution 189](#) “Structural equity and inclusion for RTE faculty.” The [addendum](#) to that resolution identified ten significant examples of inequity. Below, following our response to your feedback, we quote those inequities and comment upon them in light of the TP proposal.

All best,  
Charles Van Loan and Michael Clarkson<sup>1</sup>  
T4 Co-Chairs

## Responses to RTE WG comments on draft TP proposal

### **RTE WG Comment 1:** Unhappiness about leaving out Extension faculty.

“There was a generally positive attitude about making changes to improve job satisfaction for teaching faculty, and about the clear guidelines that would be in place, but also some disappointment with not including extension RTE in this resolution. New titles/levels were already extended to research positions. Now this resolution is dealing with teaching. Extending it to extension is the next objective. Is Eve working on extension now? Can a commitment to that be part of this?”

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.

### **RTE WG Comment 2:** Some unhappiness about creating more hierarchy.

“Functionally, raising the level of some has the effect of lowering the level of others. Creating teaching professors may effectively lower the status of lecturers, who will then (possibly) be equated with adjunct faculty. This is problematic because each unit will individually choose whether or not to implement the professor track. Units which do not will have teaching faculty simply unable to advance to these titles.”

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Clarkson is both a member of the RTE WG and co-chair of T4. He presented the draft TP proposal to the RTE WG then recused himself from the writing of the RTE WG’s review. He collaborated with Van Loan in writing this response to the review.

We believe, as we write below in response to Inequity 3, that the status of lecturers was already lowered by the creation of RTE professorial titles to which lecturers have no access. A faculty member who devotes their career primarily to research and fund-raising can be titled Research Professor. A faculty member who devotes a substantial part of their career to industry, then pivots to teaching, can be titled Professor of Practice. But a faculty member who devotes their entire career to teaching — a lecturer — currently cannot be titled “Professor”. We cannot resolve this inequity without creating a Teaching Professor title.

It might be suggested that the L track be eliminated, thus removing a level of hierarchy. We do not believe that can happen. First, the broader academic culture does not support it: in our [study of peer universities](#) that have implemented a TP (or equivalent) title, only one out of the 10 universities has eliminated the L track. Second, TPs are meant to be long-term members of the faculty, as stated in the EL, but there will always be a need for short-term coverage of courses. A college that implements a TP track may choose to use the L title for those short-term needs. That usage would expose an existing distinction that the current titles hide.

So if the L and TP tracks must coexist, how can we make that coexistence as harmonious as possible between tracks? The issue you raise about adjunct status — that is, treating Ls fairly and with respect — is important. That is one reason the EL §I.F specifies that colleges must “[describe] how the TP track will be used in combination with the [L] track,” and “changes (if any)...in how the [L track will be] implemented.” The writing of a college’s response to those prompts, and the eventual voting on them, will become an opportunity for RTE faculty in the college to make their voice heard on these issues.

And, if the L and TP tracks must coexist, how can we make that coexistence as harmonious as possible between colleges? Again, the issue you raise — an inequity resulting from some colleges adopting the TP title but others not — is important. Cornell is organized as a loose confederation of colleges, and those colleges do not have uniform teaching needs. But as evidenced in the [history of adoption](#) of RTE professorial titles, nearly every college that existed at the time adopted the PoP title within one year. Many members of T4 have likewise expressed desire for their college to adopt the TP title. We urge any faculty who have concerns about this to contact their college leadership.

**RTE WG Comment 3:** Need for clarification.

“Knowing when to include certain specifics and when to take a more general approach has clearly been a challenge. However, several parts of the resolution where more detail would be ideal include: The very short-term lengths of some appointments (e.g. 1 year) was not prohibited despite the negative effect on feelings of job security. For specific terminology, what does “long-term” or “skill and independence” mean? Can we robustly define either? Moreover, the idea of “impact” was significantly discussed. Is this in your academic area and unit? Should we revise the Title Description to say impact “in area”? Also, the Enabling Legislation should be more explicit about transitions from other RTE tracks. Finally, the section entitled “Reappointment and Promotion” could say “Appointments,

Reappointments and Promotion” and have some material added on appointments, including whether new faculty can be appointed directly to the teaching professor title.”

We have now clarified “long term” with more explicit references to 5-year contracts and streamlined renewal processes. We also now say more about possible transitions of PoP and CP faculty into the TP track. And we now include appointment-process expectations in EL §1.C.

Regarding your concerns about “impact”, “area”, “skill”, and “independence”, we do not believe that it is possible or desirable to give formulaic specifications of these concepts. For example, we do not believe that it would be wise to state specific requirements about course evaluation scores, number of students taught, or allowable areas. It is up to the colleges and departments to communicate what constitutes success along any faculty track, TP or otherwise. Our approach here is consistent with the previous EL for CP, PoP, and RP. It is also consistent with the university’s policy on university-wide [tenure criteria](#), which states: “It is not possible to establish, at the university level, detailed criteria for tenure appointments for the many academic units in the university. The basic criteria are clear: excellence in carrying out the responsibilities of the position, and unusual promise for continued achievement.”

**RTE WG Comment 4:** Need for resources.

“Related to considerations that appeared to judge teaching faculty by similar metrics as tenure-track faculty. Structurally, and realistically, how can a teaching professor, without funded research, without a lab, without graduate students, and with limited access to coverage of teaching several classes, and little or no budgeted funds, attend professional conferences at the same level as tenure-track faculty with all of those things? Resources would have to be given to achieve these goals, and the job description would need to spell this out. What resources will be given to teaching professors to enable them to achieve expectations and have impact? How can they have external impact when they are already at 110% on teaching? Teaching-related service expectations seem to be more easily achieved and perhaps not as dependent on resources and changes to existing things.”

We agree that access to resources is necessary for success in any academic position, including the proposed TP track. But legislation is not typically the place that resources such as money are made available to TT or RTE faculty. Rather, those resources are a matter of local negotiation with chairs and deans. To signal the importance of resources, we have now added this statement to the EL §1.C.3:

“Criteria for promotion along the TP track must be realistic. Professional growth requires time and resources. Candidates need access to both.”

As for external impact, please note that the EL and TP title description do not make that an absolute requirement. They say: “Teaching professors at higher ranks can demonstrate impact inside and outside the university through activities such as pedagogical innovation, curriculum development, and leadership roles.” Those example activities can be internally and/or externally

focused, and it falls on the college and ultimately the department to evaluate such activities. Some teaching faculty take on leadership roles for internal degree programs, such as being a DUS or manager of a cluster of related courses. Some teaching faculty take on internal curriculum development roles by being part of an Active Learning Initiative grant. Some teaching faculty create course materials that they use internally at Cornell and release externally for other universities to use. That kind of external impact is not extra work imposed on top of teaching but follows naturally from it. We have now supplied such examples in the EL §I.B to clarify that external visibility is not the only way to demonstrate impact.

**RTE WG Comment 5:** Concerns about the status of RTE generally.

“There was some worry that tenure-track hires who fail to get tenure might try to ‘drop into’ the teaching professor track, making teaching professors look unskilled. While current university policy wouldn’t allow this, it would be appreciated if it could be spelled out that this would not be allowed in the enabling legislation. There was also general concern expressed about the idea that RTE faculty can apply for tenure track positions as they open up. While this sounds good on paper, in practice because an RTE faculty member already exists to do a certain job, a tenure-track position to do that job never opens up.”

Regarding transitioning from TT to TP: we have now added a reminder in the EL about the existing rules governing these transitions.

Regarding transitioning from TP to TT: the purpose of that statement is to emphasize that TPs are not prohibited from applying to advertised TT positions. We prefer to leave that statement intact rather than be silent on the issue.

### [Commentary on the draft TP Proposal and inequities identified in R. 189 addendum](#)

**Inequity 1.** “RTE faculty do not benefit from job security and academic freedom.”

The TP Enabling Legislation (EL) §I.C encourages colleges to address this inequity as follows: “The [college’s] proposal should address the extent to which the reappointment procedures afford teaching professors a reasonable degree of job security in the unit, recognizing that the track is intended for long-term members of the faculty. Minimizing the process needed for reappointments would be appropriate to convey that long-term status.”

**Inequity 2.** “RTE faculty do not experience the same value and prestige in the academic climate as tenure-track and tenured faculty.”

By creating professorial titles, the value of RTE faculty is affirmed and their prestige is increased. The Clinical Professor and Professor of Practice titles already did this, but in a way that excluded RTE faculty appointed as Lecturers and Senior Lecturers. The creation of a Teaching Professor

title addresses the inequity experienced by those faculty by creating the opportunity for them to be appointed in a professorial title.

**Inequity 3.** “RTE faculty report feeling marginalized by the hierarchical climate at Cornell.”

Academia is indeed a hierarchical society, even within the tenure tracks. There are complex cultural issues at all scales, from department to university level, that can lead to feelings of marginalization. We know that you have been working such RTE-related issues this year in consultation with the Provost, Deputy Provost, and VP of HR.

The TP proposal might at first be seen as creating a new level of hierarchy, in which TPs are ranked ahead of Ls. But upon reflection, that already happened with the CP and PoP titles. It already happened to Research Associates with the creation of Research Professor titles. And if Extension Professor titles were created (as your response recommends and we discussed above), it would also happen to Extension Associates.

Given the existing hierarchy, which is not going to go away, the TP title creates an opportunity for reducing the marginalization of Ls by elevating them to a more prestigious track. It will take time to realize this opportunity throughout the entire university and to address the accompanying cultural issues. Creating the TP title an important step in that direction.

**Inequity 4.** “RTE faculty do not have opportunities for advancement beyond ‘senior’ titles given the current two-tiered system. The majority of our peer institutions offer three levels using titles similar to those used for the tenure system: Assistant / Associate / Full.”

The TP proposal directly resolves this inequity for RTE teaching faculty by creating the titles Assistant Teaching Professor, Associate Teaching Professor, and (full) Teaching Professor.

**Inequity 5.** “RTE experience inconsistent search and hiring procedures and seek a formal process similar to tenure-track faculty.”

The TP EL §I.C specifies, “Searches for open TP positions are expected to be national in scope with review procedures comparable to what is used for TT hires. [...] Colleges that adopt the TP title are expected to document and publicize the processes that will be followed for all reappointments and promotions.” As mentioned above in response to your Comment 3, we have now extended that part of the EL to address appointments.

**Inequity 6.** “RTE titles are confusing (e.g. Senior Extension Associate) which often prohibits RTE faculty from being competitive applicants for funding.”

Although establishing a TP title will not address this issue with the specific example of Senior Extension Associate, it will address it for (e.g.) Senior Lecturers who become TPs.

**Inequity 7.** “RTE faculty are mostly funded by ‘soft money’ which requires a continuous search for funding to support their positions and those they hire for their projects.”

This situation does not seem to apply to teaching faculty positions, which are usually funded by departments based on predictable teaching needs.

**Inequity 8.** “RTE faculty report not being included in faculty meetings, except for those occasions where departmental business is not discussed, such as department lunches which are also open to staff.”

The TP EL §I.E addresses voting and other rights, stating “The proposal must define other rights and responsibilities associated with TP appointments, including voting status at both the department and college levels on matters that concern hiring, promotions, and reappointments.”

Attendance at faculty meetings is another kind of right/responsibility. We have now added it to the EL.

**Inequity 9.** “RTE faculty are often listed separately from University faculty on department websites, or not listed at all.”

Website listing is another kind of right. We have now added it to the EL.

**Inequity 10.** “RTE faculty are often not included on faculty e-mail lists and thus are not informed of college and departmental events, policies, and other vital information.”

Inclusion on email lists is another kind of right. We have now added it to the EL.