

Committee on Fixed-term Faculty Annual Report to the Faculty Council April 2012

Members

Jean DeSaix	Biology (Arts & Sciences)	Senior Lecturer (ft)
Kurt Gilliland	Cell & Development Biology (medical school)	Asst. Professor (tt)
Susan Irons, Chair	English & Comparative Literature (Arts & Sciences)	Senior Lecturer (ft)
Lloyd Kramer	History (Arts & Sciences)	Professor (tt)
Cal Lee	School of Information & Library Science	Assoc. Professor (tt)
Joy Renner	Allied Health	Assoc. Professor (ft)
Judy Tisdale	Kenan-Flagler Business School	Clinical Professor (ft)
Arrel Toews	Biochemistry and Biophysics (medical school)	Professor (ft)

Assisted by Anne Whisnant; Deputy Secretary of the Faculty in the office of Faculty Governance

Meetings

September 9, 2011; October 14, 2011; November 11, 2011; December 9, 2011; January 13, 2012; February 10, 2012; March 16, 2012; April 13, 2012

Committee Charge

Resolution 2005-9. On Establishing the Council Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty

The Faculty Council resolves:

Section 1. Pursuant to Section 2-8(b)(1) of the Faculty Code of University Government, the Council Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty is created. The Committee has six members, appointed by the Chair of the Faculty from among sitting members of the Faculty Council at the September meeting of the Council each year. Four of the members are fixed-term faculty members, and two are tenure-track faculty members. The Chair of the Faculty designates the chair of the committee. Members are eligible for reappointment.

Sec. 2. The committee addresses working conditions and the status of full-time and part-time fixed-term faculty members. In this regard it monitors implementation of policies and recommendations concerning fixed-term faculty; reviews school, college, and departmental policies governing such faculty members; and formulates and proposes new policies and procedures for consideration by the Faculty Council. The committee reports to the Council as appropriate to its agenda, but at least annually.

Sec. 3. This resolution is effective upon adoption.

Summary of Activities of the Committee 2011-2012

At its first meeting in September, the Committee established a list of goals for the academic year. Appendix A provides a copy of this list. Because of the timeliness of responding to concerns raised in the April 2011 Faculty Council meeting about the title for the newly approved third-tier rank for fixed-term faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences, that task assumed priority.

Title of third-rank fixed-term faculty in College of Arts and Sciences

With the College's goal of naming its first third-tier rank fixed-term faculty members with promotions effective July 1, 2012, the urgency of addressing this issue made it a top agenda item.

Background of third-tier rank title in College of Arts and Sciences

In April 2011, the Faculty Council endorsed the plan to seek Board of Trustee approval for a third-tier rank for fixed-term faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences with the title "Master Lecturer" (see Resolution 2011-4). The third-tier rank builds upon the established ranks of Lecturer and Senior Lecturer. The Board of Trustees subsequently approved that request.

In November 2011, the Dean of the College sent each department a template for guidelines and procedures for promotion to the rank of Master Lecturer. Copies of these documents are available on the Sakai site of the Committee on Fixed-term Faculty. The Dean invited each department to modify the guidelines to reflect the expectations of its discipline or department; however, the Dean's Office had to approve all modifications. Departments were to submit those modification requests to the Dean's Office for approval by January 15, 2012 if the department planned to support a candidate for promotion as of July 1, 2012. Otherwise, the documents were due March 15, 2012. We expect the College's first third-tier rank fixed-term faculty members to be announced this spring.

Reaction to "Master Lecturer" title

At the April 2011 Faculty Council meeting where the "Master Lecturer" title was first presented, several Council members objected to the title. As discussions continued throughout the subsequent year, it became clear that these objections were widely shared on campus, and no member of our committee now supports this title. "Master Lecturer" poses multiple problems, and our concerns coalesce around these points:

- Gender bias of the title
- Associations with title historically representing oppression
- Question of whether "master" implies a higher rank than the current second-tier title of "senior" lecturer
- Question of whether the title conveys status of the rank to other institutions
- Absence of academic title "professor" within the title for a rank of high achievement

Process for considering alternative titles

We knew, anecdotally, that the committee developing the proposal for the third-tier rank had spent extensive time seeking an appropriate title. They had great difficulty coming to consensus, but chose Master Lecturer to move forward with the creation of the rank. Based on this perception,

we knew two things: the Master Lecturer title did not have a ringing endorsement and that finding another option would be challenging.

First, we established criteria for a successful title:

- Will indicate a rank of distinguished accomplishment in the areas of teaching and service to our University
- Will clearly indicate a ranking higher than Senior Lecturer
- Will have clear “coding” within the larger academic community and to other institutions

Next, the Committee researched and discussed extensively alternative titles to propose.

- We sought information about what our peer institutions are doing. To review our findings in chart format to facilitate comparisons, go to the Committee Sakai site.
- We considered “named lectureships,” such as Horace Williams Lecturer, until we learned that money must accompany a named title.
- We sought perspectives from units across the University, which were well represented on our Committee. In many schools on campus, such as the medical school, dental school, and business school, the title for fixed-term faculty includes the word “professor.” So, for example, a fixed-term faculty member may be a “clinical professor” or a “research professor.” Many of our colleagues in those schools support the idea of some uniformity across campus and believe that lecturers in the college, as they move up the ranks, should receive a title that includes the word “professor,” such as Teaching Professor.

Much discussion centered on Teaching Professor; the discussion reflected both support and reservations. Historically in the Arts and Sciences at UNC-Chapel Hill, the title “professor” has primarily been used in titles denoting tenure-track positions. Furthermore, some contend that the modifier “Teaching” suggests that other professors do not teach. However, the title “Research Professor” (which is presently used in the College) is analogous, and it does not appear to raise similar concerns. Many felt that someone who reaches the distinguished achievement demanded for the third-tier rank merits the term “professor.” In addition, others argue it would help the University move to more consistency among schools and give clear signals about the rank to other Universities.

Proposal and response

After thorough discussion, the committee unanimously recommended two options to the Provost: 1) Distinguished Lecturer or 2) Senior Lecturer with Distinction, in that order of preference. Appendix B provides a copy of the proposal to the Provost dated April 2, 2012. Susan Irons, committee chair, and Jan Boxill, Chair of the Faculty, met with Provost Bruce Carney and Bill Andrews, Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences on April 5 to discuss the proposal.

In that meeting, the Provost explained why “Distinguished Lecturer” is not an option. “Distinguished Professor” functions almost as a fourth-tier tenure-track rank, and those with that title often draw part of their funding from private sources. He pointed out the advisability of saving “Distinguished Lecturer” (or another title using “Distinguished”) for a possible similar use with the fixed-term rank in the future.

In response to the Committee’s request to reconsider the “Master Lecturer” title, the Provost will ask College Dean Karen Gil to obtain the following information through the department chairs:

- What is the response among faculty to the current title “Master Lecturer”?
- What other options would the faculty find appropriate for this rank? The Dean may choose to “float” a couple of specific options for response.

Next steps

The Committee hopes that the Dean’s assessment process will move quickly because the new third-tier faculty members will be promoted July 1, 2012. We also encourage all faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences to share their opinions with their Chair. For those outside of the College who wish to express opinions, please contact one of the Committee members. We will collate responses and share with the Dean of the College and the Provost.

Other Committee Activities

While the Committee focused primarily on the title issue, it also addressed other topics on its “goals” list concerning fixed-term faculty. Here are the outcomes.

Goals met

- Support reconsideration of “Master Lecturer” title for the new third-tier rank in Arts and Sciences
- Track closely the development of the Master Lecturer rank in Arts and Sciences
- Track promotions to Senior Lecturer in Arts and Sciences
- Questioned fixed-term faculty ineligibility for IAH’s Leadership Program. In September, the criteria stipulated tenure-track faculty only. However, IAH has revised criteria to include fixed-term faculty.

Goals ongoing

- Consider the question of how to encourage “best practices” for promotion of fixed-term faculty across the University
- Investigate the role of outside letters (“external letters”) in HR promotion criteria for professional schools’ fixed-term faculty
- Revisit the results of the spring 2011 survey conducted by the Committee

Pending updated budget information

- Investigate and form recommendations on length of contract terms for people who have worked effectively in a position and achieved seniority

Conclusion

In April of 2011, the Faculty Council endorsed the plan to seek Board of Trustee approval for a third-tier rank for fixed-term faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences with the title “Master Lecturer” (see Resolution 2011-4). The Board of Trustees created the rank, which builds upon the established ranks of Lecturer and Senior Lecturer. The first faculty members promoted to that new rank will be announced this spring. The Committee celebrates Carolina’s leadership role among Universities in creating a professional track among fixed-term faculty. However, the third-tier rank merits a title that reflects the distinguished and extraordinary teaching and service required for that achievement—and that reflects our University’s values.

The Committee will continue to monitor policies affecting fixed-term faculty across the University and will continue to research and encourage “best practices” for all fixed-term faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Appendix A: Committee Goals for 2011-2012
(from September 9, 2011 meeting)**

- Revisit the Spring 2010 survey results.
- Track closely the development of the Master Lecturer rank in Arts & Sciences.
- Support reconsideration of “Master Lecturer” title for the new third-tier rank in Arts & Sciences. Other titles mentioned in the meeting were University Professor, Professor of the Practice, and Teaching Associate. Many are unhappy with the gender bias of the current proposed title; therefore, the committee should help to keep the conversation going about the best title option.
- Investigate and form recommendations on length of contract terms for people who have worked effectively in a position and achieved seniority (and who do not receive longer contracts automatically with a promotion). One-year contracts for fixed-term faculty have become the “norm” since the budget crisis began. The committee should seek further information from Provost.
- Investigate role of outside letters or “external letters” (implied “academic” recommenders) in HR promotion criteria for professional schools fixed-term faculty. Is an “academic” recommendation always available, and is it always the most effective recommendation for all positions, for example positions focused on engaged scholarship. Find out Provost’s perspective on this issue.
- Obtain report on “to-date” promotions to Senior Lecturer in Arts & Sciences. If possible, assess how departments are interpreting the criteria and if the continuity across departments is in a reasonable range.
- Consider question of how to encourage “best practices” for promotion of fixed-term faculty across the University. Is some consistency of criteria possible? Reasonable? How might this question relate to different position names used for fixed-term faculty across campus? (Committee members reiterated that titling in the School of Medicine is not a problem.)
- Track development of titling issues in new online programs in the University.
- Continue discussion of “Lecturer” title in Arts & Sciences. Committee members noted concerns about the perceived implications of the title in letters of recommendations for students and how other universities and other schools on our own campus perceive the rank as identified by that title. For example, “Lecturer” has very different connotations in the School of Medicine.
- Raise question again about fixed-term faculty eligibility for IAH’s Leadership Program. Currently the criteria stipulates tenured-track faculty only. If necessary, write an appeal to the Director to outline and substantiate concerns.
- Explore how SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Universities) accreditation might relate to some of fixed-term faculty issues and titling.

Appendix B: Proposal to Provost

TO: Dr. Bruce Carney
Provost

FROM: Faculty Council Committee on Fixed-term Faculty

SUBJECT: Proposal to replace “Master Lecturer” title

DATE: April 3, 2012

The Faculty Council Committee on Fixed-term Faculty looks forward to the naming of the first third-tier rank of fixed-term faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences this spring. Carolina is taking a leading role in shaping the progression, criteria, and titles for a ranked system for fixed-term faculty. Because titles convey values and shape perceptions, we propose replacing the title “Master Lecturer” with another option. We urge you to consider our proposed alternatives.

The current assigned “Master Lecturer” title poses multiple problems and meets with widespread resistance on campus. No member of our committee supports this title. Furthermore, you will recall the spontaneous objections raised in the April 2011 Faculty Council meeting when the title was presented. Our concerns coalesce around these points:

- Gender bias of the title
- Associations with title historically representing oppression
- Question whether “master” implies a higher rank than the current second-tier title of “senior” lecturer
- Question whether the title conveys status of the rank to other institutions
- Absence of academic title “professor” within the title

Therefore, instead of “Master Lecturer,” we offer two alternatives, each receiving the full support of all committee members. We offer them in ranked order of preference.

1. **Distinguished Lecturer.** This title for the third-tier rank clearly signifies the level of accomplishment for the individual as one who has demonstrated an exceptional level of commitment to advancing the quality of teaching here at UNC and in a discipline.

Within the title of Distinguished Lecturer, we also see a development opportunity for named Distinguished Lecturer positions. These titles would be clearly different and separate from our existing named faculty positions because those are Distinguished “Professor,” and this would be Distinguished “Lecturer.” Alumni who have been inspired and motivated by fixed-term faculty, who have benefitted from their teaching and expertise, will have an opportunity to honor that experience through a named lectureship.

Furthermore, the title follows the model of other faculty titles—a noun with one modifier—Senior Lecturer, Assistant Professor, etc.

2. **Senior Lecturer with Distinction.** This title clearly conveys merit beyond the title of Senior Lecturer without carrying negative cultural or historical connotations.

Our committee, representing both tenure-track and fixed-term faculty from across campus, has pursued a thoughtful and thorough process to arrive at this proposal. We ask you to adopt one of our proposed alternatives

to “Master Lecturer” and bestow a title reflecting merit and achievement on our very first Carolina third-tier fixed-term faculty members in Arts and Sciences. Please let Susan Irons (Susan_Irons@unc.edu), committee chair, know if you would like to discuss our proposal with us. We would be happy to meet with you.