

Having discussed the proposed draft of new instructor ranks, the Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities Committee finds it cannot reach a consensus, largely because the needs and professional standards of different colleges differ so widely. Also, we feel the current draft leaves too many questions unanswered.

Questions Regarding Proposal for Faculty Ranks at WKU

- The needs of different disciplines vary widely. While some disciplines face a limited applicant pool and need flexibility to hire for positions whose responsibilities may not require a terminal degree, other disciplines have an overabundance of terminal-degree candidates and face a limited job pool because universities are decreasing tenure-track lines and increasing contingent faculty.^[1] What steps does WKU plan to take to ensure that the new rank system does not lead, in certain disciplines, to a less-qualified and less-expensive faculty? What steps does WKU plan to take to ensure that the new rank system does not lead to less pay and benefits for equally-qualified faculty?
- Is this an issue that should be handled by each college rather than at the university level?

Proposed Definitions

- How do the instructor/clinical rank descriptions differ from current descriptions or conceptualizations of the role? Many instructors have been hired with the understanding that teaching a certain number of courses is their sole responsibility; however, the wording of the document indicates instructors and clinical practitioners are now expected to complete service or research activities as part of the role. Will this create problems regarding the nature of their contracts?
- Will teaching load be reduced to allow for service or research work?
- If instructors are given a 4-course teaching load, how will assistant/associate/full ranks be recognized for their higher expectations for research, service, and graduate-level teaching other than through minimal pay differentials?
- Will special faculty assignments or load reductions given for special service or research projects as described in the faculty handbook (page 11) be extended to all faculty ranks?

Proposed Faculty Ranks

- How can adjunct faculty members also be assistant or associate professors? This implies adjunct faculty members are eligible for promotion.
- Under what conditions would the teaching experience requirement for promotion to Senior Instructor, Clinical Practitioner I, and Senior Clinical Practitioner be waived?

Notes

- Item two states that individuals occupying non-tenure track lines participate in all governance matters except those expressly prohibited in the faculty handbook. If faculty ranks are determined by educational training, disciplinary knowledge, and expertise, then why is the same level of knowledge and experience not appropriate criteria for specific voting issues within departments such as curriculum and research funding/support? Many departments require terminal degrees for teaching upper division courses or the creation of new courses. Why would faculty who do not meet the qualifications for teaching these courses be extended voting rights on curricular matters pertaining to upper division or holistic program changes?
- Item three states that faculty from any rank may be eligible to apply for graduate faculty status. Shouldn't this allowance be made for individuals holding a terminal degree in their home discipline? Also, shouldn't applications for graduate faculty status from faculty members below the assistant professor rank be reviewed by the graduate faculty of the home department/discipline?
- Item four states that non-tenure track faculty will follow the same procedures as tenure track faculty with

regard to annual review and application for promotion. Does this mean that promotion applications will be reviewed by faculty members at or above the rank of instructor/clinical practitioner?

Issues for Continued Discussion

- Will criteria for promotion be developed at the university, college, and department levels?
- How can current instructors/practitioners be reclassified as part of the initial implementation when there are no criteria for promotion and no current review process in place?

[1] See the AAUP's "Background Facts on Contingent Faculty" (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/contingent/contingentfacts.htm>) which reports the following:

- Between 1998 and 2001, the number of full-time non-tenure-track positions grew by 35.5 percent.
- Since the 1990s, the majority of all new full-time hires have been off the tenure track.
- In contrast, only 3.3 percent of full-time faculty appointments were off the tenure track in 1969.
- Non-tenure-track positions of all types now account for 68 percent of all faculty appointments in American higher education.