

American Association of University Professors Iowa State University Chapter



Statement on NTE Percentages at the University

Background

In 2001 the Faculty Senate approved a recommendation that the percentage of NTE (non-tenure eligible) faculty at the university as a whole not exceed 15% and not exceed 25% in any department. These percentages were based on AAUP recommended guidelines. The purpose of these guidelines was to limit the percentage of faculty who were not protected by the academic freedom rights that come with tenure. In 2001 the university was out of compliance with these guidelines and it continues to be out of compliance. The most recent data indicate that 25% of faculty instruction at the university is by NTEs and 40% of departments exceed the 25% guideline. In 2009 a taskforce appointed by the Faculty Senate examined the status of NTEs relative to these guidelines. The FDAR (Faculty Development and Administrative Relations) Council has reviewed their findings and has recommended a course of action to the Faculty Senate to deal with the issue of compliance. This requires departments to develop a “responsibility statement” that sets a target for NTE percentage that is “healthy and optimal” and provide a justification when that exceeds 25%. Colleges are also required to develop a responsibility statement that sets a “healthy and optimal” target that must be justified if it exceeds 20% (note this is higher than the 15% university-level guideline). The responsibility statements would have to be approved by the FDAR and the Provost.

AAUP position

The FDAR proposal would appear to be an attempt to finally implement the recommendations made by the Faculty Senate in 2001. In reality, it sets, and then justifies new percentage standards that exceed those recommended by the AAUP. The university then has only to comply with these new higher standards. The justification for department and college percentage targets is that they be “healthy and optimal”. But the criteria for “healthy and optimal” are not spelled out. From the AAUP perspective it is neither healthy nor optimal for an academic unit to have a large percentage of faculty that are non-tenure eligible. This places an undue burden on the tenure-track faculty to provide service and maintain active faculty governance. The NTEs are often treated as second class citizens and are unprotected with regard to academic freedom.

Recent recommendations by the AAUP may provide a way to begin complying with the original percentage guidelines.¹ The AAUP recommends that long-standing teaching-only faculty be tenured and that most teaching intensive positions be made tenure eligible. Increasing the number of tenure eligible faculty offers many benefits. Teaching-only faculty would gain stature as full members of the community with the benefits inherent in tenure, and their presence would relieve some of the service commitment of the tenure eligible faculty. ISU would benefit from having a greater number of faculty who fulfill the tripartite teaching, service, and scholarship faculty role. While the implementation of such a conversion would not be easy, other universities have done this and could serve as models. The most successful models “are those that retain experienced, qualified, and effective faculty, as opposed to those that convert *positions* while leaving behind the faculty present in them”.¹