

# Beyond Contracts: Non-tenure Track Faculty and Campus Governance

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“We will always be a side order of fries unless we participate in the day-to-day decisions of campus, because they are what truly make up the conditions of work.” This comment by a non-tenure track faculty (NTTF) leader illustrates the importance of access to governance for improving the working conditions of contingent faculty.<sup>1</sup> NTTF leaders, particularly those on campuses with inclusive environments, noted the benefits of participating in campus leadership.

Why is governance so important for NTTFs? Contracts speak to salary and job security, NTTF leaders note, but they seldom address curricular decisions, student evaluations, professional development, orientation programs, and mentoring. Many contracts address class size, workload, or online learning,

but they do not always anticipate emerging issues. Administrators may unilaterally use the governance process to alter the day-to-day work life of NTTFs and the learning environment for students. Without NTTF participation, input on these conditions is effectively out of the reach for the largest group of faculty in many postsecondary institutions. “We teach 70 percent of the general education courses,” a contingent faculty leader notes, “but have no input on text selection, course content, or course offered. How can this be?” Participation in governance also serves an important latent function: making NTTFs valued, legitimate, and credible community members.

Unions and senates are sometimes at odds instead of working in concert to advance faculty interests. This dichotomy need not be the case. Last year’s *Almanac* suggested contract

language to strengthen senate-union cooperation.<sup>2</sup> This essay advances that discussion, focusing on the role of contingent faculty in governance. Our data sources including the NEA Higher Education Contract Analysis System (HECAS), NEA forums, and focus groups and interviews.

The 1,021 contracts in the HECAS database include collective-bargaining agreements negotiated by AAUP, AFT, NEA, SEIU, and independents. We limited our analysis to the 183 *current* contracts for two-year or four-year institutions that included references to both part-time and full-time NTTFs.<sup>3</sup> Only 39 contracts provided procedures for NTTTF participation in governance. This small number suggests a need for union negotiators to improve working conditions by increasing contingent faculty involvement.

Our discussion highlights model language from these contracts in the HECAS database, and challenges that future contracts should address. But first, some caveats: Contract language does not necessarily reflect enforced institutional policies. Conversely, some schools omitted from this discussion may have supportive contingent faculty cultures and advanced policies. Contracts may not capture traditions, activities, and policies that are part of those cultures. Contingent faculty members sometimes participate in campus governance absent contract language—and absent unions.

Many faculty members think that governance is a goal subordinate to job security, multiyear contracts, rehire rights, health benefits, promotion schedules, and salary raises. This perspective is shortsighted, contingent faculty leaders note. Including governance in contract negotiations is not a luxury, they add, but a fundamental component of professionalism. Faculty members should not give up the cause even if the issue may not always appear ripe for contract negotiations. Contracts can encourage and solidify participation in times of duress, and unions can build on modest language toward more favorable provisions.

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Some contracts invite, even encourage, NTTTF participation. “Adjunct faculty are welcome to participate in appropriate departmental, division and other college/CCS meetings and events,” states the Community Colleges of Spokane (Washington) contract. The City Colleges of Chicago (Illinois) contract states, “The Board agrees that it is desirable that part-time faculty members participate in College committees, district-wide committees and departmental meetings.”

This first step has symbolic and practical importance. Symbolically, such contractual invitations formalize an otherwise intangible cultural idea; they legitimate NTTTF inclusion. Practically, they provide leverage for negotiating more productive contract language.

## A BASIC FACULTY RIGHT

Many institutions with beneficial contracts see participation in governance as a fundamental faculty *right* and as part of being a professional. The word “right” implies inherency and ownership: all faculty members regardless of status should participate. The Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville contract includes NTTTFs:

As colleagues, non-tenure track faculty members have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. They respect and defend the free inquiry of their associates. In the exchange of criticisms and ideas they show due respect for the opinions of others. They acknowledge their academic debts and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. They accept their share of non-tenure track faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution.

This language shows appreciation for NTTTFs as colleagues, acknowledges an equal right to participate in governance, encourages ownership in the academic community, and confirms equal responsibility.

## FULFILLING RESPONSIBILITIES

Along with rights come responsibilities. NTTFs must have the means to act on their rights and to perform their responsibilities. The California State University contract lists participation in governance among faculty obligations:

Faculty members have additional professional responsibilities such as: advising students, participation in campus and systemwide committees, maintaining office hours, working collaboratively and productively with colleagues and participation in traditional academic functions.

This exemplary language reminds tenure track faculty (TTF), administrators, and staff that NTTF participation in governance is needed to fulfill their day-to-day obligations. The Mount Hood Community College (Oregon) contract states:

Faculty members fulfill this responsibility by participation in committee structures, by developing curriculum, and by advising students. They assure, furthermore, the academic quality of the institution and its curriculum through their own professional development and in their participation in the total educational program of the College.

The clause justifies and reinforces NTTF participation in governance by tying this responsibility to teaching, advising, and curriculum.

NTTFs face a risk that “symbolic” language will lead to institutional complacency. College officials may decide that referring to rights and responsibilities in the contract removes the need to move toward an institutionalized policy. Even favorable contract language may fail to result in involvement. Campus leaders must facilitate NTTF participation, especially when contracts allow discretion to departments and divisions.

## HOW MUCH UNIT LEVEL AUTONOMY?

Many contracts that invite institution-wide participation in governance allow schools and departments to exclude NTTFs—a key problem, according to our interviewees. The City Colleges of Chicago contract, for example, leaves room for exclusion: “Part-time faculty will be excluded from such committees only to the extent that they are precluded from participation by contract, organizational by-laws, or statute.” The University of Vermont contract contains a similar exemption:

The parties recognize that the participation of all faculty in the institutional life of the University strengthens the institution, and therefore departments, schools and colleges shall be encouraged to incorporate part-time faculty colleagues into governance. However, bargaining unit members shall be eligible to be members of and participate, by voting or otherwise, in college, school or department meetings and governance only if, and so far as, authorized by the By-laws and other applicable guidelines of those colleges, schools or departments.

Schools and departments may desire and need autonomy. However, these contracts permit different policies and cultures towards contingent faculty within the university and even within the same division. Most NTTF leaders confirmed that the treatment and inclusion of contingent faculty varied by department and school. Rank and file NTTFs also recognized unequal treatment. This inconsistency promotes a poor campus climate.

## REQUIRING PARTICIPATION WITH VOTING RIGHTS

An invitation to participate in governance is not enough. Contracts should require NTTF inclusion in governance. Triton College (Illinois) maintains one representative seat on the faculty senate for adjunct faculty. However, having

a representative seat does not necessarily imply voting rights. Other contracts contain similar language: NTTFs may voice their concerns, but are unable to vote on relevant issues.

The City Colleges of Chicago contract invites participation, but is silent on voting rights: “The board agrees that it will invite participation of part-time faculty members on all college committees formed by the colleges for faculty or other employee participation or by the district and invite part-time faculty to participate in departmental meetings to the extent provided wherein.” The Roosevelt University (Illinois) contract has similar language: “Faculty members shall be invited to participate in scheduled faculty meetings in their academic units except for meetings exclusively related to personnel issues.”

### PROPORTIONALITY

At Triton College, NTTFs have a single representative on the 24-member faculty senate. NTTFs total 50 to 70 percent of the faculty members on many campuses, but typically three to five individuals represent over 1,000 NTTFs. NTTF leaders noted a lack of success in addressing the issue of proportionality. NTTFs doubt they have a voice, given such small proportions. “When you are the only one representing the part-time faculty in a group of 50 people, you know your voice is not being heard in the same way,” said one NTTF leader.

Diversity among the NTTFs compounds the problem. NTTFs in English composition, math, music, chemistry, education, and medicine live in different worlds. No single perspective will represent the full array of NTTF experiences and expertise. The problem tends to be worse among part-time NTTFs. San Francisco State University (California)—where half the faculty members are NTTFs—has made significant progress towards proportional governance. Each school has one NTTF and two TTF members on the Senate. That means that NTTFs, with one-third of the Senate membership, have a significant voice.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF “THE VOTE”

Designating NTTFs to serve on committees and governance groups may ensure their presence. But they may still lack adequate representation, absent the right to vote. The contracts for Kent State University (Ohio), Hofstra University (New York), Lower Columbia Community College (Oregon), Victor Valley Community College (California), and Roosevelt University specify the right to vote:

Part-time faculty members shall be elected in each college as a voting member of the College Council. University and Union acknowledge that the university senate has amended its rules to permit the election of one part-time faculty member from each college to the university senate as voting members. (Roosevelt University)

Having voting rights helps to assure that NTTFs actively participate in university and departmental affairs. These rights strengthen and add legitimacy to NTTF status by recognizing these colleagues as important parts of the decision making process. A voting requirement mandates leaders to keep NTTFs informed regarding unit concerns. Sometimes the union contract mandates changes that conflict with faculty handbooks or with Senate rules and regulations. These documents must be amended to ensure participation. At Roosevelt, the Senate had to amend its rules to allow NTTFs to vote.

Hofstra allows adjuncts to vote only on items relevant to their interests. Other contracts give the vote only to NTTF who have committed a specified amount of time to the university. Some restrictions make sense, since it is difficult to equate a first year NTTFs who teaches only one class a semester with a long-time NTTF who is only a few hours shy of full-time status. The University of North Carolina allows NTTFs full participation in governance, including the opportunity to vote, after three years of service. The three-year requirement allows NTTFs to gain a thorough understanding

of the university. A respectful relationship between TTFs and their NTT colleagues is a dividend of this successful practice.

### **PARTICIPATION AND VOTING**

NTTFs are typically excluded from voting on matters pertaining to TTFs—especially granting tenure. But contracts often fail to list the issues on which NTTFs should have input. “If the contract does not state that NTTF should be involved in curriculum or evaluation for example,” says one NTT leader, “they are often excluded from these areas. It is better to specifically state the range of issues in the contracts so that NTTF’s voice is heard on these issues.”

The Victor Valley contract designates areas of NTTF involvement: “Part-time faculty should be considered to be an integral part of their departments and given all the rights normally afforded to full-time faculty in the areas of book selection, participation in department activities, and the use of college resources.”

Encouraging NTTF participation in governance should imply involvement in many issues, including student life, curriculum, evaluation, and professional development. But many contracts, our interviews show, are narrowly interpreted and implemented. So greater specificity in contract language increases the likelihood for successful NTTF involvement.

### **ENABLING PARTICIPATION**

Opening opportunities, placing NTTFs on committees and governance bodies, and according voting rights do not insure success. NTTFs, like their TTF colleagues, need incentives and compensation. But most contracts, even at colleges with the best intentions, do not include service in calculating NTTF workload. Interviewed NTTFs noted multiple roadblocks to participation: high teaching loads and student enrollments, “free way flying” to multiple campuses, and the absence of workspace and administrative support. By contrast, these NTTFs note, the TTF teaching load is usually lighter, and the total workload typically includes participation

in governance—usually about 20 percent. Most TTFs teach at one institution and have an office and administrative support.

Most institutions—still viewing NTTF participation in governance as optional interest—do little to overcome these hindrances, and many contracts reinforce this perspective. “Representation on committees by bargaining unit employees,” states the Allan Hancock Joint Community College (California) contract, “is voluntary, optional, and *uncompensated*” (italics ours).

TTFs often receive a course release or compensation for committee work. A few contracts—including Lane Community College (Oregon), Long Beach Community College (California), Clackamas (Oregon), and Mount Saint Antonio Community College (California)—provide similar compensation for NTTF participation. All Lane faculty members who participate in governance activities receive reassignment time or course releases: “The College agrees to provide expense reimbursement to employees who, with prior approval, participate in professional activities for the purpose of benefiting College programs. Such participation will be without loss of pay.” Long Beach Community College provides stipends for all NTTFs who participate in governance.

Some contracts give faculty members reassignment time or pay for their participation. Faculty Council co-chairs at Lane (who can be NTTFs), faculty members on the College Council, and chairs and members of governance councils receive 0.25 FTE reassignment time per term. The Lane contract also speaks to NTTF compensation issues:

If governance reassignment time for a part-time faculty member produces a total assignment of .6 FTE or below for the academic year, reassignment time will contribute towards workload and be compensated as any part-time teaching assignment below .5 FTE. Governance reassignment time will not result in movement of a part-time faculty member to contracted status.

The Columbia College contract distinguishes governance work, which compensates NTTFs through course release, from “non-governance” contract work that is compensated through a payment schedule.

If a unit member is asked to work on a non-governance committee, that union member shall be paid at a rate of \$50 per regularly scheduled meeting. Attendance will be verified by the Committee Chairperson. Non-governance committees are Search Committees (except the Presidential Search Committee), ad hoc College committees, and departmental committees. Governance committees are the Columbia College Council and all of its committees.

The Northern Illinois University contract credits NTTFs for participation in governance:

At the sole discretion of the Department Chair and with the prior approval of the Dean of the relevant college, an instructor may be assigned to other non-instructional activities not listed above that directly support the mission of the department. The CUEs to be credited for such activities shall be individually negotiated and mutually agreed upon prior to commencement of this activity.

The following represents some, but not all, of the activities that can support the mission of a department.

- Working on curriculum development;
- Serving on University, College, or Department committees;
- Writing grant proposals;
- Engaging in scholarly or artistic endeavors;
- Holding office in a professional organization;
- Evaluating student portfolios or recitals;
- Database creation and management.

Crediting NTTFs for their work facilitates their participation in governance. It does not overcome structural barriers, including adjusted work profile, office space, and administrative support, but it is a start. Some NTTF senate seats go unfilled year after year because contingent faculty cannot find a way to serve. “Tenure track faculty get a course release to sit on the Senate,” said an NTTF leader. “We even have some staff on the Senate and they also get release time.” “But,” added this leader, “NTTFs are expected to serve without any release time or compensation.” NTTFs “clearly see the value; there’s just no more time in the day. This is really where we have failed,” this leader concluded. “We have a culture of participation, but provide no ways to facilitate NTTF participation in governance.”

### **ENCOURAGING LEADERSHIP**

Participation in governance is a start, but active NTTF leadership can change the campus culture and climate. Substantial inclusion is a prerequisite for campus support and encouragement of NTTF leadership, interviewees note. Many contingents assumed leadership positions—including chairing the Senate, a major committee, or a department—after participating in union mentorship and leadership training programs. TTFs changed their views about NTTF ability, competence, and engagement after seeing these colleagues in leadership positions. Instead of excluding NTTFs from leadership roles, more contracts and handbooks should follow the Lane Community College example by assuring NTTF eligibility for leadership positions.

Unions and administrations should encourage NTTFs to take leadership in areas of expertise. Contingents on one campus teach the majority of online courses. These colleagues, having gained expertise in distance education, led the development of campus policies and practices on related pedagogical and technology issues. They also developed measures of student outcomes and faculty effectiveness.

## SEPARATE CONTRACTS

Will TTFs support the interests of NTTFs? On some campuses with a unified faculty, TTFs understand the needs of NTTFs and argue for their inclusion in governance. Most contracts encompass both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty. However, contextual factors—including state legislation, history, and bargaining agreements—led NTTFs to establish their own bargaining units on some campuses, and to negotiate separate contracts. Such four-year institutions include Southern Illinois, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Kent State, and the University of Vermont. Two-year institutions with separate contracts include Mt. Hood and Clackamas Community Colleges.

Separate contracts offer benefits and challenges. The Illinois State University contract acknowledges the importance of NTTFs:

It is the intent of the Board of Trustees and the Association to promote the quality and effectiveness of education at Illinois State University and to promote high standards of academic excellence in all phases of instruction. The Board and Association also recognize that an effective and harmonious working relationship will facilitate achievement of common objectives and will provide an environment conducive to the delivery of high quality education.

Hofstra University and the Berkeley and Davis campuses of the University of California have separate NTTF senates that make decisions related to the interests of adjuncts or part-time faculty. Separation allows for consideration of needs for different groups.

However, all-faculty contracts may be equally beneficial. The Mount San Antonio College contract grants all faculty members the same rights regardless of the nature of the appointment. The contract also lists responsibilities expected of every faculty member:

To be involved reasonably in the total program of the College (for example, College-wide committees, meetings, and student activities).

To be prompt and regular in attendance at all department, committee, and College-wide meetings.

Union contracts, we believe, should encourage a single governance system that invites all constituencies to meet and discuss common interests. As many leaders note, a divided governance body is one more convergence hurdle to overcome and may be problematic later.

## A PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE

Several contracts permit NTTF inclusion only if there are not enough TTFs to participate in and fulfill the obligations of campus governance. Other contracts permit part-time faculty member participation only when full-time colleagues are unavailable. The Cuesta College (California) and the Los Angeles Community College System (California) contracts exemplify this favoritism. “If there is an insufficient number of regular faculty members in the department or division to fill one or more of the regular faculty member positions on the committee,” the Cuesta College contract notes, “additional temporary faculty from the department or division and/or regular faculty members from other departments or divisions may be selected.”

This language opens opportunities for NTTF participation in governance—especially in community colleges—as the number of adjunct faculty members increases, and as the number of TTFs declines. It also highlights a distinction between NTTFs and TTFs: NTTFs are the last resort, not an equally important resource.

## FULL-TIME VERSUS PART-TIME STATUS

The term “part-time” is a misnomer on many campuses. Some part-time faculty members are employed elsewhere, but many others are

long-term members of their academic communities. Many interviewed NTTFs (and their colleagues) who worked 80 or 90 percent of full-time credit hours were still considered part-time. Other NTTFs may work fewer hours, but class size, office hours, course preparation, and grading may require time expenditures comparable to the workload of full-time faculty.

Many observers would concede that full-time NTTFs, particularly colleagues with two or more years of campus experience, should participate in governance. Campus leaders and faculty are more divided on the role of part-time and adjunct faculty. Participation in governance makes less sense for colleagues who teach a single class and do not engage with the institution. Most part-time participants are long-time adjuncts; only a few colleagues represent this group when contracts permit part-timer participation. The shifting obligations of faculty members affect decisions on eligibility to participate as more part-timers virtually teach full-time, and look increasingly like full-time NTTFs.

Some contracts acknowledge the shifting workloads of NTTF colleagues, but we could not find language that applied to participation in governance. Collecting data that accurately delineates NTTF workloads would enable colleges to develop a representative system of governance. Some contracts currently designate a two-year waiting period; then they might also permit comparable contributions to governance for full-time NTTFs and for part-time colleagues teaching a 50 percent load or more.

It will not be easy to elicit NTTF participation. Some campuses may have to deal with pre-existing inertia. Those campuses with considerable NTTF involvement created a culture that values and expects their inclusion. However creating this culture, leaders on these campuses noted, took many years. They recommended enabling features in contract language, such as compensation and release time, as the key to getting greater involvement.

## CONCLUSION

Faculty leaders must address the professional right—and responsibility—of NTTFs to participate in governance. Conditions have improved since a 1993 study found no real contingent faculty involvement in governance or voting privileges—at most, some NTTFs could attend some departmental meetings.<sup>4</sup> Contingent faculty participation in governance is an underdeveloped area, despite new provisions in some contracts. More campuses invite NTTF participation in governance, but the contracts do not mandate compensation or course release. It is unfair to ask NTTFs to contribute time and energy to governance without compensation, when other participants receive incentives.

Besides enabling participation, faculty leaders must assure that NTTFs have more than token membership in departmental and senate governance, on administrative committees, and on the board. NTTFs must have input on many campus issues, and possess voting rights. Contracts must avoid language that unintentionally excludes NTTFs and must not compromise NTTF rights when honoring departmental or divisional autonomy.

NTTF participation in governance allows these professionals to shape their working conditions. It is also an institutional imperative. Colleges are replacing retiring TTFs with NTTFs. We can press for hiring more TTFs, but excluding NTTFs from governance will eventually eliminate the faculty voice. This exclusion places our colleges and universities—the world's best—at risk.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Titles for faculty members vary; the authors use this term to include part-time and full-time faculty members that are not on the tenure track.

<sup>2</sup> Maitland and Rhoades, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> “Current” includes contracts expiring in 2008 or later.

<sup>4</sup> Gappa and Leslie, 1993.

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