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Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions

Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession

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PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES FOR NON-TENURE-TRACK FACULTY MEMBERS:
RECOMMENDATIONS AND EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

Non-tenure-track faculty members now constitute a majority of the faculty in higher education in the United States and Canada. The premise of this document is that both students and institutions will be better served when policy and practice reflect the important role played by these professionals.

Acknowledging the reality of a broad range of academic appointments with corresponding variations in responsibility, this document nonetheless presumes that establishing long-term, regularized positions for as many faculty members as possible is in the best interest of institutions and higher education generally. The term "non-tenure-track" is used to designate those faculty members working on a continuing basis—full-time or part-time, in per-course or contractually limited appointments—without job security or the prospect of advancement to tenure lines or tenure equivalents.

This document endorses and extends the work of the MLA's Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit; the recommendations made in the MLA's 2003 Statement on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members; and the 2008 report *Education in the Balance*, which argues that the profession "must ensure that those colleagues employed outside the tenure track have the appropriate salaries, working conditions, status, rights and responsibilities, and security of employment." We call particular attention to the following recommendations of the 2003 statement:

- Non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty members should be hired by means of long-term planning whenever possible, to provide for extended terms of appointment consistent with institutional needs, thereby also providing sufficient job security to encourage and support continuing involvement with students and colleagues. NTT faculty members should ideally be hired on three-year contracts with full benefits; after six years, they should be eligible for longer-term review; past six years, they should be given longer (five- or six-year) contracts and be allowed to participate in departmental governance regarding NTT lines.

- NTT faculty members should be incorporated into the life of the department to the fullest extent possible, short of participation on department committees pertaining to the evaluation of tenure-track faculty members. They should have regular offices, mailboxes, access to departmental communications, telephone and computer access, parking permits, library access, after-hours access to buildings, and access to departmental staff.

- NTT faculty members should be considered for tenure-track jobs alongside new PhDs whenever plausible and practicable. NTTs should additionally be given equal consideration for jobs at their home institution (presuming that their home institution is not their PhD-granting institution) whenever that institution converts NTT lines to the tenure track.

- NTT faculty members should be fully informed of their terms of employment and fully aware of the possibilities and consequences of departmental review. Each appointment should include a clear contractual statement of expectations and assignments, including in-class teaching and such other responsibilities as course preparation, student advisement, and

service. Each appointment should be made in a timely fashion that allows NTT faculty members adequate time for course preparation.

- NTT faculty members should be provided with orientation, mentoring, and professional support and development opportunities, including campus grant programs, access to sabbatical opportunities, support for travel for research, and support for participation in professional conferences.

- NTT faculty members should be reviewed annually with regard to salary levels and opportunities for professional advancement and promotion. Evaluations should be conducted in accordance with established, written criteria for departmental review, and departments should establish procedures for appeal or grievance in the event that an NTT faculty member alleges substantial violations of such criteria.

Building on the 2003 statement, this document offers recommendations in five general areas for improving the professional standing of faculty members who hold non-tenure-track appointments. A series of questions under each recommendation aims to assist individuals and departments in evaluating policy and practice in their own institutions and programs. A high number of affirmative responses corresponds with a high level of professionalization for members of the non-tenure-track faculty. However, this document does not attempt to quantify thresholds of affirmative responses that could be taken to register institutional conditions as "below standard," "standard," or "above standard." Rather, the purpose is to help faculty members, departments, and institutions identify areas of policy and practice where progress has been made and areas where change can and should be sought.

I. HIRING AND ASSESSMENT
Hiring and assessment practices should be standardized, transparent, and fair, with institutions prioritizing the creation of long-term, regularized positions that create a stable faculty that is committed to the institution.

- Does your department have established procedures for hiring non-tenure-track faculty members (including last-minute hires)?
- Are hiring decisions made by committee?
- Are job responsibilities spelled out precisely at the point of hire for faculty members in all appointments?
- In the case of part-time appointments, does the job description specify what percentage of a full-time equivalent the job represents?
- Are multiyear contracts prioritized?
- Are the means of accruing seniority transparent?
- Are there mechanisms for converting qualified non-tenure-track faculty members to tenure lines?
- Are performance reviews regularized?
- Are performance reviews appropriate to the term length of the appointment?
- Do performance reviews move beyond student evaluations to include, for example, classroom observations, reviews of dossiers or teaching statements, and the like?

- Are all non-tenure-track faculty members evaluated using the same assessment instruments and standards?
- Do evaluative criteria account for the full range of intellectual and academic work done by non-tenure-track faculty—including, for example, the development of pedagogical materials and testing vehicles, online teaching activities, participation in professional meetings, and training in new methodologies?

II. COMPENSATION AND PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT
Compensation scales should be transparent; non-tenure-track faculty members should be compensated commensurate with their qualifications and responsibilities and in a manner that takes account of the full range of their labor. All faculty members should have access to advancement opportunities that allow for a progressive career path.

- Do non-tenure-track faculty members at your institution receive salary increases, including for merit, when tenure-line faculty members receive raises?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members have health, retirement, and other employment benefits?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members informed of the benefits available to them?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members compensated for labor beyond teaching— including, for instance, committee work, advising, course development?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members have access to advancement opportunities, whether through a system of academic ranks or through an alternative system of recognition and seniority accrual? (Alternatives might include, for example, longer appointment lengths.)

III. PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Non-tenure-track faculty members should have access to the material necessities that enable their daily work and should be welcome participants in academic planning and faculty governance. Non-tenure-track faculty members should be guaranteed academic freedom; they should also have the right, after an established probationary period, to due process before termination.

- Do non-tenure-track faculty members at your institution have access to standard electronic communication tools with students (such as e-mail, Web pages, grading systems, attendance alerts)?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members have access to private spaces for meeting with students?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members free to teach, study, and publish without threat of discrimination or reprisal?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members made aware of the institution's grievance procedures?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members allowed due process before termination after an appropriate probationary period?

- Do non-tenure-track faculty members sit on faculty committees?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members included in relevant curricular discussions and decisions, such as textbook selection, development of testing procedures, course or program assessments, or conversations about recruitment and retention of students?

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION
The full range of labor performed by non-tenure-track faculty members should be supported, recognized, and developed to nurture the intellectual and academic engagement that is vital to all instructional work in higher education.

- Are non-tenure-track faculty members at your institution eligible for awards, honors, and recognitions?
- Do you sponsor professional development activities for non-tenure-track faculty members? These may include support for travel; funding for books, software, or professional memberships; opportunities to learn or share teaching ideas; or an established mentoring program.
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members included in technology training—for example, for upgrades in computer systems or software releases?
- Are non-tenure-track faculty members supported in their efforts to secure internal and external funding related to professional development?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members participate in regular professional development activities in the department?

V. INTEGRATION INTO THE LIFE OF THE DEPARTMENT AND INSTITUTION
All faculty members should be included in the professional identity and community life of their departments and institutions.

- Are non-tenure-track faculty members at your institution included by name or given a profile on departmental Web sites?
- Do tenure-track faculty members regularly interact with non-tenure-track faculty members?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members attend department meetings?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members participate in unofficial department activities, such as book clubs, theater outings, museum visits, or concerts?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members represent the department or institution in interactions with outside entities and organizations?
- Do non-tenure-track faculty members perceive themselves as members of the department?