Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members as Administrators: Planning and Evaluation
Laura Brady and Nathalie Singh-Corcoran

THE expanding role of non-tenure-track faculty members has been highlighted in recent discussions of job trends on college and university campuses. The Association of Departments of English (ADE), the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL), the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) all have policy statements on the status and working conditions of part-time and full-time faculty members employed off the tenure track. The search pages for the ADE Bulletin and the ADFL Bulletin include such categories as Adjunct Faculty / Part-Time Faculty, Conditions of Work and Employment, and Faculty Evaluation and Reward.

The study by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) on higher education job growth—American Academic: The State of Higher Education Workforce, 1997–2007—indicates that, in 2007, the total number of faculty jobs has increased as college enrollments have surged by more than three million students over the last ten years; the increase, however, has only been in the non-tenure-track faculty. Where full-time and tenure-track faculty members represented thirty-three percent of all faculty in 1997, that number has since dropped to twenty-seven percent; contingent faculty members now comprise the majority of the teaching workforce (9–11). English departments have followed the trend with a dramatic rise in the number of non-tenure-track lines.

In the 2008 publication Education in the Balance: A Report on the Workforce in English, the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing notes that the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty positions within English departments remained constant while the number of full- and part-time positions outside the tenure track increased sharply (2). While English departments have long had a history of diverse faculty roles, these roles have recently changed. Education in the Balance puts our profession’s varied employment categories in context, tracking the increase in the number of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members to rising undergraduate enrollment but also noting a widening division between teaching and research (3, 15). As institutions increase research expectations for tenure-track faculty members, support for that research often takes the form of decreased teaching loads. As a result, non-tenure-track faculty members are taking on responsibility for lower-division as well as upper-division undergraduate courses (7). Since teaching faculty members occupy the bulk of non-tenure-track positions, it is not surprising that most of the scholarship on contingent faculty members focuses on the teaching population. The ADE report raises important questions about the relation of teaching and research. We want to add another consideration: the relation of teaching, research, and administration.

A small but growing number of non-tenure-track appointments are in undergraduate program administration. We recognize that there are many complex issues...
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related to the use of non-tenure-track faculty members, but we draw attention to this facet because we believe it raises significant questions about how we value undergraduate program administration within departments and universities, the relation of research and administration, and the complexities of evaluating administrative service for faculty renewal and promotion. Thus we examine here two related questions: What specific factors do departments and job candidates need to consider before creating or accepting a full-time, non-tenure-track administrative position? Once a department creates a full-time, non-tenure-track position (or a candidate accepts such a position), how might evaluation and promotion guidelines provide specific support for non-tenure-track faculty members in administrative roles?

Creating Non-Tenure-Track Administrative Positions

Non-tenure-track administrative positions need to be considered from at least two perspectives: that of the department hiring for the position and that of a job candidate considering the position. As part of a forum in a College English special issue on contingent faculty (Arnold et al. 411–12), we raised questions for both sides to consider:

• **Stability.** Does the position have a clear source of renewable funding? Is the position eligible for pay increases?
• **Centrality.** How does the position correspond to department, college, and university goals?
• **Integration.** Will the person employed in the position be a fully participating member of the departmental community with a voice in governance?
• **Security.** What strategies are in place to protect academic freedom in the absence of tenure? Do evaluation procedures or guidelines need to be revised to assist in equitable annual reviews and promotions?

Here we want to address some of these questions with examples that show why the stability, centrality, integration, and security of non-tenure-track administrative positions are so important and how they apply to a wide range of departments and job seekers, starting with the hiring process and continuing through annual reviews.

*The Hiring Perspective*

Previous studies of changes in the academic labor force have largely neglected issues concerning non-tenure-track faculty members in administrative positions. We offer as a sample case our department’s decision to define the position of writing center coordinator as non-tenure-track. Like many universities, our institution (a large, public, research-oriented, land-grant university) has seen sharp increases in undergraduate enrollments over the past ten years. The rising number of undergraduates has resulted in more sections of required composition courses and new needs for academic support services such as a writing center.

We received permission to hire a non-tenure-track writing center coordinator, but we worried that a non-tenure-track position would imply a separation between research on current developments in our field and administrative practice. The pay inequity between non-tenure-track and tenure-track positions at our institution raised
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additional concerns about institutional hierarchies. We had to weigh these problems against the fact that a full-time line represented far more support and stability than the half-time appointment of a graduate teaching assistant or two that we currently had for tutoring. When we decided in favor of the full-time line, we did so with a concurrent commitment to changes at the department level that would make the position stable, central, well-integrated, and secure.

An equitable salary scale and renewable funding are two factors that indicate a position's long-term stability. The funding for our writing center coordinator is stable even if the full-time position is not tenure-track. The college and university invested significant funds to create a new physical space for the writing center and also committed an annual budget for the coordinator and peer tutor stipends. We would not have moved forward without having secured long-term funding. While we were disappointed that the salary for the non-tenure-track position began at eighty percent of what a new tenure-track position would earn, we were able to redefine the position as “clinical faculty” rather than “faculty equivalent,” which made it eligible for annual merit money and the pay raises associated with promotions. Over time, merit pay has somewhat lessened the salary inequity, but the lower pay scale for non-tenure-track positions remains a challenge.

The writing center coordinator position connects well to department, college, and university goals to improve undergraduate education and student retention. While connection to college and university goals helps with stability as well as centrality, it is also important in annual evaluations. (We’ll say a bit more about this below.)

Following the advice of the 2008 ADE report, we wanted to make sure that the person employed in this position would be a fully participating member of the department community with a voice in governance, but realizing this role involved two key changes. First, we needed to redefine the position as “clinical faculty” rather than “faculty equivalent.” At our institution, faculty-equivalent positions are primarily administrative, with no expectations of research. Clinical faculty positions started in the health sciences to recognize health-care professionals who held continuing appointments and usually, but not always, devoted the majority of their professional effort to clinical service. By using this existing faculty category, we could define the writing center coordinator’s role to recognize administrative responsibilities as central while still being able to value teaching and research. Specifically, we configured the position as fifty percent administrative work, forty percent teaching, and ten percent research. In this way, a clinical faculty position had a distinct advantage over a teaching faculty line, which, at the time, did not recognize any time allocated to research. The research component was important to us, because a coordinator who was actively engaged with the profession and aware of current theories, research studies, and practices would understand his or her work in a much larger context than one who focused solely on student-tutor interactions. Given the opportunity for research, the writing center coordinator could collaborate with the undergraduate writing program on planning, curriculum development, and faculty outreach.

The terms of the contract and the performance expectations that follow also contribute to the security of any position. At our institution, those in clinical faculty positions can be promoted from assistant professor to associate professor to
The decision to accept a non-tenure-track administrative position in a writing program involves various professional and personal considerations. We recommend that, when faced with such a decision, job seekers pay close attention to department stability, collegiality, campus support for writing, and the overall institutional culture.

Non-tenure-track administrative appointments are often attractive because—as Roger Baldwin and Jay Chronister aptly state—one can “pursue an academic career without the liabilities often associated with the quest for tenure” (140). There is little pressure to publish and no tenure clock. In theory, one can pursue research of any kind and at any point in one’s career. And because of the limited requirements to produce publishable research, one’s job could be more focused. That is, unlike tenure-track colleagues, a non-tenure-track person who spends time away from research to attend to administrative duties can still receive a positive annual evaluation for that service.

Again, we offer an example to illustrate these points. Because the writing center coordinator's work directly connects to the university mission and to specific goals related to student learning, it has led to positive and productive relationships with writing faculty members outside the department and with deans outside the college, lending the position an important voice in university-wide conversations about core writing requirements and student retention. As a result, this non-tenure-track position is integrated within institutional structures and the person employed in it understands budgets and decision-making processes on our campus from an administrative as well as a faculty perspective.

The non-tenure-track position works because of several factors we outline earlier: the writing center has stable funding; the goals of the center and the responsibilities of the administrative position coincide with department, college, and university goals; and, because of the recent positive changes in the department’s faculty evaluation guidelines, all full-time colleagues (regardless of tenure status) have a voice in governance, are eligible for professional development leaves (which are similar to sabbaticals but focus on teaching or administration), and can apply for elective promotion on their own timetable.

Of course there are cautions attached to any position off the tenure track. As graduate students, we are trained to become scholars and are often advised against taking on service-oriented work. We learn very early that the institution arranges hierarchically the work we do. When faculty members are asked by their colleagues what they are working on, they mention their current research and upcoming publications, not their committee work or their administrative duties. Service activities...
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Do not hold intellectual currency; the implicit message is that academicians advance the discipline while administrators manage or direct the affairs of the institution without actively creating knowledge (Strickland 49). Because the workload of non-tenure-track faculty members may be defined in terms other than the 40-40-20 division typical of teaching, research, and service for tenure-track faculty members, candidates need to assess any offer carefully. While each job candidate’s situation is unique, we believe there are some common questions for any candidate considering a non-tenure-track position: Are teaching loads variable? Are the terms of the contract clearly defined? How is research valued? Do faculty evaluation guidelines explicitly include performance expectations for non-tenure-track faculty members?

Administrative Work and Evaluation Challenges

Our example illustrates how departments and individuals need to address whether a full-time, non-tenure-track position is a good option for program administration. While stability and support are crucial for success, we also need to consider how to integrate and secure new positions. What, for instance, are alternative ways for faculty to gain recognition and centrality when research and publication are not the primary goals or criteria for their appointments?

Our department chair and our dean recognize the need to value and promote faculty members who take on administrative roles (probably because they are administrators). We continue to seek ways to demonstrate the value of administrative work to the teaching and research colleagues who serve on promotion and evaluation committees. This is where expanded definitions of scholarship and the move away from rigid distinctions of teaching and research and service continue to prove valuable—but also difficult to enact, particularly in areas of faculty evaluation.

The hiring and assessment section of the MLA’s Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions helps us identify areas that would count in evaluating a non-tenure-track faculty member’s contributions to the institution. But we also need to scrutinize the rigid categories that constitute all faculty members’ work. Whether program administrators are on or off the tenure track, their work is difficult to evaluate because so much of the typical workload defies neat categorization as purely research, purely teaching, or purely administration or service. Institutions and departments therefore often struggle with identifying and categorizing administrative work for annual evaluation and promotion. New, non-tenure-track administrative positions have the potential to make evaluation easier because they overtly give more value to administrative work, often identifying it as accounting for fifty percent or more of the position’s workload. But even when the duties tied to a position are more clearly defined, the productive overlap of teaching, research, and service often gets lost. Service, the category most often associated with administrative work, is a particularly slippery term that can denote either administrative responsibilities or contributions to the academic institution or profession more broadly. At issue is who defines the term, how service counts toward individual evaluations and promotions, and how service is valued within a program or department.
Let’s say, for example, that two colleagues, one tenure-track and one non-tenure-track, copresent a faculty workshop. For the tenure-track person, who receives a course reassignment in exchange for a host of service-related activities, the workshop is considered teaching-related and should thus be counted as teaching for the purposes of the annual review. For the non-tenure-track person, however, whose job description calls for fifty to sixty percent of his or her time to be allocated to administrative service, such a workshop would normally be classified as service. When the tenure-track person lists the workshop under teaching and the non-tenure-track person lists the same workshop under service, it creates confusion for the faculty evaluation committee that reviews both files. Where does the workshop “count”? Can it be counted differently for each faculty member? Who decides?

In an effort to aid institutions and departments in evaluating faculty work, the MLA produced the 1996 report *Making Faculty Work Visible: Reinterpreting Professional Service, Teaching, and Research in the Fields of Language and Literature*. The report is a nod to Ernest Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered*, but instead of categorizing labor in terms of the traditional triad of research, teaching, and service, the MLA model assesses faculty work according to its “quality, significance, and impact” (2). The report recommends giving equal weight to all work that forwards a discipline as well as work that sustains and improves the infrastructure of the academy. This model divides faculty work into two categories: intellectual work (e.g., the production of original research, grant writing as related to scholarship, administering a writing center, co-teaching, mentoring, and offering faculty workshops) and academic and professional citizenship (e.g., serving on local, regional, or national boards; designing or participating in a community literacy project; fund-raising; or organizing academic conferences).

In 1998 the Council for Writing Program Administrators (WPA) published “Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration,” drawing on Boyer’s 1990 report and on the MLA’s 1996 report. To create a context for discussing and evaluating writing program administrative work, the WPA suggests that much administration falls into one or more of the following five categories of intellectual work: “Program Creation, Curricular Design, Faculty Development, Program Assessment and Evaluation, and Program-Related Textual Production.” Furthermore, administrative activity in one of these categories should count as intellectual work if it meets any of the following criteria, as outlined in guideline 2:

- It generates, clarifies, connects, reinterprets, or applies knowledge based on research, theory, and sound pedagogical practice;
- It requires disciplinary knowledge available only to an expert trained in or conversant with a particular field;
- It requires highly developed analytical or problem solving skills derived from specific expertise, training, or research derived from scholarly knowledge;
- It results in products or activities that can be evaluated by peers (e.g., publication, internal and outside evaluation, participant responses) as the contribution of the individual’s insight, research, and disciplinary knowledge.

To assess the quality, significance, and intellectual value of the administrative work, guideline 3 of the WPA document asks evaluators to consider how activities in the
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five categories serve to innovate, improve, disseminate, or demonstrably accomplish effective teaching and learning. In a final recommendation, the guidelines call for peer reviews as another way to place the intellectual work of program administration in an expanded, national context.

Despite such efforts, department standards often remain rigid—an issue that is especially problematic for faculty members with administrative responsibilities. The documents noted here, as well as those from other organizations, share a sincere attempt to expand definitions of scholarship and recognize diverse faculty roles. Yet two decades of scholarship seem to have had relatively little impact when it comes to recognizing the varied and complementary contributions of faculty members, both tenured and untenured. The ADE report concludes with the reminder that, although we must collectively work “to define an appropriate role for the non-tenure-track segment of the faculty and limit its size,” we also must “ensure that those colleagues employed outside the tenure track have the appropriate salaries, working conditions, status, rights and responsibilities, and security of employment” (Education 15). What, then, can departments do to support full-time, non-tenure-track positions?

Collegiality, Collective Action, and Flexible Allocations

R. Eugene Rice and Mary Deane Sorcinelli identify two competing cultures that dominate the current academic reward system: the collegial and the managerial. The collegial culture, dominant from the 1950s through the 1970s, assumes a community of scholars, academic freedom, and shared governance; it values professional autonomy and disciplinary affiliation. The collegial culture generated a prestige economy with ranking systems and hierarchical categories that control relative status. The managerial culture, in contrast, relies on a market economy “where resource providers [not the faculty] determine priorities and value products and services” (105). Increasingly, university governing boards and legislators at the state or even national level are calling for greater attention to undergraduate teaching, more outreach to the community, more attention to new technologies, and so forth. As a result, Rice and Sorcinelli report, untenured faculty members often feel under siege and overwhelmed by competing demands to excel at research, teaching, and service.

Michael Murphy provides another way of looking at the academic market economy. He argues that teaching-intensive faculty members (and here we would add administrative faculty members), as active consumers of the scholarship that research-intensive faculty members produce, play an integral role in sustaining the intellectual integrity of the discipline. Murphy outlines a careful and strategic two-tier system to enfranchise the teaching-intensive faculty while safeguarding the ongoing need for the traditional research-oriented track (25, 35). While his essay is both thoughtful and thought-provoking, we would like to extend his concept with specific workplace strategies for supporting an ever-increasing, full-time, service-intensive faculty track.

To integrate non-tenure-track faculty members into departmental culture, we propose a shift away from individual faculty roles and workloads to focus instead on the department and university contexts to which the work contributes. Such a shift would potentially benefit tenure-track faculty members as well. We argue that
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A department’s collective effort can provide a framing context for recognizing and valuing the contributions of non-tenure-track faculty members, especially those who serve as writing administrators, and that adopting a collective approach is a step toward reestablishing a collegial culture that values a community of scholars and shared governance.

Our department had the chance to try a collective approach when we revised our evaluation guidelines to include new full-time, non-tenure-track faculty categories. We began by listing and defining the various types of faculty roles in our department (e.g., research, teaching, and administration or service) in terms of each one’s primary contributions to the department and typical workload. This process of listing and defining helped us consider the larger work of the department and the need for varied roles to meet our collective goals. That is, members of the teaching faculty help us excel at meeting the needs of undergraduates, which in turn helps us meet enrollment and retention goals set by the college and university. Likewise, members of the research faculty advance the reputation of our department and graduate programs. And members of the administrative faculty ensure that our curriculum and professional development programs support both teachers and students while staying current with national research on writing.

The conversations also helped make some sense of the faculty workload forms required by our university, which ask individual faculty members to quantify discrete units of time devoted to teaching, research, and service. Practices in place at other universities suggest how workload allocations might help articulate the ways that individuals work together to contribute to collective department goals. Victoria Clegg and Gretchen Esping, for instance, describe the system of flexible workload allocations in place at Kansas State University (KSU). Unlike stand-alone faculty workload forms that rely on simple percentages of effort (the model currently in place at our university), the KSU model depends on a rich and specific departmental context. The department head meets “with each faculty member, individually, at the beginning of the evaluation period, to set broad terms for allocating the faculty members’ time and effort in teaching, research, service, and other activities during the year, and also to agree on reasonable expectations for performance standards” (170). The department head puts the results of this conversation in writing and in terms that are “consistent with more general criteria and standards for evaluation, promotion, and tenure” (171). In this model of flexible allocation, the department head clearly plays an important—and time-intensive—role, and faculty members need to trust their chair to negotiate fair allocations and evaluations (183). Clegg and Esping are quick to note that if shared governance is to remain “an important reality and expectation” within this system, then departments who use flexible allocation methods need to make decisions collaboratively, establish expectations clearly, and communicate those decisions and expectations well (184).

When our department revised its guidelines for the evaluation and promotion of full-time non-tenure-track faculty members, we kept Clegg and Esping’s advice in mind. Beyond defining the various roles in our department in relation to our overall department goals, we also drew on the ADE, MLA, and WPA guidelines to help us take stock of our specific local culture and establish clear expectations for evaluations.
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We were able to draw on several self-studies of our department (one that we had completed for an external review and others required for regular institutional reporting). We also had a faculty-evaluation task force that consulted with colleagues at other universities. This departmental-level committee (chaired by one of us) included tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track representatives. After a good deal of research on faculty evaluation, reviews of guidelines in place at several other schools, and several months of faculty meetings, our department agreed on the following framework for documenting and evaluating the wide range of work that each person contributes.

1. **Significance or Impact.** To what degree do the faculty member’s activities (in teaching, or research, or service) benefit or affect students, our department, our college, our university, our profession, or other communities or individuals? And/or to what degree do the faculty member’s activities (in teaching, research, or service) reflect originality and development within a body of work?

2. **Engagement.** To what degree do the faculty member’s activities (in teaching, or research, or service) generate, apply, and/or use knowledge and insight consistent with current directions in our field of study? And/or to what degree does the faculty member demonstrate thoroughness, reliability, and availability?

3. **Context.** To what degree are the faculty member’s activities (in teaching, or research, or service) consistent with goals important to our department, our college, our university, or our profession? And/or to what degree do the faculty member’s activities (in teaching, research, or service) rely on knowledge of the department, college, institution, or professional organizations? To what degree is the faculty member willing to learn about the department, college, institution, or profession or keep current with changes? ("Department" 7–8)

The new guidelines have been in use since the 2009–10 academic year. By framing the entire set of faculty evaluation guidelines in terms of significance, engagement, and context, we are trying to break down rigid barriers among teaching, research, and service. The three points are helping us create a common way of talking about the work we do individually and collectively that always places individual contributions within a larger perspective. The required workload allocation forms still ask faculty members to identify discrete percentages of time devoted to each of the categories, but now those numbers are always accompanied by a faculty member’s reflective narrative and a portfolio of supporting material.

The transition has not always been completely smooth, but our new guidelines strive to guide faculty members toward success, clarify faculty goals, inform annual assignments that reflect the short- and long-term vision of the department, include faculty members in discussions and decisions, and provide consistent and clear criteria for performance-based salary increases and for promotion and tenure recommendations, as applicable. Approved unanimously by the department, the revised guidelines include the following several significant changes from our previous department guidelines:

- adding non-tenure-track representatives to the faculty evaluation committee
- expanding and detailing the service section to make the process of documenting and evaluating service more transparent
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• establishing some deliberate overlaps of categories so that faculty members
can, depending on the nature of their appointment and work, determine
when their administrative work counts as research or teaching or service
• creating examples of how faculty members with nontraditional workloads
will be evaluated
• specifying promotion criteria for non-tenure-track faculty members

In other words, our new guidelines strive to recognize and value what faculty
members—regardless of their tenure status—accomplish by their efforts without
becoming constrained by rigid category boundaries. In the example of program
administration, these guidelines prompt evaluators to look at the effects of the admin-
istrative work in terms of its significance, its engagement, and its context in relation
to the department’s goals.

Having clear and equitable development and evaluation guidelines—starting with
the job ad and interview process and continuing through the appointment letter
and faculty evaluation—protects all faculty members from being dismissed without
adequate cause by specifying the types of evidence that demonstrate satisfactory or
unsatisfactory job performance. Such guidelines also help departments promote sta-
bility, centrality, integration, and security among diverse faculty roles, even as those
roles continue to change.

Notes
1. On changes in the profession generally, see Baldwin and Chronister; Boyer; Chait; Rice and Sor-
cinelli; Wergin and Swingen. On the shifting balance of tenure-track and contingent positions, see
Bartholomae; Harris; Murphy; Webb and Boardman; Schell; Trainor and Godley.
2. For our institution’s emphasis on enriching the student learning environment, see West Virginia Uni-
versity’s 2020 Strategic Plan, goal 1; Eberly College of Arts and Sciences 2020 Strategic Plan, goals 1 and 2.
3. For the definition of clinical track faculty as it emerged in the School of Medicine, see West Vir-
ginia University School of Medicine Guidelines for Faculty Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (8–11, 31,
32–33, 43).
4. Our institution’s more general policies and procedures for faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure
specify that “all tenure-track, clinical-track, or tenured faculty members must do scholarly, creative, or pro-
fessional work that informs their teaching and service” (West Virginia University Policies 3; emphasis added).
5. On the importance of linking research and teaching for all faculty members, see Bartholomae 25–27.
6. On tensions between the planning goals of departments and institutions, see Wergin and Swingen 3; Lynton.
7. For guidance on initiating such actions, see Council of Writing Program Administrators; Checklist.

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