

AAUP-ISU Statement on Recommendations

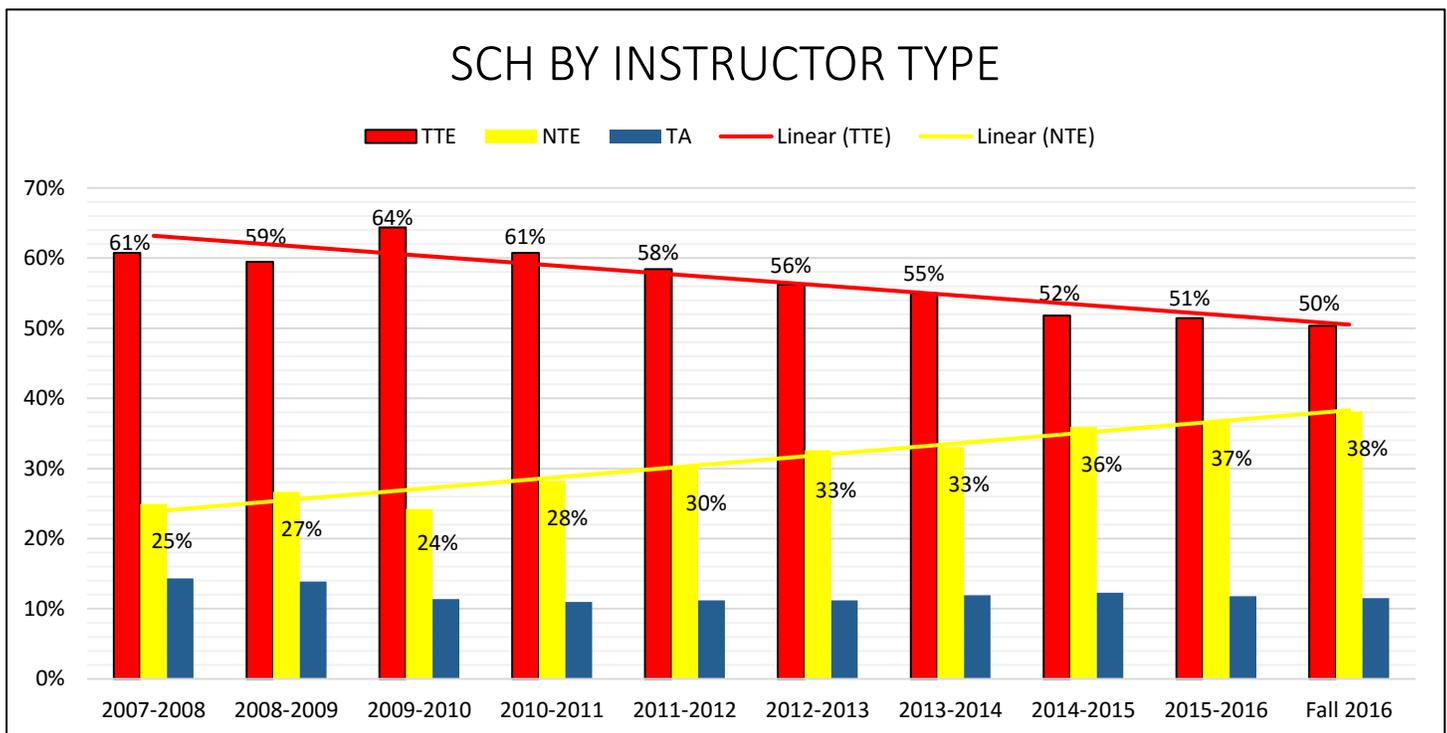
from the NTE Task Force Report



The Iowa State University chapter of the American Association of University Professors welcomes efforts to protect tenure and improve the conditions of faculty working outside of the tenure system. The recent recommendations from the NTE Task Force touch on important matters of tenure, shared governance, and academic freedom at Iowa State University. Before discussing the specific recommendations of the report, we would like to note one critically important issue about which the report makes no recommendations: the percentage of faculty ineligible for tenure.

Percentage of Faculty Ineligible for Tenure

ISU's Faculty Handbook explicitly adopts the AAUP recommendation that nearly all faculty appointments be within the tenure system. The Handbook states "ISU subscribes to AAUP guidelines and standards for part-time and non-tenure-eligible faculty, including the AAUP recommendation that part-time and non-tenure-eligible faculty appointments be limited to no more than 15% of the total instruction within the university, and no more than 25% of the total instruction within any given department."¹ Instruction at ISU far exceeds these recommended limits.²



The University should not use any of the proposed changes to further erode tenure at Iowa State University. Instead, ISU should work to transition from reliance on tenure-ineligible faculty to a faculty body where nearly all teach, research, and participate in governance with the protection of the tenure system. Tenure is critical to maintain academic freedom and for the financial viability of the profession, which requires stability and equitable compensation. The NTE Report includes a summary of NTE concerns from a survey, where NTE faculty stressed job security and compensation, neither of which are addressed by the report's recommendations.³ While ISU should work to meet the AAUP guidelines that it has already endorsed, it can also work to improve conditions for those faculty members ineligible for tenure. This supplemental project is where the NTE Taskforce report can be useful, but it should not substitute for addressing the declining percentage of tenure-track faculty.

Specific Report Recommendations

The NTE Report recommendations largely concern clarifying and restructuring the position descriptions of the existing body of faculty working without the protections of the tenure system. Most of these recommendations are generally positive, if too modest in their ambitions.

1. Inclusion of scholarly achievement as a potential responsibility of instructional faculty

AAUP guidelines strongly support the recommendation that faculty on contingent appointments have opportunities for scholarly achievement.⁴ The NTE Report recommends that a “component of an instructional appointment may include opportunity for scholarly achievement and institutional or professional service.”⁵ Faculty work is an integrated whole. Teaching, research, and governance all inform one another. Scholarly engagement of all faculty is crucial to the mission of higher education. For primarily instructional faculty, scholarly engagement is necessary for their teaching to stay current, for participation as equals in shaping the curriculum, for the opportunity to apply successfully for tenure-track positions, and for professional satisfaction. The NTE Report notes that NTE faculty want more opportunities for scholarly achievement and professional development.⁶ The lack of such scholarly opportunities likely contributes to the feeling and perceptions of NTE as second-class faculty.

While the AAUP supports this change, the recommendation raises worries that tenured faculty will be replaced by instructional faculty who do research at a lower cost. Contingent instructional faculty positions must not become a low-cost replacement for tenured positions. The omission of a plan to meet the Faculty Handbook and AAUP guidelines on percentages of faculty without tenure exacerbates these concerns. The best way to live up to the guidelines endorsed in the ISU Faculty Handbook, while relying on primarily instructional faculty, is through teaching-intensive tenured and tenure-eligible positions that include governance responsibilities and more modest expectations for scholarly achievement.⁷

We are also concerned that allowing contingent faculty the opportunity to pursue scholarly achievement may be interpreted by some administrators as a requirement, leading to contingent faculty who were hired as instructors having their appointments not renewed due to insufficient scholarship.

While the university continues to rely on tenure-ineligible faculty, the ISU chapter of the AAUP can offer some provisional recommendations. These recommendations are provisional in the sense that the National AAUP guidelines do not explicitly recommend them. Instead, they suggest one way that ISU might try to implement improvements to contingent faculty positions without increasing the number or percentage of faculty who hold those positions.

Suggested modifications to report recommendations:

- a) The assignment of responsibilities for scholarly achievement should be only at the request of the faculty member. The university should not use the possibility of these responsibilities to require further academic labor and research from lower-cost instructional faculty, especially those with little job security. This clarifies what might be meant when the report states, “The entire set of expectations must be negotiated as a part of the creation of the PRS.”⁸
- b) The primary basis for the evaluation of instructional faculty should be their teaching. While all of the duties of the faculty member are subject to peer review, decisions about renewal and advancement of instructional faculty should rest primarily upon the peer evaluation of their teaching.
 - i. The peer evaluation of research for instructional faculty should remain internal to the university. The research of instructional faculty should not go through the same external review process as tenure-track faculty. The expectations of national and international recognition for scholarship, upon which the research reputation of the university depends, are not appropriate for faculty holding instructional appointments.
 - ii. Unsatisfactory performance with respect to research should not result in non-renewal or non-advancement, but the reduction in research responsibilities assigned to the faculty member, consistent with the minimal needs to keep their teaching current.

2. Inclusion of faculty ineligible for tenure in peer evaluations for renewal and promotion

AAUP guidelines clearly support the recommendation to include all faculty more fully in the peer evaluation process when qualified.⁹ The NTE Report recommends that faculty ineligible for tenure be included in evaluating other faculty ineligible for tenure. AAUP recommends that all faculty participate in shared governance where qualified. The Task Force recommendations rightly include faculty holding contingent appointments and rightly emphasize the role of peer review in renewal and promotion decisions. Participation in the evaluation of colleagues for renewal and advancement is an important aspect of shared governance. All faculty, including those ineligible for tenure, should be eligible to participate in governance when qualified. The process for instructional faculty should be parallel to that of the tenure-track faculty.

Suggested modification for language on renewal

For renewal decisions, “An appropriate committee would include specialized faculty whenever possible, **at or** above the rank of the faculty member being considered **or at the terminal rank**, and tenured and/or tenure-eligible faculty.” Generally, the practice at ISU is not to have assistant professors vote on the preliminary renewal review and tenure cases of other assistant professors.

3. Additional rank for instructional faculty

AAUP recommendations and guidelines do not speak directly to the appropriate number of ranks that ought to be available to faculty. In considering the situation at ISU, the guidelines tend to support an additional rank. AAUP recommends that the evaluation processes for contingent and tenure-track faculty should be similar. Insofar as this makes the promotion and review processes more similar, the new rank for instructional faculty is appropriate. Yet, the NTE Report makes clear that compensation is one of the primary concerns of NTE faculty. The AAUP also draws attention to the issue of compensation. One problem of contingent appointments is that “most non-tenure-track faculty usually do not achieve the higher salaries based on seniority and promotion through the ranks that tenure-track and tenured faculty would; their opportunities for advancement tend to be limited even if they are reappointed for many years.”¹⁰ If the new proposed rank can help address shortcomings in compensation for contingent faculty, it is welcome. However, the NTE Report makes no recommendations about salary. We also note that tenure track faculty are usually hired in highly competitive searches from a national/international pool of applicants. It is essential that ISU provide competitive salary levels to attract and retain top talent.

The AAUP recommends that compensation must be fair and comparable to other faculty at ISU with similar qualifications. “All faculty work should be compensated fairly. Positions that require comparable work, responsibilities, and qualifications should be comparably compensated. Although the variety of responsibilities and qualifications required of each position may make comparability difficult to determine, it is the responsibility of duly constituted faculty bodies to meet this challenge.”¹¹

4. Change of titles, including the use of ‘professorial’ titles

AAUP does not offer explicit guidelines with respect to titles; however, it does encourage faculty to address each other respectfully. The NTE Report recommends changing the term ‘Non-Tenure Eligible’ (NTE) to ‘Specialized faculty.’ The Report also recommends the establishment of the new title Principal Lecturer and a ‘Teaching Professor’ track for instructional faculty, the introduction of a Professor of Practice track, and renaming NTERs into Research Professors. The professorial titles are introduced to make the positions more attractive and consistent with the clinical professor titles. These recommendations are consistent with AAUP guidelines.

However, a new title is not a substitute for the protection of tenure or adequate compensation. These deeper inequalities, unaddressed by the report, are of greater concern to the AAUP and many of the faculty members working without tenure. One concern is that a proliferation of titles may undermine unity of the faculty body, especially if the new positions do not include a combination of teaching, scholarship, and governance.

A second concern is that retaining the Lecturer titles for some instructional faculty may undermine the good of the new titles. “Contingent faculty, both part- and full-time, are constantly confronted with reminders of their lack of status in the academic community.... Taken together, these inequities weaken the whole profession and diminish its capacity to serve the public good.”¹² Non-professorial titles can often be another reminder of this lack of status. Insofar as the new titles help increase the status for faculty on contingent appointments so that help those faculty participate in the university as equals, the recommendations are welcome. Having faculty who specialize in teaching or scholarship is also fine, but those positions should be tenurable and should incorporate all aspects of faculty work.

Conclusion

The ISU chapter of the AAUP is largely supportive of the specific recommendations of the NTE Task Force Report. However, ISU must work to ensure that the academic freedom of all faculty is protected by the tenure system. As the AAUP states, “it is important to note that tenure can be granted at any professional rank (or without rank); the Association does not link tenure with a particular faculty status. The professor in a research university, whose appointment includes a significant responsibility for original research, should not be the sole or primary model for tenurable academic work. A faculty member whose position focuses primarily on teaching, supported by sufficient opportunity for scholarship and service, is also engaged in tenurable academic work. Just as there are different emphases in the range of faculty appointments in research universities, comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges, all of which define tenurable faculty work, so, too, there may be different models for tenurable faculty work within a single institution.”¹³

¹ ISU Faculty Handbook, 3.3.2.1.1 Guidelines for NTE Percentages.

² Data taken from 2016-2017 ISU Fact Book, SCH Taught by Faculty and Teaching Assistants (graph), based on total credit hours taught per academic year.

³ NTE Task Force, Final Report, p. 18.

⁴ "The relative emphasis placed on teaching, scholarship, and service by a faculty member varies according to the terms of his or her appointment and academic discipline and the type of institution at which he or she works. But although emphases vary, these functions are not completely divisible. Faculty work cannot be sliced cleanly into component parts without losing the important connections that make up the whole. For example, while teaching may be the primary mission of certain types of institutions or programs, teaching faculty recognize the need to engage in scholarly work in order to remain current and effective as teachers in their respective disciplines.... **To support the essential mission of higher education, faculty appointments, including contingent appointments, should incorporate all aspects of university life: active engagement with an academic discipline, teaching or mentoring of undergraduate or graduate students, participation in academic decision making, and service on campus and to the surrounding community.**" Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession, AAUP Red Book, pp. 174-175.

⁵ NTE Task Force, Final Report, p. 4.

⁶ "Many NTE faculty members noted a lack of professional development opportunities, suggesting that more funds should be made available for conferences and trainings. Expanding these opportunities would help faculty gain more necessary experiences required for advancement eligibility and would further support those NTE faculty members who aspire to become tenure-track faculty. Such additions would also enhance retention, as some NTE faculty members stated intentions to leave in pursuit of advancement and better salaries." NTE Task Force, Final Report, p. 18.

⁷ Tenure and Teaching Intensive Appointments, AAUP Red Book, pp. 187-188.

⁸ NTE Report, pp. 4-5.

⁹ "While faculty on contingent appointments may be restricted from participating in the evaluation of tenured and tenure-track faculty, faculty on contingent appointments should have the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of other contingent faculty" (pp. 205-206).

¹⁰ On Full-Time Non-tenure-track Appointments, AAUP Red Book, p. 191.

¹¹ Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession, AAUP Red Book, p. 177.

¹² Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession, AAUP Red Book, p. 174.

¹³ Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession, AAUP Red Book, p. 176.