

Forums for Tenure-Line Faculty on the NTT Bargaining Process
FEC Notes
November 7th & 8th, 2023
Gannett Auditorium

What follows are notes taken by members of FEC during the tenure-line faculty forums of November 7th and 8th, 2023, on the NTT bargaining process. These are meant to be descriptive notes of what took place during these forums and not transcripts of the sessions.

Abbreviations used: TT = tenure-track; TL = tenure-line; NTT: non-tenure-track; CBA = collective bargaining agreement

Forum 1
Tuesday, November 7th, 4-5pm

Opening Remarks by DOF/VPAA Dorothy Mosby

Dean Mosby welcomed everyone. She highlighted a few things about the role of tenure and TT faculty: have the ability to determine the curriculum, programs, objectives, activities, resources, and shared governance, which directs and shapes the college. [T/TT faculty are considered “management” in this process because of their responsibility in determining and managing the curriculum and role in shared governance.]

The proposals have not been finalized for the negotiation. It is a long process, which might take 18 months or up to two years. At this moment, the discussion is focused on non-economic items, such as what the rights of management are, access to campus resources, titles and ranks, etc.

Concerns that Came Up in the Survey (Survey Distributed in Preparation for the Forums)

[FEC note: the survey included roughly 36 concerns, submitted by 26 respondents.]

One of the survey respondents was concerned that the college is dragging out the process. The college is not dragging it out intentionally. The negotiation process takes time. The most significant item on the table right now is the proposal about the terms of the contracts and titles. DOF is gathering information from the tenured faculty to prepare the college’s proposal.

Dean Mosby shared some of the principles she was following:

- Commitment to tenure. The college and the DOF are committed to tenure.
- Equity and fairness. NTT colleagues are asking for stability and predictability regarding their service and the college.
- Centrality of the curriculum. The college and the DOF are committed to the college’s educational goals, the effective delivery of the curriculum, and TT faculty’s ownership of that curriculum.
- Ability of tenure track faculty to contribute to the proposals and counter-proposals.

Answers to Written Questions (Survey Distributed in Preparation for the Forums)

[FEC note: the survey included roughly 33 questions, submitted by 16 respondents.]

To the question of what the Dean of Faculty thinks tenure-line faculty need to know about this process, Dean Mosby highlighted the role of tenure-line faculty as management.

Regarding concerns about resource allocation (if academic affairs has a specific budget and the NTT bargaining representatives make demands for a more significant portion of that budget, how do we know TT faculty will have their resources maintained and protected?), Dean Mosby said there is no separate budget. There is not a TT budget or an NTT budget. It is all the same pool.

Floor Open for Questions

The questions, answers, and comments presented here are based on the notes taken by members of FEC. They should not be taken as a transcript of the forum, which was not recorded. Hence, it should be assumed that the actual wording and content of questions, answers, and comments are not exactly the same as those expressed during the forum.

Notes on faculty member question: Clarification question on the managerial role of TL faculty and participation of NTT faculty in the governance system.

Notes on DoF answer: NTT faculty can voluntarily participate in shared governance. But it has not happened for a variety of reasons. There is a clear expectation that TT faculty at this institution participate in shared governance. Administrators manage the resources. But when it comes to the curriculum, DOF is not getting involved in curriculum development. That is the charge of TT faculty. When it comes to shared governance, the TT faculty should consider how the faculty governance cycle is managed here. It is a responsibility that TT faculty step up to help run this place, to advise, to consult, but also to make critical decisions, particularly when it comes to evaluation and review of the curriculum.

Notes on faculty member comment: There has been practically no reflection or policy on what is a proper appointment to NTT or TT (particularly in terms of service and governance).

Notes on DoF answer: This is a point to reflect precisely on how much tenure is valued at this institution and how non-tenure-track lines have grown over time. On the one hand, there is a desire for flexibility. On the other hand, there is also a desire for sort of a cost-effective way to staff a very robust curriculum. But this is a moment to ask ourselves, ask each other, what tenure means at this institution.

Notes on faculty member question: Is the administration thinking strategically about converting long-term NTT to TT lines (following AAUP guidelines)?

Notes on DoF answer: Thinking about it, but there are questions about implementation. A deep commitment to national searches. A number of NTT faculty have come through more localized methods. We have to ask ourselves, is this what we want as an institution? Not threatening the stability and the continuity of those currently here, but thinking about the future, what do we want to do, and how do we want to do it?

Notes on faculty member question: Question about NTT faculty's responsibility for the curriculum. Should NTT faculty vote on a major policy or curricular change in a department meeting?

Notes on DoF answer: Not sure where we are going to land with the CBA. Heard from department chairs talking about the need to maintain or even build in the expectation of service, particularly for continuing NTT faculty, not necessarily for temporary sabbatical replacements. This is under discussion.

Notes on faculty member question: What do you see the proper role of financial considerations being for establishing a position that is continuing, which bears a full range of teaching responsibilities, like advising, all the things that a tenure-track position would do more or less with the exception of scholarship expectation? Is there a way of thinking about these as teacher-scholar positions, describing them appropriately with regard to not just the length of service but also the character of the service (for example, we are expecting them to teach students doing research)? If we expect NTT faculty to do that, is there anything other than an economic consideration to describe that position as an NTT position as opposed to a TT

position?

Notes on DoF answer: Turn it back to faculty and how faculty see those roles and the economic difference. That difference in compensation is also the expectation of their participation and more robust participation in faculty governance and management of the curriculum.

Notes on faculty member question: Distinction between the two different positions would also be more scholarship expectations?

Notes on DoF answer: From what the Dean understands currently, for NTT faculty the focus is teaching. Whereas for TT faculty, it is teaching, scholarship and creative production, and service.

Notes on faculty member comment: We already have committees that are restricted in terms of who can serve. Serving on those committees is not considered faculty governance service.

Notes on DoF answer: There is a lot of work outside of governance. We need to have faculty participate in that; it is not part of the governance service, but it is important to the institution. [Examples of service outside of governance are working groups for reaccreditation and strategic planning]

Notes on faculty member comment: Advising is also service.

Notes on faculty member question: Clarification question about service and managerial responsibilities. Is advising the kind of service that makes you a manager, or is that just the kind of service that is part of being an academic? If NTT people cannot do governance, does that mean they cannot do any service or is there a line to be drawn?

Notes on DoF answer: That is up for discussion. But the CBA does not necessarily take the place of the Faculty Handbook, but informs it and clarifies roles and expectations.

Notes on faculty member comment: Some things that have been discussed in the union meetings in negotiations would have a significant impact on how TT faculty could conduct their departments. It is not simply about being treated fairly and equitably, but there are concrete differences that could be built into their contract with the College, which TT faculty would have to accommodate.

Notes on DoF answer: It is a negotiation.

Notes on faculty member comment: Expressed concern about tenure track faculty not being part of the negotiation.

Notes on DoF answer: Mindful of the AAUP guidelines. Regret that this is the first meeting. Wish that this was a continuation of meetings that happened earlier. This is an effort to try to continue. Mindful of the diversity of opinions, but an effort to try to hear all of those different positions and but also mindful of the stability and equity that NTT faculty are asking for.

Notes on faculty member comment: NTT faculty have a different role than TL faculty. There are going to be changes in how NTT faculty participate in departments. Described specific departmental context. Expressed excitement about changes that can be done in a way that everyone feels more respected, has a say, and is conscious of their different roles in the

department, as opposed to power differentials.

Notes on faculty member comment: There is a lot of anxiety in the room around changes we do not have control over, but there is a lot of potential and opportunities. What do you think is the positive potential in this process for our future as a faculty?

Notes on DoF answer: Number one positive is clarity. The biggest positive outcome is clarity on roles and expectations.

Notes on faculty member comment: Described specific context and importance of NTT faculty in a department and their role in curricular matters.

Notes on faculty member question: Is there a discussion of different types of NTT roles at this moment?

Notes on DoF answer: That is at the top of the Dean's mind as well as having the clarity of what different positions titles would be, but also about what the evaluation process would be and where that process lives [whether the evaluation of NTT faculty should remain as it is currently or if a new structure should be created to fairly and effectively evaluate faculty for contract renewal and promotion.]

Notes on faculty member comment: Comment regarding the lack of policies on whether it is appropriate for a position to be NTT or TT. A recipe for inequity.

Notes on DoF answer: Comment touches on the need for both clarity and policy, but also process.

Notes on faculty member comment: Some situations are better met with NTT faculty for various reasons. But in a specific department, the main reason there are people off the tenure track is because of the lack of resources to fully staff the courses needed to offer the college curriculum. Need to balance current needs and leave room for flexibility that enhances the College and individual departments.

Notes on faculty member comment: If NTT faculty define their roles properly, department chairs will have a better way to present cases to fill curricular needs.

Notes on faculty member comment: It is still related to resource constraints in terms of the additional money that would be required.

Notes on faculty member comment: The English department has a unique problem. All the sections of expository writing do not give a lot of flexibility. It is about delivering all those sections.

Notes on ADOF comment: Important to point out that one of the challenges of the negotiating table is that we have enormous heterogeneity. Not all of the NTT faculty members are the same. For instance, writers and artists-in-residence have a scholarship requirement. Those are NTT faculty members. Instructors are very carefully defined in the Faculty Handbook. Those are people with a different requirement in reference to their qualifications. They serve particularly STEM departments. The heterogeneity is so wide that we cannot talk about the difference between TT and NTT. It is the question of what tenure is, how are all of these different NTT appointments serving or not serving us, and how we differentiate among them. NTT is a proliferation of categories, which is a big part of the challenge.

Notes on faculty member comment: Hope that the administration will do everything that it can to give long-term NTT colleagues the stability that they are asking for. A huge part of our curriculum is delivered by NTT colleagues. Almost all of those folks are teaching in the introductory curriculum. They are innovating; they are doing amazing work. We need to have a mechanism for NTT faculty to have a voice in the curriculum because they are often the ones who are delivering it.

Notes on faculty member comment: A lot of things are happening. It is helpful to picture the very real human beings affected by this.

Notes on DoF answer: That was part of the conversation during the recent meetings with the chairs and program directors.

Notes on faculty member comment: Comment regarding job ads, flexibility and clarity at the time of hiring, and flexibility in the career paths faculty could take once at the institution. Is it possible to allow that flexibility as we define the clarity in their roles?

Notes on DoF answer: Clarity at the start is important. The distinction between the role of TT and NTT is also important. Something to be discussed. Not familiar with other small colleges that have a flexible model like that.

Notes on faculty member comment: Not everybody, even in TT, is producing scholarship. Wondering if this is a time to develop policies that consider this.

Notes on DoF answer: Dean thinks this question is under discussion. PC is talking about promotion models that are an alternative to the traditional teaching/scholarship/service criteria in currently in use, and other colleges are also discussing this.

Notes on faculty member comment: Clarity is ultimately something that the Dean's office is responsible for in a way.

Notes on DoF answer: It is a two-way process.

Notes on faculty member comment: At the end of the day, chairs make requests to the Dean's office for hiring, and the DOF would recommend an NTT hire. Curious about the Dean's conception of what the role of the DOF is as a leader or what she needs from faculty going forward to get some more coherence to our vision.

Notes on DoF answer: Looking forward to working with departments/programs. Role in the DOF office is to be mindful of resources but also think about how we set practices and policies to support current state and future.

Dean Mosby thanked attendees and invited them to direct questions to her. Will do her best to consolidate some of the questions received and put together responses.

Forum 2
Wednesday, Nov. 8, 4-5 pm, Gannett Auditorium

Opening Remarks by DOF/VPAA Dorothy Mosby

DOF welcomed attendees and described some of the meetings that have occurred so far (for example, with CPDs). She highlighted the importance of having conversations with tenure-line faculty to have a space for conversation as a group and talk about the role of tenure-line faculty as management and what that means. DOF thanked FEC for its participation in putting together the fora.

Concerns that Came Up in the Survey (Survey Distributed in Preparation for the Forums)

[FEC note: the survey included roughly 36 concerns, submitted by 26 respondents.]

Dean Mosby gave a general overview of the concerns expressed in the survey sent to faculty in preparation for the fora. Tenure-line faculty are management due to having a direct role in shaping the direction of the college (hiring, management, etc.). She described the collective bargaining process and highlighted its nature as a negotiation, one that will take time. Skidmore is taking an approach that focuses on non-economic items first.

Guiding principles in the process: the importance of and commitment to tenure, the centrality of the curriculum, fairness, and equity.

Dean Mosby described other concerns that came up in the survey:

- Tenure and its meaning at Skidmore, future of the teacher-scholar model
- Equity (for example, in the length of contracts)
- Clarified that the administration is not interested in dividing and conquering (we are one faculty with various roles and common goals)

Floor Open for Questions

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Notes on faculty member question: Asking for clarification question about management rights.

Notes on DoF answer: For legal reasons, TL faculty cannot always chime in on proposals because of management role [Faculty are management, but there are aspects of the CBA process that unfortunately cannot be collaborative.]

Notes on faculty member question: Asking for clarification about conversations with NTT faculty about the process.

Notes on DoF answer: OK talk with NTT faculty, but keep working conditions the same. Should not discuss personnel issues, work conditions, and labor contracts

Notes on faculty member question: Why not use this opportunity to increase tenure lines?

Notes on DoF answer: Resources are a challenge. More positions might come, but followed by prioritization process. We need to rethink who we are and what we do. We still need NTT faculty in temporary contracts for certain roles; not all positions can be transformed to renewable contracts or TT (e.g., sabbatical replacements).

Notes on faculty member comment: Some NTT faculty do not want to be on the tenure track.

Notes on faculty member question: Question related to conversions of positions of faculty who are already here.

Notes on DoF answer: A number of positions did not come from national searches. Importance of national searches for the diversity of candidates they provide.

Notes on faculty member question: Are national searches considered for NTT?

Notes on DoF answer: There is a large variation in what we call NTT; national searches might be appropriate for some of those positions.

Notes on faculty member question: Where to direct people who have questions?

Notes on DoF answer: ADOF Janet Casey is a good person to contact with questions.

Notes on faculty member comment: Some NTT faculty in Business do not desire to have a tenure track (have positions elsewhere). Attendee gave context on individual case. The stability piece makes sense and can be useful for the college for planning purposes. The attendee expressed support for unions but need to consider that not all cases are the same.

Notes on faculty member comment: Media and Film Studies runs almost entirely on NTT and part-time faculty, not ideal. Interested to know what the administration is proposing as a counter-proposal. Can you tell us?

Notes on DoF answer: The Skidmore proposal has not been finalized. Looking for clarity in the types of positions and timeframes when positions have to be considered as renewable. Really concerned about having clarity for folks currently with short-term renewable contracts who have been at the institution for a long time.

Notes on faculty member question: Clarification question about the idea of a clock when an NTT will be considered for a renewable contract.

Notes on DoF answer: Some schools have a clock for when a NTT position needs to become renewable or a TT part of the conversation.

Notes on faculty member question: Will there be a path to convert NTT faculty to TT when the position is deemed to be needed as TT?

Notes on DoF answer: This is part of the conversation.

Notes on faculty member question: Is service in the governance system part of the negotiations?

Notes on DoF answer: Not there yet.

Notes on faculty member question: Role of service in the negotiation? Departmental vs college service?

Notes on DoF answer: One of the things Dean Mosby has heard is that it is sometimes difficult for NTT to serve in the governance system.

Notes on FEC member comment: From FEC's perspective, the main reason NTT faculty have been unable to serve in certain governance roles is that their contracts are shorter than the term length for those roles. Institutional memory is needed in many of these committees, so not having the ability to serve many years is not ideal.

Notes on faculty member question: What might be challenging around renewable contracts? Do these moments give the institution an evaluative opportunity? Why do we have so few renewable contracts?

Notes on DoF answer: Do not know. This is one of the things that will be considered.

Notes on ADOF comment: Most of the renewable NTT positions are hybrid (with administrative responsibilities). There is a limit to how many full-time faculty we have. A mechanism is desirable to decide whether a line should be TT or renewable NTT.

Notes on faculty member comment: There is not a lot of flexibility in the operating budget lines to add renewable NTT or tenured positions. We are living in the legacy of the past: a lot of thought in the past on what NTT renewable positions should be and efforts to save resources. A complex situation.

Notes on faculty member question: Wanted to know more about the resources implicated in converting a NTT line to TT. Why can we only have a certain number of long-term positions?

Notes on DoF answer: The difference has to do with salary difference and dedication of long-term resources. There are a number of resources "wrapped around" TT faculty lines (vary by discipline) and budgetary planning [for salary, benefits, start-up, professional development, sabbatical leaves, course releases, etc.]. The difference will be shaped by the negotiations.

Notes on faculty member question: In chemistry, there is a significant number of faculty who want to do research. Will the administration encourage/provide financial resources for NTT faculty in renewable contracts to pursue research with students and service?

Notes on DoF answer: Will look at this; also important to consider differences in disciplines and equity across disciplines.

Notes on faculty member question: DoF was asked to go back to the question of why we cannot have more positions.

Notes on DoF answer: There are ongoing conversations. We need to be mindful that resources aren't infinite. Skidmore is unique in the number of full-pay students it has and the gifts from donors. The number of college-age students in the Northeast is decreasing. [Need to consider current and future resources and curricular support/staffing.]

Notes on faculty member question: We have been relying on NTT faculty for long-term positions. Will changes in the curriculum be necessary? Is this part of the conversations?

Notes on DoF answer: It is, and it is not. These are questions on Dean Mosby's mind at all times.

Notes on faculty member question: Is there a reason why NTT representation is not present at the faculty meetings?

Notes on DoF answer: Dean Mosby was asked by the NTT negotiating group to be present at the September meeting, but due to time limitations, she requested to wait until October. Open to the bargaining unit members regarding future opportunities to share information during faculty meeting.

Dean Faculty thanked attendees and said there will be mechanisms to answer the questions posed in the survey. There is a lot to learn.