CULTURE, OPERATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Improving Workplace Culture for Non-tenure Track Faculty

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Executive Summary

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Non-tenure track (NTT) faculty (lecturers, professors of practice, and research professors) are essential to the operation and successful education of students within the School of Engineering & Applied Science (SEAS). Of 118 total faculty, 31 are NTT faculty (26%) who are responsible for 48% of the student hours[1] taught by full-time faculty. NTT teaching faculty are recognized as being among the best instructors in SEAS and are a tremendous resource pool and asset to the school.

It is imperative for SEAS to have the policies, resources, and benefits in place to attract and retain the best talent in order to promote excellence in teaching and educational leadership.

NTT positions need to be viewed as stable, professionally rewarding careers with opportunities for advancement. Improving workplace culture will help maximize the talents NTT faculty contribute to the School's missions. Given the small size of SEAS, one of the best ways we can distinguish ourselves from other institutions is to provide an excellent education for our students, led by a committed teaching core. This paper focuses mostly on NTT teaching faculty, but many issues are common to NTT research faculty as well.

Where we stand today

Utilization, expectations, and integration of NTT faculty across engineering departments is inconsistent.

Utilization

Our departments use NTT faculty differently. For example, the Department of Energy, Environmental, & Chemical Engineering (EECE) uses NTT faculty minimally, as it has only one lecturer who began three semesters ago. In contrast, the Department of Electrical & Systems Engineering (ESE) has eight lecturers, and it is possible to earn a BSEE degree taking no courses from tenured or tenure-track (T/TT) faculty. Table 1 shows the number and type of faculty employed in each department. With the exception of EECE and the Department of Biomedical Engineering (BME), each of which has one lecturer, the departments rely heavily on NTT teaching faculty (lecturers and professors of practice).

Table 1 Number of non-tenure track faculty in each department as of March 2017

Department	Lecturers	Professors of Practice	Research Faculty	T/TT Faculty
BME	1	0	1	16
CSE	6	1	0	22
EECE	1	0	3	18
ESE	8	2	2	15
MEMS	3	2	1	16
Engineering Communications	5	0	0	0

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[2] Student hours are defined as the number of students taught multiplied by the course credit hours.

Table 2 shows the percentage of student hours taught by NTT teaching faculty, T/TT faculty, and other appointments (including adjunct professors) for each engineering department during the 2016-2017 academic year.

Table 2 Percentage of student hours taught by NTT teaching faculty, T/TT faculty, and other appointments for each department during 2016-2017 academic year

Department[2]	Lecturers and Professors of Practice	T/TT	Other Appointments
BME	13%	70%	17%
CSE	40%	41%	19%
EECE	10%	67%	23%
ESE	60%	25%	15%
MEMS	27%	52%	21%
Engineering Communications	100%	0%	0%
TOTAL	40%	42%	18%

The percentage of student hours taught by NTT teaching faculty varies significantly between departments, ranging from 13% in BME to 60% in ESE. As a result, the percentage of student hours taught by T/TT faculty in these departments is 25% in ESE and 70% in BME.

Expectations

Within SEAS, expectations and responsibilities for NTT faculty vary widely. Teaching loads vary from one course per semester to four courses per semester with "overload" pay. Some NTT faculty have teaching responsibilities only, while others have significant administrative responsibilities, represent their department or the School on committees, and advise students and student organizations. However, it is best to resist establishing set duties and responsibilities for all NTT faculty members because departmental needs, courses, and individuals are different. The diversity in capabilities and responsibilities of the NTT faculty is one of the factors that makes their contributions valuable.

Resources

Similarly, professional development and teaching resource policies pertaining to NTT faculty vary widely. Some departments commit funds to attend engineering education or discipline-specific conferences, while others do not. Some departments pay for teaching resources, such as computers and presentation tools, while others do not. In these areas, greater consistency is needed to ensure that NTT faculty have what they need to promote excellence in teaching and educational leadership.

Integration

NTT faculty are integrated into their departments and the school to various degrees, which directly affects the workplace culture for NTT faculty. Many of the NTT faculty say they feel disjointed because they are not allowed to attend meetings or assemblies that would provide valuable information about what is occurring in the department and School. For example, not all NTT faculty are invited to attend department meetings. Because of

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[2] Biomedical Engineering (BME); Computer Science and Engineering (CSE); Energy, Environmental, and Chemical Engineering (EECE); Electrical and Systems Engineering (ESE); Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science (MEMS)

this lack of integration, many NTT faculty have limited interactions with T/TT faculty, making it difficult to enhance curriculum coordination and be viewed as a partner in the school's mission to provide an excellent education to our students.

Also apparent are some issues with communication and how NTT faculty are presented on department websites. On occasion, NTT faculty are omitted from important, relevant emails from administration. In addition, departments list NTT faculty differently on their websites. Some departments list NTT faculty on the same page with T/TT faculty, while other department websites list NTT faculty on a separate webpage titled "Other Faculty," for example. While these are small details, they only increase the perceived divide between NTT and T/TT faculty.

SEAS policies pertaining to NTT faculty are outdated.

Job Descriptions and Associated Research Policies

Policies pertaining to NTT faculty are not well-defined and/or followed. NTT teaching faculty job descriptions are presented in a Danforth Campus-wide document (Danforth Campus Policy on Full-Time Teaching Track Faculty) and a school-specific document (The School of Engineering & Applied Science Guidebook to Faculty and Research Appointments). The Danforth Campus document lists titles of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Teaching Professor, while the SEAS Guidebook lists titles of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Principal Lecturer. SEAS needs to resolve these different titles as well as elaborate on the duties and expectations of each position.

In addition, the applicable research policy for NTT teaching faculty needs to be reviewed. Danforth Campus policy does not prohibit NTT teaching faculty from doing research. The SEAS Guidebook states that Lecturers and Senior Lecturers "cannot be involved in research" while Principal Lecturers have the "flexibility to engage in funding activities that have an education component." Even though the School prohibits NTT teaching faculty from doing disciplinary research, not all departments adhere to this policy. While some of the teaching faculty have no desire to do disciplinary research, most would like the ability to do so and think that it would improve their teaching and job satisfaction. On the other hand, some administrators believe that doing research conflicts with job performance since it takes time away from teaching, and they note the lack of published research to support the assertion that disciplinary research enhances learning outcomes in undergraduate courses. Furthermore, some are concerned that if a NTT faculty member performs the same job functions as a T/TT faculty member (teaching and research), the NTT faculty member is given grounds for a lawsuit against the school for not being on the tenure track.

Contracts

Another important policy issue is the timing of the notification for NTT faculty contract renewal. Most NTT faculty are on one-year contracts, and the annual deadline for contract renewal is April 15. This timing could pose a problem if a faculty member's contract were not renewed. It leaves little time to find new employment, especially for a faculty member who needs to search for academic teaching positions, which have similar hiring cycles to tenure-track positions (i.e., openings posted in late fall). This situation could be mitigated by offering NTT faculty longer contracts, but the SEAS Guidebook to Faculty and Research Appointments allows only one-year contracts for Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, although it allows up to three-year contracts for Principal Lecturers. The Danforth Campus policy states that Lecturers may receive up to one-year contracts while Senior Lecturers may receive up to three-year contracts. It does not mention the length of contracts for Principal Lecturers, since the title does not exist in the Danforth Campus policy.

Onboarding Policies

No established onboarding procedures exist for orienting new NTT faculty to their jobs. Some NTT faculty received absolutely no orientation when they started work at Washington University, not even a meeting with Human Resources. We need to treat NTT faculty hires with professionalism and provide them with the information and resources they need to be prepared to do their jobs on day one. In addition, newly-hired NTT faculty are not provided the opportunity to be formally mentored, as TT faculty are, which would make navigating a new job and work environment easier.

Parental Leave Policy

New child parental leave benefits for NTT faculty are lagging behind recent changes to benefits for T/TT faculty and graduate students. With T/TT faculty receiving up to a semester of paid new child parental leave and graduate students receiving up to 60 days, a new policy pertaining to NTT faculty needs to be implemented. The Washington University Danforth Campus Policy on Parental Leave for Non-Tenure Track Faculty states that after three years of continuous employment at 50% time or more, a NTT faculty member can receive up to four weeks of paid parental leave. After four years, it goes up to eight weeks, and after five years, it goes up to 12 weeks. Since most NTT positions require a PhD, it is not practical for faculty to wait five years to receive full parental leave benefits.

Policies Specific to Research Faculty

Some current policies impose limitations on research faculty. For example, research faculty are not allowed to chair their own students' dissertation committees due to a policy in the School of Arts & Sciences, the school that grants PhDs earned in SEAS. Another policy prohibits research faculty from serving as lead PI on internal grants, such as I-CARES grants, which sends the message that the support and success of research faculty is not valued as highly.

Where we need to be in the future and how we get there

We should strive for our NTT faculty core to attain the following visions within five years:

1. **NTT faculty are leaders in incorporating effective teaching methods to best educate our students.**

To get there, NTT faculty need access to professional development opportunities and provided funding to attend one conference or workshop each year. This will help the faculty members stay up to date with the latest teaching practices and developments in their technical areas of expertise. Either the department or the school would provide funding. All faculty need to be equipped with the resources they need to implement the best teaching practices, for example, software used for peer assessment when facilitating group work in the classroom. Associated costs should be covered by each department. Faculty (NTT and T/TT) should meet periodically to discuss the teaching practices they are using, what is working or not working, and how to support one another in teaching efforts.

2. **NTT faculty are integrated into the school and provided opportunities to contribute in ways other than teaching.**

To get there, all NTT faculty need to be invited to department meetings and Faculty Assembly. Not only will this improve the communication between NTT faculty and the department and school, but it will enhance the cohesiveness between T/TT and NTT faculty since they will have more opportunities to interact. By attending these meetings, NTT faculty will be represented and can contribute their ideas on issues the school faces as

well as have opportunities to volunteer to assist in efforts, should they wish. In addition, NTT faculty who serve administrative roles or represent the department on other committees will be afforded the opportunity to share the outcomes of their work with the rest of the department or school.

Administration needs to include NTT faculty on all relevant emails and communication. In addition, NTT faculty should be presented on department websites in the same manner. There should be one webpage labeled "Faculty" that lists T/TT faculty on the top and NTT faculty on the bottom.

3. **NTT faculty are provided clear pathways for career advancement.**

To get there, SEAS needs to create clearly defined job descriptions for titles of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Principal Lecturer, and Teaching Professor. A SEAS committee, with all stakeholders represented, needs to be formed to accomplish this. The contract length and renewal deadline for all NTT jobs should be reviewed as well. To offer some advantage of being a Senior Lecturer versus a Lecturer, the committee should consider extending the length of contracts for Senior Lecturers from one year to up to three years.

4. **Policies regarding research are clearly defined and followed.**

To get there, the research policy for each NTT position needs to be reviewed, established, and followed consistently across all departments. The policy needs to be drafted with representation from different ranks of NTT faculty and administration.

5. **NTT faculty searches are thorough and include proper onboarding for new hires.**

To get there, when a NTT position is open, the department needs to do a nationwide search for the position in order to find and attract the best candidates. Once hired, the new employee should go through an established orientation process: a meeting with HR to learn about benefits; a meeting with the Teaching Center and Engineering Information Technology to learn about available resources; and receipt of a faculty handbook that covers subjects such as how to use the WebFAC system, how to reserve a room, etc. A computer and office space should be set up prior to the first day of employment. Each new hire should be paired with a more seasoned NTT faculty member so that he or she has the opportunity to be mentored.

6. **NTT faculty have access to similar new child parental leave policies as graduate students and tenured/ tenure-track faculty.**

To get there, SEAS needs to implement a new child parental leave policy for NTT faculty. If employed less than two years full-time, NTT employees should receive up to eight weeks of paid parental leave (similar to the graduate student policy). After two years, NTT employees should receive up to a semester of paid parental leave (similar to the T/TT policy). This parental leave policy, like all other HR benefits, should be regularly reviewed to ensure that policies for NTT employees remain current with other WashU employees and market expectations.

SEAS needs to take the necessary steps to achieve the above six visions to create a competitive advantage over other universities to attract and retain the best teaching talent. NTT faculty need to be supported through funding for professional development opportunities and teaching resources; better integration and inclusion in their departments and the school; clarification of job titles; more secure contracts; professional onboarding for new hires; and a fair parental leave policy. Making these changes will establish the culture and policies necessary to equip and motivate NTT faculty to lead the school in promoting excellence in teaching and educational leadership.